The Effect of Geographical Setting, Duration in a Single Parent Family, Sex and Dethronement on Stepsibling Relationships After Parental Remarriage

Sharon D. Cannon
Utah State University

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THE EFFECT OF GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING, DURATION IN A SINGLE PARENT FAMILY, SEX AND DETHRONEMENT ON STEPSIBLING RELATIONSHIPS AFTER PARENTAL REMARRIAGE

by

Sharon D. Cannon

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

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Family and Human Development
(Marriage and Family Therapy)

Approved:

Major Professor

Committee Member

Committee Member

Dean of Graduate Studies

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

1986
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Special thanks to Dr. Sharyn Crossman, Committee Chairperson, for not only generously allowing me to share her research and providing untiring assistance and advice, but also for being a friend and for teaching me the intricacies of pinochle.

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Loving gratitude goes to my husband, Richley, who has always been a champion of my right to pursue an education, and to my children, who have sometimes been neglected as I followed my dream.

"Per Scientiam Ad Sapientiam"
School Motto, Corby Grammar School
Corby, Northamptonshire, England
1964-1966

Sharon D. Cannon
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ABSTRACT

The Effect of Geographical Setting, Duration in a Single Parent Family, Sex and Dethronement on Stepsibling Relationships After Parental Remarriage

by

Sharon D. Cannon, Master of Science
Utah State University, 1986

Major Professor: Dr. Sharyn M. Crossman
Department: Family and Human Development (Marriage and Family Therapy)

This exploratory study investigated how four independent variables, namely post-marital residence, length of time in a single parent family, gender and change in relative age position in the family, affect the closeness of stepsibling relationships. This research focused primarily on families in which stepsiblings lived together in the same household; however, individuals who had stepsiblings living in another location were also included in the study.

A sample of 139 people was generated through a purposive method of requesting names of eligible persons from county extension agents in four Western states (Utah, Idaho, Oregon and Arizona), and from ten introductory classes in Family and Human Development and Sociology during the fall and winter quarters of the 1984-1985 school year. Questionnaires were mailed out. Ninety surveys were returned, yielding
a response rate of 65 percent. Seventy-five of the instruments were usable (N=75).

The analysis consisted of a two way analysis of covariance for the first three variables. A Kruskal-Wallace was used for the dethronement variable given the small numbers in each of the cells.

Post-marital residence and gender of the respondents had no discernible effect on the dependent variable in this study. While the variable months in a single parent family did not have a significant effect on the feelings of closeness towards stepsiblings, a positive trend was noted between the two. A strong but non-significant relationship was discovered between the variable of dethronement and the dependent variable.

Further analysis was conducted on a separate independent variable, whether or not the respondents were informed about the parental remarriage, and on two dependent variables as follows: feelings towards stepsiblings at the time of remarriage as well as feelings about the actual remarriage, loving relationships between stepsiblings. A significant difference was noted between informed and non-informed respondents and the first dependent variable. A strong but non-significant relationship was discovered between the same groups of respondents and the second dependent variable.

Implications for therapy were generated from the results of the study. Suggestions for the optimum times to introduce therapy were also given, as well as strategies that would be useful in enhancing stepsibling functioning.
CHAPTER I
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Divorce rates in the early 1980s continued to increase, although currently they have appeared to stabilize. The divorce rate following remarriage, however, is higher than the divorce rate following first marriages (Glick, 1980). One reason for this increase is the concentration of divorce prone personalities among the remarried which are more widely distributed among the larger first married group. Other more useful and concrete reasons for a more substantial divorce rate following remarriage remain unclear; there appear to be several contributing factors to this problem.

One possible contributing factor to the breakdown of second and/or subsequent marriages is the presence of stepsibling conflict and disharmony, which contribute to poor functioning in the newly constituted family. For example, one investigator has suggested that better stepsibling relationships promote better family functioning and integration (Duberman, 1973). Stepsibling relationships may often be less idyllic than anticipated, however, due to what Schulman (1972) referred to as "myths that intrude on the adaptation of the step-family." One myth in particular involves the notion that stepsiblings automatically love each other upon the marriage of their parents. Another myth is that stepfamily members have the same qualitative relationships with each other that nuclear families do. Since, as Schulman believes, this is not likely to be the case, stepfamilies sometimes may be likely to experience problems in
interpersonal relationships, not just between stepparent and stepchild, but between stepsiblings as well.

The most recent data indicate that currently about 4.8 million children live in remarried couple households (Cherlin & McCarthy, 1985). Since this includes children born after remarriage, the actual number of children living with a stepparent is unknown; however, the number is substantial enough to warrant research investigation. Previous estimates have placed the number of stepchildren as high as 6.5 million (Jacobson, 1980). To date only a miniscule amount of research has been conducted to determine how successfully stepfamilies function, and how cohesive the relationships are between individual family members, specifically those between stepsiblings.

Theoretical Framework

The ABCX model was devised by Hill (1949, 1958) to help explain the adaptation to stress of families who had been separated through war, and ultimately reunited. This model has been extremely resilient for the 36 years since its genesis, and is still used today as a conceptual framework to explain the adaptation of families to stress. Simply put, the ABCX model is as follows: A (the stressor event) interacts with B (resources the family has to deal with the stressor event) and with C (the family's perception or definition of the stressor event) to produce X (the crisis).

Several researchers, notably McCubbin, have attempted to redefine the ABCX model (McCubbin, Boss, Wilson & Lester, 1980; McCubbin and Patterson, 1981, 1982, 1983). This redefinition produced the double ABCX model. This model used the ABCX model, intact, as the first half
of the new framework, but added postcrisis variables to describe certain phenomena.

The first postcrisis variable is "pile-up," or the additional stressors that occur in a family. These stressors can occur not only because of crises that arise, but also because of the normal growth and development of families. McCubbin and Figley (1983) maintain that there are five general categories of stressors that contribute to pile-up, or the aA factor. They are as follows: the initial stressor, normative transitions, previous strain, the consequences of the family's coping efforts and intrafamily and social ambiguity.

A second variable, the bB factor, is the resources that families have that enable them to adapt. There appear to be three kinds of family resources: each family member's personal resources, the family system's internal resources and social support.

The third variable, the cC factor, is described as family definition and meaning. It can also be conceptualized as what the family perceives the significance of their situation to be. If families are able to redefine or reframe a situation, three things occur: difficulties and problems are able to be managed more easily, the strong intensity of mood and emotions that is brought about through crisis is diminished, and finally, the family interacts more positively as a unit.

The interaction of aA, bB and cC affects the coping prowess not only of the individual but also the family. The level of coping has a great impact on xX, the adaptation of the family to the crisis. Such adaptation will be positive, i.e., bonadaptation, or negative i.e., maladaptation.
The proposed study will focus upon how successfully stepfamilies function, as measured by stepsibling relationships. Since this is a postcrisis variable, the double ABCX model is the most appropriate conceptual framework.

For the purposes of this study, the initial stressor, or A, will be remarriage. The resources of the family in coping with remarriage will be B. These resources could be individual, societal, financial or emotional. The family's perception of itself as a remarried family unit will be C. This could be positive, such as "I'm glad we're a family again" or negative, "Why can't we be a normal family like everyone else?" The interaction of A, B, and C will lead to the crisis, or X, which in this study will be the attempt to reconstitute the family successfully.

The crisis, usually not one particular event but the adaptation to a chronic situation, leads to aA, or pile-up. An example of this could be the normative transition of families from nuclear family to stepfamily ideology. Others include the redefinition of roles and boundaries. The family resources, or the bB factor, could include personal commitment to making the stepfamily successful, and social support for stepfamilies as a legitimate family form. The family definition, or cC, could take the form of deciding the strengths of stepfamilies, or decreasing the emotional intensity of stepfamilies by reframing stepfamilies as "all right". The interaction of aA, bB, and cC will determine how well the stepfamily copes, and in turn the level of adaptation. Adaptation ranges on a continuum from bonadaptation to maladaptation. An example of bonadaptation would be the successful reintegration of the stepfamily, where each member feels positively not
only about their membership in a stepfamily, but also experiences positive relationships with and affect for other family members. An extreme example of maladaptation would be the disruption or dissolution of the stepfamily through divorce. This information concerning the model and how it applies to the proposed research can be found in Figure 1.
Figure 1. Double ABCX model

Family social welfare agencies

B existing resources

remarriage

A stressor

C perception of "A"

X crisis

successful reintegration

aA pile-up

coping

family adaptive resources

bB existing and new resources

bon-adaptation (good)

mal-adaptation (bad)

new family definition and meaning

perception of X+aA+bB
Definition of Terms

Stepbrother/stepsister: Individuals who become related as brothers and/or sisters only through the marriage of their parents. No blood relationship is found between stepsiblings.

Halfbrother/halfsister: An individual with whom one shares one biological parent, either a father or a mother.

Natural brother/sister: An individual with whom one shares the same biological parents, both father and mother.

Transient siblings: A sibling, step-, half-, or natural, who doesn't live in the same household as an individual, but who comes to visit. The individual may also be a transient sibling if s/he visits siblings who live at another location.

Reconstituted family: These terms are synonymous. They refer to
Reconstructed family: a newly formed nuclear unit where one or both
Stepfamily: spouses have been previously married and at least one partner brings children into the new marriage.

Purpose and Objectives

This exploratory study investigated how four independent variables, namely, post-marital residence, length of time in a single parent family, gender and change in relative age position in the family, affected the closeness of stepsibling relationships. This research focused primarily on families in which stepsiblings lived together in the same household; however, individuals who had stepsiblings living in another location were also included in the study.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature concerning stepsibling relationships is scanty at best. Most descriptions of stepsibling relationships can be found in more general literature on stepparents, stepfamilies, remarriage and divorce. Often, stepsibling relationships are assessed or evaluated by a third party. Such is the case in a particular study conducted by Duberman (1973). Duberman selected a random sample of parents who had remarried during the years 1965-1968. This sample was drawn from the Marriage License Bureau of Cuyahoga County in Ohio and yielded a total N of 88 families. Forty-five of these families contained children from both parents and the remainder, 43, contained children belonging to one parent only. Duberman evaluated the relationship between stepsiblings by asking the parents about such relationships. They were asked to rate each child's relationship with each stepsibling, using a Likert scale ranging from very close to very distant. In the families with stepsiblings (N=45), the parents were also asked to evaluate the relationships between the two sets of children. Twenty-four percent of the families rated this relationship to be excellent, 38 percent rated it as good and another 38 percent evaluated it as poor.

Among the group whose stepsibling relationships were said to be excellent, many of the children in each group were said to be like real brothers and sisters. In the group that had good relationships, it appeared that a period of adjustment had been necessary in facilitating the stepsibling relationship. Such a period of adjustment was not evident in the poor group; jealousy and rivalry seemed to abound between the sibships of these families.
Other variables also had an impact on the stepsibling relationship, as reported by Duberman. Higher satisfaction was reported in homes where the father had lower levels of education and was younger. When stepsiblings lived in the same home, relationships were more satisfactory; satisfactory relationships also occurred more frequently when the oldest child on each side of the newly reconstructed family was of the opposite sex.

Better stepsibling relationships enhanced family functioning; however, some of the problems among natural siblings were exacerbated by stepsibling relationships. Birth order, sometimes a problem in natural families when the oldest child is dethroned by other siblings, is more of a problem when two oldest children may be put together in the reconstituted family. Power struggles and conflicts are often more common in such stepfamilies.

Finally, Duberman found that most stepsiblings in these families formed a basic interest in one another, and in each other's activities. However, close relationships were rare.

Although on the surface Duberman's study is a significant contribution to the stepsibling literature, a serious limitation exists in her research design. One of her research goals was to compare stepsibling relationships with natural sibling relationships. One would anticipate therefore an assessment of stepsibling relationships in general. How Duberman goes about determining stepsibling relationships is not to ask the stepsiblings themselves about their relationships with each other, but to ask the parents to rate their children's relationships with their stepsiblings. Assuming that the parents' perceptions of these relationships are accurate reflections of the truth
seems to ignore the potential for bias and might lead to many erroneous conclusions.

One suspects that parents would have a vested interest in reporting the relationships between stepsiblings as more positive than the stepsiblings might for a number of reasons. First, there is often a great deal of societal pressure for members of reconstituted families to love each other in ways that nuclear families are perceived as doing. Secondly, disharmonious relationships may appear to outsiders, and indeed even to the stepparents, as symptoms of a dysfunctional system, a system which may therefore be headed for disintegration. Remarried couples may not be likely to want to entertain the idea of another divorce. Logic suggests, therefore, that stepsiblings who do not get along could pose a considerable threat to the stability of the reconstituted family. Alternately, stepparents may simply be ignorant of the quality of stepsibling relationships and may be unable to make accurate observations.

Duberman's research also suffers from a sample too small and limited in terms of heterogeneity to make even cautious generalizations. Although Duberman's study is now 11 years old, she used literature now 30 years old to support a seeming bias that stepsibling relationships are not always unhappy. While Duberman is to be lauded for not assuming a deficit preconception of stepsibling relationships, one suspects she has gone too far in the opposite direction. Her study, therefore, provides little in the way of a definitive statement, based on empirical data, concerning stepsibling relationships.

Schulman (1972) discussed myths that can adversely affect the functioning of stepfamilies. She presented these myths and proposed
that family therapy enables the family to achieve integration and adaptation more successfully. The two most important myths are the myths of the "wicked stepmother" and "instant love." Schulman maintains that in reconstructed families, the stepmother is often considered wicked or bad if she doesn't live up to expectations that outsiders have of her in terms of parenting her stepchildren. She also feels that stepmothers are often coerced into actions they don't wish to perform, such as having the spouse's children come and live with the family, to avoid being stereotyped as the "wicked stepmother." Resentment about being coerced into this behavior therefore becomes another barrier to successful adaptation.

Schulman referred to the second myth, that of "instant love," as occurring between stepparent and stepchild. It follows that the same myth could be applied to stepsiblings also. She feels that reconstituted families are often characterized by stepsibling conflicts that are frequently exacerbated by the parents' persistent distinction and comparison of "yours" and "mine."

Schulman sees great value in pre-remarital therapy as a device to minimize potential problems in the adaptation of the reconstructed family. The best preventative approach, according to Schulman, is to work on exploding some of these myths before the remarriage takes place. Barring that, therapy in the early stages of family adaptation after the remarriage is desirable.

Schulman's observations about the adaptation of stepfamilies were derived not from empirical research but from her personal observation and experience as a clinician. Generalizations that she made, therefore, have no basis in empirical fact. Her concept of stepfamily
functioning is decidedly a deficit one. This is understandable, since healthy stepfamilies usually do not seek therapy.

Her analysis of stepsibling functioning, which is most relevant to the proposed study, assumed that usually stepsibling functioning is poor because of parental shortcomings. An example of this is the parent who claims "My children are more intelligent or talented than yours" to the other parent. It may also be the case that there are factors besides stepparental characteristics that actually do make stepsiblings close, even when parents compare negatively. Even Schulman's article, as enlightening as it is in recommending either pre-remarital therapy or therapy in the early stages of reintegration, does not explore stepsibling relationships, and simply assumes a deficit stance when briefly discussing them.

Bowerman and Irish (1962) while studying relationships between stepparents and children, found some evidence of hostility between stepsiblings. The study was conducted in Washington State (stepchild N=572), North Carolina (stepchild N=710), and Ohio (stepchild N=722). A scale was used to determine parent-child adjustment; some inferences about stepsibling relationships can, however, be made from these data.

For example, children felt that their stepparent discriminated against them in favor of their own children; stepparents of the opposite sex were especially suspect. Stepchildren of all families felt that stepmothers discriminated more than stepfathers.

Although it is possible, it is unlikely that one would have a close, loving relationship with a stepsibling whom one perceives to be receiving preferential treatment from a natural parent. Stepsibling functioning is likely to be poor in these families.
Probably the most enlightening study completed to date which included the subject of stepsibling relationships was done by Fishman and Hamel (1981). These investigators focused on how stepfamilies function and the change in ideology between nuclear and stepfamilies. The sample was comprised of 16 families which were recruited through self-help groups, through a snowball sample and through clergy.

Fishman and Hamel raised some intriguing questions on how the issue of territoriality influenced stepsibling relationships. In one stepfamily, a mother with two daughters moved into the new husband's home, and in so doing, displaced the husband's son from his bedroom into an unfamiliar room in the basement. One of the new daughters expressed feeling like an intruder, and of feeling unhappy about the necessity of the stepbrother moving out of his room. The stepbrother, as perceived by the girls, was "still mad at us."

Concern about money was an issue. One respondent expressed resentment toward her new stepsister because the stepsister was more well-off than the respondent was. This stepsister was the stepmother's daughter and was therefore also being supported financially by a non-custodial father. The stepsister had frequent vacations to Europe and this caused resentment and conflict for the respondent.

Not all of the experiences reported in this study were negative. For example, a young teenage girl expressed delight at having a stepsibling her own age; the respondent was especially glad to have a companion and friend after having lived as an only child in a single parent family for several years. A teenage boy was glad to acquire not one but three stepsiblings. He gained an older stepbrother and expressed happiness at having an older brother who became a role model
he could respect. Some children expressed displeasure with being in a single parent family and were glad to relinquish exclusive relationships with a single parent in order to acquire stepsiblings.

The biggest criticism of Fishman and Hamel's work doubtless stems from problems with the sample. First of all, the sample size was only 16 families, and the population from which it was drawn was not clearly defined. Thus, results cannot be generalized. Secondly, much of their sample was generated from individuals in marriage and family therapy.

One suspects also a bias in favor of high socioeconomic status among the respondents, since ten of the families had financial resources sufficient to send their children to private schools and several were able to afford private counseling. The respondents were also different from the ever divorced population, having stayed in their first marriages an average of 11.5 years for the women and 12.5 years for the men. This is in contrast with the average for all divorced women as well as all divorced men of seven years (Glick, 1980).

The claim of longitudinality by Fishman and Hamel is somewhat suspect. Although information concerning first measures was given, no information concerning future measures of analysis was offered. Finally, although researchers interviewed families, the research results were given in anecdotal form rather than being subjected to more precise statistical analysis. This is perhaps the case due to the small number of respondents in the study, or because an open-ended interview format was used. Therefore, it becomes difficult to obtain a clear picture of actually how well or how poorly stepsiblings or other family members related to each other.
In spite of the problems, Fishman and Hamel's study is probably the first one to investigate how stepfamilies function by actually asking the individuals themselves. It is perhaps the only study of stepsibling relationships to use direct observation and actual questioning of the stepsiblings.

The dearth of literature on stepsibling relationships was never more clearly illustrated than in the special issue of *Family Relations*, published in 1984, which had remarriage as its focal point. Not a single article even broached the subject of stepsibling relationships, let alone had this important area as its focus. Although Baptiste (1984) briefly discussed sibling relationships, he mentioned only half-sibling relationships and described only the problems that may exist between half-siblings. In a review of literature concerning the effects of remarriage on children, Ganong and Coleman (1984) found only one article out of 37 that even mentioned stepchildren relationships. This article was the one written by Duberman (1973) and discussed earlier.

Although research exists concerning how well siblings interact and what types of interactions they have depending on the gender of the siblings, (Koch 1954, 1955), as well as how children are socialized, no such research exists concerning stepsiblings. Block (1982) maintains that girls, for example, are socialized more into using assimilative techniques for adapting to change, whereas boys use more accommodating techniques. In simplified terms, boys are more likely to incorporate change into their behaviors, whereas girls are more likely to try to manipulate the environment in an attempt to reduce demands for change. Research on whether these specific techniques are also used in stepfamilies has not been performed.
A similar state of affairs exists concerning birth order or family constellation. Much research has been performed concerning birth order and its effects on sibling relationships.

Adler (1928), for example, was interested in birth order as it pertained to the issue of dethronement. Initially, the oldest child has a monopoly on the parents and is dethroned when the next sibling arrives. This new sibling never has a monopoly on the parents, but like the firstborn, is dethroned upon the arrival of another sibling. Assuming that the third child is the youngest, s/he then has a monopoly on the parents, but at a different stage in the life span than the first born. Naturally, being the youngest, s/he is not dethroned from this position.

According to Adler, the two main components of this theory are the notions of monopolization and dethronement. Using these concepts, he maintains that the oldest and youngest are quite alike in terms of a monopoly of parents. The oldest and middle are somewhat alike in terms of their both experiencing a dethronement of sorts; Adler posits that this dethronement is much more traumatic for the oldest child because s/he has historically enjoyed a monopoly of the parents that the middle child did not enjoy. The only child experiences all the privileges of monopoly and none of the anxiety of dethronement. Adams (1972) provided a clearer picture of the above information in table form (see Table 1).
Table 1
Monopoly of Parents' Attention and Dethronement by Ordinal Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ordinal position</th>
<th>Monopoly on Parents</th>
<th>Dethronement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oldest</td>
<td>Yes (early childhood)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngest</td>
<td>Yes (late teenage)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adler did not address the issue of dethronement among stepsiblings. One wonders whether or not an oldest child experiences anxiety if dethroned from the ordinal position of first born when entering a stepfamily the way an oldest child experiences dethronement in a nuclear family. The anxiety of dethronement may be more traumatic for the oldest entering a stepfamily, since s/he has now had to overcome dethronement twice. It may be equally traumatic for the youngest, who having been accustomed to a monopoly on the parents and not being dethroned, is faced perhaps with the loss of that monopoly and potential dethronement when the natural parent remarryes.

Summary

To summarize then, it seems clear that there is a paucity of research concentrating on stepsibling relationships. Duberman (1973) studied stepsibling relationships by asking the parents to assess the relationships between children in the family. Schulman (1972) briefly discussed stepsibling relationships from a deficit standpoint. Another focus of her article was the use of therapy as a prevention for problems
and as an enhancement for integrating stepfamilies more successfully. Bowerman and Irish (1962), in their investigation of stepparent-stepchild relationships, found indications of negative affect between stepsiblings. Fishman and Hamel (1981) discussed the shift in ideology from nuclear to stepfamily. Included in this literature were examples of the nature of stepsibling relationships, as reported by the stepsiblings themselves.

Research by Koch (1954, 1955) investigated how well natural siblings interact, and how gender tempers the interactions. Block (1982) was concerned about how gender affects the socialization of children and the socialization techniques that children use.

Investigations of birth order and its effect on socialization were discussed. Adler (1928) was primarily interested in the issue of dethronement and how it affected children's relationships.

In conclusion, it is clear from the literature review that there are considerable problems with both the quantity and quality of research concerning stepsibling relationships. The quantity deficit is obvious from the fact that only one study has even considered stepsibling relationships at all (Fishman & Hamel, 1981). Even this study's focus was not on stepsibling relationships but on the change in ideology between nuclear and stepfamilies. Problems in research quality stem from nonrepresentative samples, samples that are too small and methodology that is often indirect and therefore oftentimes misleading.

The proposed study will attempt to rectify these shortcomings by employing a larger sample size which is not derived from a clinical population. Instead of indirect observation, direct questioning of the
unit of analysis, the stepsibling, will be employed. A deficit preconception of stepsibling relationships will be avoided. The results of the study will be presented in a statistical form, rather than an anecdotal one. Through this exploratory study, the area of stepsibling research will be more thoroughly assessed. This study will contribute substantially to the small extant body of literature on stepsibling relationships, and will hopefully spur other researchers to broaden the literature also.
Sample

A purposive sample was used since the parameters of the remarried population have not yet been established. Respondents were males and females ranging in age from 18 to 25. They either currently live or have lived in a reconstituted family with stepsiblings. Respondents could have had stepsiblings who came and visited a parent who lived in the same home as the respondent; those respondents were defined as having transient stepsiblings. Conversely, the respondents themselves may have been transient stepsiblings who made visits to an absent, noncustodial parent. Only one individual per family was asked to participate.

The sample was generated in two ways: first, from students who took introductory classes in Sociology and in Family and Human Development at Utah State University during the fall and winter quarter of the 1984-85 academic year. Secondly, through names suggested by county Extension agents in four Western states: Utah, Idaho, Oregon and Arizona.

A total of ten introductory classes were visited, seven in the Department of Family and Human Development, and three in the Sociology Department. A brief explanation of the study was made, along with a description of who specifically was invited to participate. A sign-up sheet was circulated for potential respondents to sign.

In the four Western states selected for the study, state directors for Extension were contacted. A description of the study, as well as who was eligible to participate was given. Permission was requested from the state directors for the researchers to contact individual
county agents and request that they submit the names of two or more individuals they knew who were eligible for the study.

When the lists of county agents were received, a letter was mailed to them explaining the nature of the research (see Appendix A) as well as a form (see Appendix B) with space for the names of two or more individuals whom the agent thought were eligible for inclusion in the sample. Using this multistep method, a potential sample size of 150 respondents was generated.

**Pilot Test and Validity**

An 18 page survey, printed on one side of the paper, was pilot tested in the spring of 1983 and then was modified. Only one question, number 12a and 12b (see Appendix C) was added to the pilot questionnaire. Several pages of questions regarding the level and direction of change in the relationship were removed since they were not responded to in the pilot test. Some small modifications in the wording of questions were made, for example, in question 3 the space for number of months was added so we could compute the ages in months. This would give a more accurate determination of the interval between marital disruption and remarriage. The pilot test generated a response rate of 80 percent.

Since the sample was a purposive one, the issues of external validity and generalizability were raised. However, due to the exploratory nature of the study, possible problems surrounding generalizability would not likely pose a serious threat to the findings. The problem of face validity was minimized by the utilization of the pilot test; items that were deemed to have less face validity were removed from the final version of the survey instrument.
Measurement

The data were gathered by means of a mailed-out questionnaire. The questionnaire was printed on buff colored paper and consisted of 7 pages, printed on both sides. It included 36 open- and closed-ended questions. The closed-ended questions were usually in the form of a 7 point Likert scale. The open-ended questions asked for elaborations of the immediately previous response to a closed-ended question.

Reliability

Reliability in the study was addressed by computing Cronbach's alpha coefficient of reliability on all four subcomponents of the dependent variable, the A score. The reliability coefficient was calculated at .72. The researchers deemed this a sufficiently strong correlation to utilize all the subcomponents to comprise the dependent variable.

Procedures

When names of individuals were recommended and the ten introductory classes had been visited, a list of respondent names was compiled and a survey package was sent to each respondent. A cover letter (Appendix D) included the following information: an explanation of the study and why it was being conducted, the name of the individual who recommended the respondent, an estimate of how long it would take to complete the survey. Finally, respondents were assured anonymity if they participated. Also included in the survey package were an instruction sheet which included a list of definitions (Appendix E), a copy of the survey instrument, a stamped, addressed envelope in which to return the survey instrument and a numbered, stamped postcard. The respondents
were instructed to mail the questionnaire and the postcard back to us separately. In this way, the complete anonymity of the respondents was assured, since we were able to know who had responded but were unable to identify which survey instrument belonged to a particular subject.

This study was exempt from review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, as determined by the Office of Research at Utah State University (see Appendix F). The reasons for its exemption were as follows: subjects could not be identified through individual questionnaires; the subjects were not placed at either criminal or civil risk by the information they divulged; the research did not deal with sensitive aspects of the subject's behavior, such as alcohol or drug use, etc.

After two weeks a letter prompt was mailed to all non-respondents (see Appendix G). This letter prompt, less expensive than mailing out a second instrument, proved to be effective enough in the pilot sample to generate an additional 30 percent response over the initial 50 percent response. This letter prompt encouraged non-respondents to return their completed questionnaires and also included a time table indicating the date by which the researchers needed the instrument returned. The letter prompt generated an extra 20 percent response over the initial 45 percent return rate in the final study.

Data Reduction and Transformation

A codebook was created and the data were reduced and coded accordingly. Responses to open-ended questions were assigned a numerical value for coding purposes. Concerning the open-ended questions that were prioritized, the order of the numerical codes on the code sheet indicated the priority of the response. For example, in
question number 15c, the respondents were asked to rank their responses from most important to least important. On the code sheets that were used, the first column allotted for question number 15c indicated that that response was considered by the respondent to have the highest priority, the second column indicated the response with the second highest priority, and so on. When the coding of all survey instruments was completed, the data were entered onto the computer for analysis.

**Research Objectives**

Since so little is known concerning stepsibling relationships, this research was exploratory in nature. Thus, no hypotheses were offered; rather, a set of objectives was generated. The objectives were as follows:

Objective #1. To discover if the relationship between stepsiblings was affected by whether the respondent moved into the stepsibling home, or vice versa, or whether a new geographical setting was chosen for the establishment of the reconstructed family.

Objective #2. To determine if the length of time between widowhood/divorce and remarriage had an effect on stepsibling relationships.

Objective #3. To determine if positive affect for stepsiblings was affected by the gender of respondent.

Objective #4. To determine whether dethronement from the youngest or the oldest birth order position affected stepsibling relationships.
Analysis

The dependent variable utilized to meet all four objectives was a respondent's A score. This score was a mean of the following questions from the survey: number 10, number 14, and number 34. A mean score was used to include as many respondents as possible who had failed to provide scores for all four of the subcomponents of the A score. If a respondent provided answers for at least two of the four components, a mean of the responses was calculated and considered to be the respondent's A score. Individuals who answered at least two of the components were included in the analysis; individuals who answered one or none of the components were excluded from the study. Cronbach's alpha was computed for these questions. Since the alpha coefficient was .72, questions number 10, 14, and 34 were all included in determining the respondent's A score.

Responses to all of the questions comprised a seven-item Likert scale. In question number 10, there was a six category range of responses from "very happy" to "very unhappy" with a seventh category, "don't know," listed as a final alternative. Each category was assigned a numerical value as follows: +3 for "Very Happy," +2 for "Happy," +1 for "Somewhat Happy," -1 for "Somewhat Unhappy," -2 for "Unhappy," and -3 for "Very Unhappy."

Responses to question 14 ranged from "I liked them a lot" to "I didn't like them at all." The category "I don't know" was a final alternative. Each category was assigned a numerical value as follows: +3 for "I like them a lot," +2 for "I like them," +1 for "I liked them somewhat," -1 for "I didn't like them much," -2 for "I didn't like them," and -3 for "I didn't like them at all."
Similar numerical values were assigned to both parts of question 34, "happy" and "loving." Values were determined as follows: +3 for "quite happy" and for "quite loving," +2 for "happy" and for "loving," +1 for "somewhat happy" and for "somewhat loving," -1 for "somewhat unhappy" and for "somewhat unloving," -2 for "unhappy" and for "unloving," and -3 for "very unhappy" and for "quite unloving."

The independent variable for Objective 1 was location of residence at either the respondent's home, the stepfamily's home, or a neolocal residence. In Objective 2, the independent variable was the length of time measured in months that the individual spent in a single parent family. In Objective 3 the independent variable was the gender of the respondent. In Objective 4, there were two independent variables: having occupied the ordinal position in the natural family as the oldest child, or having occupied the ordinal position in the natural family as the youngest child.

The dependent variable was considered interval data given the combination of components to derive the A scores. Therefore, rather than conduct a separate analysis for Objectives 1, 2 and 3, the analysis of covariance for all three was conducted simultaneously. This would assure that each independent variable would be adjusted for all others to give the unique effect of each independent variable on the dependent one. The actual method of analysis would depend on the presence or absence of a natural distribution of A scores. Given the presence of a normal distribution, the analysis would be a straightforward analysis of covariance.

If a normal distribution of A scores was not evident, then the analysis of covariance would have been conducted using the program found
in SPSSX, but the F scores derived would have been disregarded. Instead, a new table of F scores would have been computer generated based on the actual distribution of the A scores. This new table would then have been utilized to interpret the results derived from the SPSSX program. The subvariables that were to be included in the primary analysis of covariance were as follows: objective number 1, gender and age; objective number 2, gender and age; objective number 3, age.

The analysis of objective number 4 would take the form of a one way analysis of variance using the Kruskal-Wallace nonparametric method, because of anticipations that groups might be small. Also, since it was expected that the individual cells would contain small numbers, no subvariables would be utilized.
Demographic Information

A total of 139 questionnaires were mailed out. Ninety of them were returned, yielding a return rate of 65 percent. Of the 90 survey instruments returned, 75 were usable. Instruments were excluded from the final analysis for one or more of the following reasons: if the respondents' parents were neither divorced nor widowed, if the respondents were not relating their own experiences as stepsiblings, if the respondents did not fill out the questionnaire themselves, if the respondents answered less than two of the subcomponents of the A score, if it was clear that respondents were referring to different remarried or blended families throughout the course of the questionnaire. There were 45 (60 percent) respondents from Utah, 13 (17.3 percent) from Idaho, Arizona and Oregon combined and 3 (4 percent) from other states. Respondents who did not identify their state of residence or for whom it was impossible to determine comprised 14 (18.7 percent) of the respondents.

There were 19 (25.3 percent) males and 56 (74.7 percent) females. Respondents stated their marital status as follows: married, 29 (38.7 percent); divorced 1 (1.3 percent); single, 45 (60.0 percent). The living arrangements of the respondents as children were as follows: with their unmarried mother, 10 (13.3 percent); with their unmarried father, 3 (4.0 percent); with their remarried mother and stepfather, 41 (54.7 percent) and with their remarried father and stepmother, 19 (25.3 percent). There were 2 (2.7 percent) non-responses to this question.
The mean age of the sample was 23.9 years. At the time of the family dissolution the mean age was 8.16 years, and the mean age of the respondents at the parental remarriage was 10.96 years.

With specific regard to the research objectives of the current study, 14 (18.7 percent) of the respondents had stepfamilies who moved into the respondent's home upon the parental remarriage, 17 (22.7 percent) moved into the home of the new stepparent, and 8 (10.7 percent) moved into a new home that neither family had previously occupied. Twenty-two (29.3 percent) of the respondents checked "other" as their residence location, while 14 (18.6) percent failed to respond.

The mean number of months spent in a single parent family was 33.48. There were only 2 (2.7 percent) respondents who said they were oldest, dethroned children and 4 (5.4 percent) respondents who said they were youngest dethroned children.

**Dependent Variable**

The A scores of the respondents were skewed to the left, indicating that they tended to cluster around the high end of the scale. However, it was determined that a normal distribution existed (see Figure 3). The mean A score for the sample was 1.144, with a minimum of -2.00 and a maximum of 3.00 (sd = 1.196).
Figure 3. Frequency distribution of sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNT</th>
<th>MIDPOINT</th>
<th>ONE SYMBOL EQUALS APPROXIMATELY</th>
<th>20 OCCURRENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-2.00</td>
<td>:****</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-1.75</td>
<td>:****</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>:****</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-1.25</td>
<td>:**<em>:</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1.00</td>
<td>:++++:*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.75</td>
<td>:++++:*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.50</td>
<td>:++++:*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>:++++:*</td>
<td></td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>:++++:*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>:++++:*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>:++++:*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>:++++:*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>:++++:*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>:++++:*</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>:++++:*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>:++++:*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of Residence Location, Time and Gender

The first three objectives, residence location of the newly constituted family, time that each respondent spent in a single parent family, and gender were all analyzed simultaneously using a two-way factorial analysis of covariance. This procedure assured that each independent variable was adjusted for all others so that the unique effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable was given.

Both the linear and curvilinear effect of months single (months the respondent spent in a single parent family) did not significantly affect the dependent variable, the A score [(F=.322 (df=1) p .573); (F=.489 (df=1) p .487); see Table 2]. The four groups of residence location did not differ significantly on the dependent variable (F=.181 (df=3)
p ≤ .908). The means for each of the various groups were as follows: group one (respondent's home), \( X = 1.01 \); group two (stepfamily's home), \( X = 1.18 \); group three (new residence location), \( X = 1.47 \); and group four ("other" response category), \( X = 1.18 \). Males and females also did not differ significantly on A score \( (F = .378 \text{ (df=1)} \ p \leq .541) \). The mean for males was 1.10 and the mean for females was 1.13. The difference between males and females on A score was constant across all four levels of residence location \( (F = .377 \text{ (df=3)} \ p \leq .769) \). Since no significant relationship was found between groups, no subvariable analysis was conducted for objectives one, two and three.

Table 2

Two Way Factorial Analysis of Covariance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>( f )</th>
<th>Significance of ( f )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MOSINGLE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.546</td>
<td>0.3226050</td>
<td>0.573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOSQ</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.829</td>
<td>0.4695875</td>
<td>0.487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESLOC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.308</td>
<td>0.1817191</td>
<td>0.908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEX</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.642</td>
<td>0.3789646</td>
<td>0.541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESLOC X SEX</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.640</td>
<td>0.3778521</td>
<td>0.769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESIDUAL</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1.693</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1.501</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

75 cases were processed; 17 cases (22.7 percent) were missing
Residence Location

The first research objective was to determine whether the location of the respondent's home would affect relationships with stepsiblings. The three location possibilities for the blended family's home were as follows: respondent's home, stepfamily's home, or a new home that no one in the blended family had previously occupied.

There was no relationship between residence location groups and A score. One might infer, therefore, that it really didn't matter where the blended family decided to set up residence. Twenty-two respondents checked "other" as their response to the question on residence location. Some provided further explanation about this, such as "When my father remarried, I went to live with my grandmother." Most did not, thus the salience of this variable might be lessened due to those respondents who chose "other" as their residence location post-parental remarriage, but did not to elaborate.

Residence Location and Feelings Towards Stepsiblings

Replies from five respondents concerning their stepsiblings and living with them indicated feelings of "lack of privacy" or "invasion of territory." For example, direct responses included "I felt intruded upon. My privacy was invaded by my stepsister who lived with us."

For three respondents, problems arose over differences in values and moral behavior, such as different sexual mores and drug taking behaviors. Two other respondents expressed resentment towards new stepsiblings because of a perceived loss of friends and the imposition on respondents' social lives by the stepsiblings.
Although these numbers appear small, there was a substantial number
of different responses (17) that were coded for this question.
Therefore, for more than one person to respond in a similar manner
is noteworthy, because of the large number of response categories and
a sometimes large number of non-responses.

Positive Feelings about
New Residence Location

Not all the feelings about residence location were negative. For
two respondents, moving into a new neutral residence location or the
home of the stepparent posed no problem because in these cases it was a
step up from their previous socioeconomic status. These subjects
expressed pleasure at the remarriage because the family was now better
off financially.

The above respondents, who perceived their parent's remarriage as
materially advantageous and who moved into more affluent surroundings,
scored both low and high on A scores. One other respondent, who found
living conditions crowded with the arrival of new stepfamily members
with the blending of stepfamilies, scored high on the A score.
Apparently variables other than residence location affect stepsibling
relationships.

Analysis of Months in a
Single Parent Family

Since no significant differences were found using the analysis of
covariance, further analysis was conducted using the variable months in
a single parent family because of a seeming trend noted on the scatter
plot of A score by months single. The A scores generally increased as
months spent in a single parent family increased (see Figure 4).
Figure 3. Plot of A score with months single
Effect of Months Spent in Single Parent Families on Stepsibling Relationships

As indicated previously, the average time that elapsed before parental remarriage occurred was 33.48 months. The initial analysis revealed there was no difference in A score relative to the time spent in a single parent family. Although no significant differences were discovered, there did appear to be a trend toward those respondents with higher A scores having lived for a longer period of time in a single parent family. Expressions of happiness typically were indicated by respondents who had lived in single parent families for six years and longer. Such expressions focused on sentiments of knowing that the stepparent needed companionship and feelings of gladness that the parent had found someone to be loved by and to love.

To examine the possible positive relationships, individuals were divided into one of three groups according to their A score. Scores for the low group ranged from -2.00 to .50 (N=22). Scores for the middle group ranged from .67 to 1.50 (N=23). Scores for the high group ranged from 1.75 to 3.00 (N=26).

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted between months single and A score, with A score being broken into three groups as described above. The mean number of months spent in a single parent family for each of the groups was as follows: group one, 26.46 (sd=27.28); group two, 32.04 (sd=34.02); group three, 40.27 (sd=40.80). There were no significant differences between groups (F=.95 (df 2, 1165.01), p ~ .38; see Table 3).
Table 3
One Way Analysis of Variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
<th>Probability</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1165.0114</td>
<td>.9578</td>
<td>.3888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2274.2426</td>
<td>1.8698</td>
<td>.1760</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weighted linear term</td>
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<td>2303.0561</td>
<td>1.8935</td>
<td>.1733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quad. term</td>
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<td>26.9668</td>
<td>.0222</td>
<td>.8821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>68</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents' Gender and Stepsibling Relationships

The third objective attempted to determine whether gender had an effect on an individual's A score. In the analysis there were no significant differences in terms of A score. Proportionately, however males were slightly over-represented at the extremes of A scores, and more than slightly underrepresented in the middle group A scores. In the lowest group there were 8 males, in the middle group 4, and in the highest group, 7.

Analysis of Dethronement

The analysis between oldest dethroned respondents and youngest dethroned respondents and A score was conducted using a Kruskal-Wallace one-way analysis of variance. The Kruskal-Wallace statistic was used because of the small number of respondents who fell into these
categories. There were no significant differences between groups on A score. However, a strong, nonsignificant trend was noted ($X^2=3.529$ (df=1) $p \sim .06$). If groups had been larger, a more accurate picture might have emerged and a significant difference might have been found.

There were four youngest dethroned respondents and two oldest dethroned subjects. The two oldest respondents scored in the highest group of A scores. Three of the youngest children scored in the middle group and the last youngest respondent scored the lowest A score of all 75 respondents.

**Feelings Concerning Dethronement**

The dethronement issue seemed more important to the individuals in the youngest group. Two of them stated that they still retained the trait of "youngest", even though they both had younger stepsiblings. Both of them stated they didn't really lose the trait of "youngest", they just shared it with their new younger stepsibling.

The oldest respondents stated more nonchalant feelings concerning their dethronement. One oldest male stated it really didn't matter that his stepsister was the oldest. The other stated that losing his trait as the oldest was "no big deal".

**Feelings About Parental Remarriage**

The question concerning feelings about parental remarriage, which was one of the scales in the A score, was followed by an open-ended question asking respondents to clarify their response on the scale. A decision was made to analyze these responses to obtain further insight into stepsibling adjustment to remarriage. Responses were analyzed dividing respondents into two groups.
Responses from individuals who were in the lowest A score group indicated a possible link between scores on the earlier component scales that comprised the A score and whether or not parents discussed remarriage plans with their children. Thus, an ANOVA compared respondents who indicated their parent had discussed remarriage plans with them and respondents who reported their parent merely informed them they had married or planned to be married. The component scales one and two of the A score were as follows: feelings at parental remarriage, feelings toward new stepsiblings at remarriage.

The one-way ANOVA results ($F=3.52$ (df 2, 57), $p \leq .03$) indicated that there was a significant difference between the two groups. It should be noted that since a subcomponent of the A score was used here both responses had to be present to complete the ANOVA. This is why the number of cases decreased from $N=75$ to $N=58$ with df being 2 and 57. Those whose parents discussed marriage plans and asked respondents how they felt about it had significantly more positive scores on component scales of the A score than did those who were not told or who were merely informed that their parent would remarry. Thus, more positive feelings about parental remarriage and towards stepsiblings resulted when children were included in the remarriage decision-making process and actual planning for the remarriage.

**Loving Relationships Between Stepsiblings**

A second one-way ANOVA was completed that compared the same two groups, those who were or were not involved in parental remarriage plans on the third and fourth components of the A score, feelings of liking and loving for stepsiblings. The ANOVA ($F=2.85$, (df=2, 63), $p \leq .06$)
revealed a strong but nonsignificant relationship with more positive loving and liking scores for those whose parents talked with respondents before the decision to remarry was made and included respondents in the process.

As suggested in the above analysis, the total N involved was less than in the larger analysis of the study because a mean was calculated for the missing data in analyses that involved the four subcomponent A score. This could not be done when only two subcomponents were used.

Thus, an important element which appeared to contribute to positive stepsibling adjustments after parental remarriage was inclusion in the parental decision to remarry. Including children in the remarriage decision had more value as a process variable than an outcome one.
Residence Location and Stepsibling Relationships

Residence location itself had no discernible effect on stepsibling relationships for this sample. This does not necessarily rule out the possibility that other factors concerning residence location may be relevant to the dependent variable. For example, rather than residence location alone, perceptions about the move and its financial implications may be important. A step up financially may provide a more positive environment for establishing stepsibling relationships. Feelings of comfort and ease in the new home may also directly affect the feelings of affinity with stepfamily members. If an individual feels like a stranger, or always has to ask permission to use certain things such as the television or stereo, then the development of feelings of closeness towards new stepsiblings may be marred.

Another important issue related to the above is the actual allocation of physical resources. Having to give up one's room or furnishings can cause resentment towards the receiver. Such feelings of resentment can impair the establishment of positive affect for stepsiblings. Having to share such resources with an individual who has radically differing social values and customs is likely to put a strain on a relationship that under the best of circumstances may not be good. These findings support the findings of Fishman and Hamel (1981).

The issue of choice may also be important. Being able to choose or at least give input into the decision about where the new family should live could create or enhance the bonding necessary to establish good
stepsibling relationships. This could occur through all family members excitedly anticipating a new abode and also by removing possible nostalgic or painful memories associated with the previous home.

**Months Spent in Single Parent Families**

A slight trend was found between the number of months in a single parent family and A score. A possible explanation can be found in investigating the characteristics of respondents found in lengthy single parent families.

As has been stated by the respondents themselves, many of them were old enough to realize that their parent was lonely and needed a new companion. Therefore, if it made the parent happy, it made them happy also. This feeling of happiness for the parent and toward the stepparent for making the parent happy may also have extended to the stepsibling relationship. Since formal operations and abstract thinking are not able to be established until pre-adolescence and are probably not firmly established until several years later (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958), these older respondents were more likely to be able to think abstractly about their parent's remarriage and assess stepsibling relationship in a logical way rather than an emotional one, assuming they had indeed achieved a formal operational level of cognitive functioning. Issues of territoriality, feelings of competition and jealousy may all have been abrogated in favor of the parent's feelings; they may also have been less prevalent among this group simply because they ceased to be issues after a certain age.

Parents of these older respondents may also have felt that, since their children were older at the time of the parent's remarriage, it was
more likely that their children would be able to understand if they knew about an impending remarriage, and therefore informed them. As well as merely being informed, the respondents may actually have been included in the decision making process and been actively requested to provide input. This brings into play the quality of the parent-child relationship. If the parent-child relationship was a poor one, parents may not have requested feedback or informed their offspring, regardless of the children's ages. Indeed, the quality of the parent-child relationship could have a direct impact on stepsibling relationships. Nurturing support from parents when there are troubles may help smooth over stepsibling difficulties. Being happy for the parent upon remarriage may override children's personal feelings of unhappiness. Alternately, a child may have a positive relationship with the parent and may be unwilling to share such a relationship with stepsiblings.

Living in a single parent family for a long time period does not always mean that children are older. If a child is particularly young at the time of the marital dissolution, s/he could still be young, say 10 years old or younger, when the parent remarries. The quality of the parent-child relationship is especially important in these remarriages because the child is unable to abstract, and may be called upon to provide input or be informed about the marriage less often than older adolescents or young adult children.

Gender and Stepsibling Relationships

There seems to be little that can be stated or inferred about the differences between males and females in the study. The findings suggest that it seems unimportant to compare the two types of learning
and coping mechanisms that childhood researchers have delineated: assimilation and accommodation. It has been conceptualized that girls use assimilative techniques and boys use accommodative ones. In the present study, it seems that neither one produces a distinct advantage over the other in terms of successful stepfamily and stepsibling socialization. One possibility is that whatever differences occur between males and females in terms of solving problems or coping are washed out as both groups mature. Therefore, as adults, or at least as adults looking retrospectively at their childhood experiences, little difference remains in behavioral style.

If one could accurately assess the feelings of adjustment and stepsibling affect of children, then one would have a better idea of whether differences do occur between males and females. Since it is problematic to assess children's feelings given the concrete nature of childhood thought, it seems unlikely that such differences between the sexes will be able to be determined.

Dethronement

The oldest dethroned respondents were less likely to want to hold onto their trait of oldest than were the youngest, who seemed quite determined to not give up their trait as "the baby." It may be that, generally speaking, the ordinal position of oldest is perceived as less valuable by children. For example, traditionally, oldest children may be called upon to perform more services and enjoy fewer privileges than younger children. Some of these services may be tending smaller children and performing household tasks for a parent, especially in a single parent family where the custodial parent is employed full or part
time. Acquiring an older sibling may shift responsibility from the respondent onto the new oldest child of the blended family. A release from responsibility would therefore ensue. Youngest children, however, are naturally never called on to tend younger siblings, and may be perceived as being too young to perform household tasks, given the presence of older siblings who may be looked upon as being more responsible. Therefore, being dethroned from the youngest birth order position may be perceived as being dethroned from a position of privilege, rather than a position of responsibility. Thus, the youngest birth order position may be seen as being worthy of holding on to; hence the insistence upon the sharing of the youngest trait by some respondents and the relatively nonchalant relinquishing of the oldest trait by respondents who were oldest children before remarriage.

Middle children, not having to face the issue of dethronement at all in reconstituted family may be less troubled by stepsibling relationships. Curiously enough, they may theoretically acquire the status of youngest or oldest child in blended families depending on which siblings live with which parent. It would be interesting to discover whether or not such acquisition of roles is more or less stressful than the loss of roles. There is some literature to suggest that acquiring new roles outweighs any stress which might arise from role accumulation (Sieber, 1974). In any event, future research at least points to including comparisons of oldest, middle and youngest children in stepsibling adjustments.
Implications for Therapy

Given the positive trend of better adjustment and affect toward stepsiblings as evidenced by A score and longer periods of time spent in a single parent family, the thrust in therapy would be to counsel couples not to enter second and subsequent marriages hastily. The other important point that therapists should remember is that children usually have better stepsibling relationships if they are informed beforehand of the impending remarriage. Probably more important than being informed about the marriage is for the children involved to perceive that their opinions and their feelings count in the parental decision. The opportunity to give feedback seems to be the critical factor. Therefore, therapists are urged to encourage their clients to include all offspring in the remarriage decision making process.

It is well understood by the researcher that many problems in stepfamilies arise after the remarriage has taken place. Therefore, the ideal time for therapeutic intervention is the pre-remarital therapy phase. During this time, the children should be allowed and encouraged to give feedback concerning the remarriage. If conflicts concerning the natural parents' divorce are unresolved, this would be an ideal time for intervention so that children don't take unnecessary anxieties into the new family. Relationships between all potential new members of the family can and should be enhanced by the introduction of all family members to each other. Institution of bonding activities may be established through mutual family events that include stepsiblings. When the time is optimal, further programs such as "Caring Days", which involves the performing of small, specific, positive behaviors on the part of family members to each other, may be introduced.
Given the fact that many individuals and families do not seek therapy until a full fledged crisis has erupted, it may be that pre-remarital therapy may not be sought by many couples. Therefore, the optimum time for intervention may actually have passed before help is sought. Thus, the possibility of including some of the above suggestions in divorce therapy becomes the next best alternative. Naturally, some of the suggestions will not be able to be implemented during this time. For example, asking the children for feedback, introducing them to the would-be stepfamily and instituting Caring Days activities would be irrelevant for the family of a divorcing adult who has not yet found a future spouse. However, some of the suggestions can be modified to be included in divorce therapy. The divorcing parent with custody of children should be advised of the sound mindedness of informing and eliciting feedback from their children concerning a new spouse. They should be advised that hasty marriages and uninformed children may be the precursors of unhappy relationships and poor adjustment and a potential divorce.

Therapists may want to take into consideration the results of the study when counseling clients concerning remarriage and stepsibling relationships. For example, practitioners would want to bring out the unimportance of being too concerned about which of their children would adjust better to stepsiblings, based solely on their gender. The same holds true for establishing the blended family's residence. Advice should be given concerning the length of time children have spent in single parent families and how that may affect adjustment.

Finally, clients should be made aware that youngest children potentially have more problems adjusting if their status as youngest is
threatened. This may be countered in stepfamilies where both youngest children are close in age and the stepfamily accepts the status of both children as the youngest.

Therapists should be aware of the potential problems that may impact stepsibling relationships and adjustment. They should also be aware of the optimum times of intervention and the appropriate strategies to use at each optimum time for each situation.

Limitations to the Study

The limitations of the study stem primarily from the sample. Since the majority of the respondents were from the western United States, this study is generalizable to that geographical section of the United States only. Approximately 40 of the usable instruments were from Utah respondents. Many of the respondents may belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Just how many do is impossible to determine. Whether an actual bias exists or not is unknown, since we are not able to assume that a Utah postmark denotes a born and bred Utahn or Latter-Day Saint, any more than an Idaho or Oregon postmark denotes a non Latter-Day Saint. Utah State University was used as a potential source of respondents and students attending Utah State University may have been born and raised in any state of the Union, but have been classified as a Utah respondent because of their postmark. Also, since this is a retrospective study, we investigated activities and feelings that occurred in some cases many years ago. Respondents' families may have moved homes frequently since the remarriage occurred; therefore, no inferences can be made about a respondent's experiential history from a current postmark.
Since the majority of the returns originated in the Intermountain West region of the United States, characteristics unique to this population may provide certain biases. Again, though to what extent regional biases occur is not obvious. There may be a predisposition towards having experienced a rural upbringing or having had a family of origin dissolve through divorce, since this region is predominantly rural and has the highest crude divorce rate in the United States.

The potential for a biased sample exists in this study the same as it does in virtually all studies. What effects this may have had on the outcome of the research are unclear.

Another bias involves the ratio of females to males, which in this study is about 3:1. Ideally, one would prefer to have females and males each comprise half of the sample.

Retrospective studies are often criticized from a methodological standpoint. Critics claim that data gathered from retrospective studies reflect distortions of perception over time and selective amnesia and remembering. This may or may not be true depending upon the respondent in question. Critics herald the investigation of phenomena at the time the experiences occur.

This approach provides its own set of problems relevant to this study. Many of the respondents were young children at the time of their parents' remarriage. As already stated, they may be at a concrete level of cognitive functioning, and therefore very limited in their ability to express certain opinions or ideas. Another problem relates to the specific time that children are questioned. If asked on a certain day how they like their stepsiblings, they may respond negatively because of
a recent stepsibling squabble. On the other hand, a positive response might be given if the stepsibling had recently offered to share candy or play a game.

Obviously there are problems inherent in research conducted on subjects while phenomena are occurring as well as in retrospective studies. However, given the nature of this research and the ages of the respondents, a retrospective study offers the best approach.

The most obvious biases are therefore ones pertaining to geography, gender and arguments that one may make concerning retrospective studies in general. These factors may affect the generalizability of the study.

**Implications for Future Research**

Considerations for future research have been implied elsewhere. One of these considerations is the need to determine the significance of months in a single parent family as an independent variable. Another consideration is assessing the impact of discussing the impending remarriage with the children. Whether or not this variable can stand on its own as an independent variable or whether it is more important as an intervening variable will be important to discover. Related to the concept of informing the children is the age of the child at the time of the parental remarriage and whether or not months in a single parent family is related to a combination of the previous two variables. The importance of the quality of the parent-child relationship should be assessed as a determining factor in the informing of children about impending remarriage.
Any future research concerning stepsiblings should make scrupulous effort to establish that the respondent is disclosing the same parent's remarriage throughout the questionnaire. Given that remarriages fail at rates higher than do first remarriages, many individuals find themselves faced with serial sets of stepparents, stepsiblings and blended families. In this study, it was not uncommon for respondents to reply to the same question more than once, with comments such as "father's first remarriage" and "father's second remarriage," or "mother's remarriage" and "father's remarriage," or even combinations of the above. When such comments were added, it was easy to determine which response it was necessary to code. However, the possibility exists that respondents may have switched back and forth from one set of reconstituted family relationships to another when answering different questions, without divulging that they had done so. However, it does not seem to be a strong possibility here since respondents often took care to make clear to which remarriage they were referring.

Along a similar vein, there were individuals, not included in the analysis, who were anxious to tell us about the divorce, subsequent remarriage and roles as stepparents of themselves, their brother, sister or whomever, while realizing they were not eligible for the study. Apparently the mere mention of a study on stepsibling relationships was enough of a stimulus for some individuals to want to disclose the experiences of themselves and others in a stepfamily to us. For these reasons, using an interview format rather than a mailed out questionnaire would be more beneficial. This would eliminate possible
confusion, however small, about which stepfamily's relationships were being investigated, as well as establishing respondent eligibility for the study being conducted.

Conclusion

In conclusion, recommendations for future research include the following:

1. Assess the significance of the independent variable months in a single parent family, especially as it relates to the respondent's age when the parent remarries.

2. Determine the effect of whether or not children are informed about parental remarriage as a variable separate from months in a single parent family. Is being informed about parental remarriage more important as an independent variable or an intervening variable in relationship to the dependent variable of affect for stepsiblings?

3. Assess the quality of the parent-child relationship and how it affects the decision making process as well as stepsibling relationships.

4. Stepsibling research will be enhanced through the use of the interview format rather than a mail-out questionnaire. This will better insure that respondents are referring to the same blended family each time they respond to the survey. Also, eligibility can thus be determined at the beginning of the interview. Expense, obviously, will have a direct impact on the feasibility of the interview format.
5. Increase the geographical boundary of the population so that potential biases pertaining to certain geographical settings are reduced or eliminated.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
Appendix A
Dear [salutation]

I am Sharyn Crossman, an assistant professor of family and human development, in the Department of Family and Human Development, at Utah State University and I need your help.

We who study and work with America’s families need all the good, fact-based information we can get to help families live better lives. I was recently awarded a grant by the Research Office at Utah State to study the relationship which develops between stepsiblings when divorced or widowed parents remarry.

I am developing a list of potential respondents in Utah, Idaho, Arizona and Oregon. Since Extension Agents are in contact with families on a daily basis, I felt that you would be in a particularly good position to know and be able to recommend two or more individuals in your area who you think would be willing to fill out and return a survey instrument.

I have already spoken with your program director, [variable name], and he has given the project his support. He felt you would be willing to cooperate. In return for your help, I will be mailing a summary of findings to your program leader when the project is completed which you may then use for program development and intervention. I will be using the data to publish several journal articles on stepsibling relationships in the coming years.

The kind of respondents I need are: males or females, aged 18 to 25, who are now living or have lived in a blended family where each member of the remarried couple had children from a former marriage. Please send the name of only one child per blended family. I will be looking at families where the stepsiblings lived together in the same household on a continuous basis or visited a remarried parent and interacted with stepsiblings on an intermittent basis.

If you know of any individuals who fit the above description and who you think will cooperate by taking about an hour of their time to fill out and return the survey, please supply the names and addresses on the form provided. Please mail back in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope by October 26.
Also, one more favor. Please indicate whether I have your permission to indicate to the individuals you have recommended that you gave me their names. If you feel comfortable about allowing me to use your name as a reference, please allow me to do so. Respondents are much more likely to respond and feel positive about being contacted if they know who recommended them.

May I thank you for your help and cooperation. I hope the findings from this project help you help families.

Sharyn M. Crossman, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Family and Human Development

SMC/s1c

Enclosure
Appendix B
(Please check one)

I give my permission _____ I do not give my permission _____ to use my name as the person who recommended the individuals below.

Reference: If you have granted permission, please complete the following:

Name: ______________________________
Address: ______________________________
______________________________

Individual #1: Name: ______________________________
Address: ______________________________
City, State, Zip: ______________________________

Individual #2: Name: ______________________________
Address: ______________________________
City, State, Zip: ______________________________

Additional Individuals:
Name: ______________________________
Address: ______________________________
City, State, Zip: ______________________________
Name: ______________________________
Address: ______________________________
City, State, Zip: ______________________________

Once again, many thanks.

Signature ____________________________ Date _________
STEPCHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS

Please answer all questions from #9 through #36 in terms of the first or only parent who remarried.

Demographic Information (please answer questions 1 through 9 in relation to yourself.)

1. Sex: Male__, Female__, Age as of your last birthday____ yrs and ____ months.

2. Present marital status: Married__Divorced__Widowed__Single__.

2a. Number of years of education completed____high school ____college

3. When my parent/s became widowed__,divorced__, I was ____ years and ____ months old.

When my parent remarried, (first parent to remarry) I was _____ years and ____ months old.

4. My permanent residence was with my
   ____ unmarried mother
   ____ unmarried father
   ____ remarried mother and stepfather
   ____ remarried father and stepmother

   a. Respondents who had divorced parents please continue on with question #5.

   b. Respondents whose parent was widowed please move to question #7.

5. Did you visit periodically with your other parent? Yes__, No__.

   If yes, continue with question #6, if no, move to question #7.
6. Was the parent with whom you visited
   _____ a. unmarried
   _____ b. remarried but without stepchildren in residence
   _____ c. remarried with stepchildren in residence

7. I have (indicate total number) brothers_____, sisters_____,
   (including step and half brothers and sisters).
   a. _____ brothers were natural, _____ sisters were natural.
   b. _____ brothers were step, _____ sisters were step.
   c. _____ brothers were half brothers, _____ sisters were
      half sisters.

8. My natural father's occupation is/was______________________
   (If applicable) My stepfather's occupation is/was___________
   __________________.
   My mother's occupation is/was__________________________
   (If applicable) My stepmother's occupation is/was____________
   __________________

9. What is the birth order of your natural brothers and sisters?
   (Please list from the oldest to the youngest and don't forget to
   include yourself.)

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10. How did you feel about your parent becoming remarried?
   ____ 6. Very happy
   ____ 5. Happy
   ____ 4. Somewhat happy
   ____ 3. Somewhat unhappy
   ____ 2. Unhappy
   ____ 1. Very unhappy
   ____ 0. Don't know

10a. Why did you respond as you did?

11. Did your parent discuss his/her remarriage with you before
    the event occurred? Yes___, No___, Unsure___.

11a. Please explain:
12. Did you have a chance to meet with your new stepbrothers and sisters before the marriage? Yes__, No__, Other__. Please explain:

12a. When your parents got remarried, did:
   _____ your stepfamily move into your home
   _____ you move into the home of your new stepparent
   _____ both families moved into a new home that neither family had occupied before
   _____ other (specify)

12b. How did you feel about these living arrangements?

13. What is the birth order of the stepbrothers and stepsisters with whom you live/lived?

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14. How did you feel about your new stepbrothers and sisters? On the whole:

_____ 6. I liked them a lot
_____ 5. I like them
_____ 4. I liked them somewhat
_____ 3. I didn't like them much
_____ 2. I didn't like them
_____ 1. I didn't like them at all
_____ 0. I don't know

14a. Why did you respond as you did?

15. After you lived with your stepbrothers and sisters for a while did your feelings towards them change? Yes___, No___, Unsure___.

If you answered yes to question #15, please move to #15a.
If you answered no or unsure to question #15, please indicate below why your feelings did not change or why you feel unsure. Then move on to question #18.

15a. About how many weeks (after you began living with your stepbrothers and sisters) passed before your feelings changed?

_____ weeks passed

15b. How did your feelings change

_____ I grew to like them a lot more

_____ I grew to like them more

_____ I grew to like them somewhat more

_____ I grew to like them somewhat less

_____ I grew to like them less

_____ I grew to like them a lot less

15c. What were the reasons for your change of feelings (Please list from most important (1) to least important (6)).

1.

2.
If you also had stepbrothers and stepsisters living with a parent you visited, please list their birth order below. If you did not visit, or there were no stepbrothers or sisters there please move on to question #17.

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17. What sort of relationship do you presently have with your stepbrothers and sisters? (First or only parent who remarried)

18. What sort of relationship do you presently have with your natural brothers and sisters?

19. Did/do you have stepbrothers and sisters who came/come for short visits?
   Yes__, No__. If no, move to #20a.
   a. If yes, how did/do you feel about this situation?
20. Did you make short visits to a parent and then return home?  
   Yes__, No__. If no, please move to #21.  
   a. If yes, how did you feel about this situation?

21. Did you have any chores or services you performed for the family  
   before your parent remarried? Yes__, No__. If no, please  
   move on to question #25. If yes, please continue with #22.  
22. What chore(s) or service(s) did you perform, or which was/were  
   considered yours to do?

23. When your parent remarried, did you lose your assigned task(s) to  
   a stepbrother__ or sister __, or retain the task(s) ____?  
   (Check one)

23a How did you feel about this?
24. In many families each child is known for some specific trait. For example, the oldest, the baby, the musical one, the athlete. Did you have such a trait identity? Yes__, No__, Unsure__. (Check one).
   If no, or unsure, please move on to #28. If yes, please continue with #25.

25. What was your identity trait? ________________________________

26. When your parent remarried did one of your stepbrothers or sisters become identified by your trait? Yes__, No__.  
   If no, please move to #28.  
   If yes, please move to #27.

27. How did you feel about this loss of your trait?

27a. Did you get a new identity trait? Yes__, No__.  
     Please explain.

27b. How did you feel about this?
Natural Brothers and Sisters

28. Did your relationship with your natural brothers and sisters change as a result of your stepbrothers' and sisters' presence?
   Yes____, No____, Only with some not others____, unsure____.

28a. Please explain.

29. When your parent was first remarried, how did you think your natural brothers and sisters felt about their stepbrothers and sisters?

30. How do you think your natural brothers and sisters feel about their stepbrothers and sisters at the present time?
31. How frequently do you interact with your natural brothers and sisters? (Interactions can include face to face contact, telephone calls, and/or mailed communication.)

___ never
___ daily
___ at least once per week
___ at least once every two weeks
___ at least once every three weeks
___ at least once every four weeks
___ less often than once a month. Please explain.

32. How frequently do you interact with your stepbrothers and sisters?
   (Interaction can include face to face contact, telephone calls, and/or mailed communication.)

___ never
___ daily
___ at least once per week
___ at least once every two weeks
___ at least once every three weeks
___ at least once every four weeks
___ less often than once a month. Please explain.
33. Overall, what was most positive and most negative about living with stepbrothers and sisters?
   Most positive.

   Most negative.

34. In general, my relationship with my stepbrothers and sisters has been? (Check one in each column please.)

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<tr>
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<th>6. quite happy</th>
<th>5. happy</th>
<th>4. somewhat happy</th>
<th>3. somewhat unhappy</th>
<th>2. unhappy</th>
<th>1. very unhappy</th>
<th>0. don't know</th>
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<td>somewhat unloving</td>
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<td>very unloving</td>
<td>don't know</td>
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35. In general, my relationship with my natural brothers and sisters has been? (Check one in each column please.)

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<td>somewhat unloving</td>
<td>unloving</td>
<td>very unloving</td>
<td>don't know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
36. Having lived in a family which was formed with the remarriage of your parent, how would you feel about raising your own children in such a blended family?

In order for us to have a better understanding of the relations between stepchildren, is there anything we did not ask you about which you think we should know? If so, please make your remarks below.

May we thank you very much for your help in our search to learn about relationships which develop after parents remarry.
Appendix D
Dear [Name],

I am an Assistant Professor of Family Relations in the Department of Family and Human Development at Utah State University and I need your help. I am doing a study on the relationships between stepchildren and a family relations professional in your area suggested that you might be willing to act as a respondent in this survey.

I would like to thank you in advance for your help. Your responses on the enclosed questionnaire will be invaluable to me in my search for an understanding of how stepfamily members relate. Since you experienced a parental remarriage at some point while you were growing up, you are a very special person with special information to share. At this point, no research has been completed on the relationships of stepbrothers and stepsisters. There is virtually no information about the interactions or feelings of this group of individuals. Therefore, I would appreciate it if you would be willing to share your experience and feelings with me.

Please be assured that everything you disclose will be held in strict confidence. Nothing you reveal will be identified with you in any way. These data will be analyzed by comparing groups to discover general trends. I would appreciate it if you would answer all questions as completely as you can. The findings from this study will be presented at professional meetings and in journals devoted to the study of and strengthening of families.

Please fill in the questionnaire and return it in the self-addressed, stamped envelope provided as soon as possible. If you have any questions call: Sharyn Crossman at (801) 750-1549.

Please return the completed questionnaire by February 20, 1985. Once again, many thanks!

Sincerely,

Sharyn Crossman, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Family and Human Development

SC/slc

Enclosures
Appendix E
Instructions for Respondents

Dear Respondent:

The following are some definitions that will help you in completing the survey instrument.

Stepbrother/sister: An individual who is related to you through the marriage of your parent to his or her parent. Thus, they are not blood related to you.

Half brother/sister: An individual who is related to you by blood because he or she and you have the same father or mother.

Natural brother/sister: An individual who has the same mother and father you have and is therefore blood related to you.

Parent with whom you lived: This is the parent you lived with most of the time and where you considered your primary residence to be located.

The enclosed post card is to allow you to let us know you've completed the survey without disclosing your identity. Just mail the survey and post card back separately. We can then check your number off the mailing list without having to know which survey instrument belongs to you.

Thank you.
Memorandum

TO: Dr. Sharyn Crossman and Sharon Cannon
FROM: Sydney Peterson
DATE: April 10, 1985
SUBJECT: Proposal Entitled, "Stepsibling Relationships after Parental Remarriage"

The above referenced proposal has been reviewed by this office and is exempt from further review by the Institutional Review Board. However, the IRB strongly recommends that you, as a researcher, maintain continual vigil of the importance of ethical research conduct. Further, while your research project does not require a signed informed consent, you should consider (a) offering a general introduction to your research goals, and (b) informing, in writing or through oral presentation, each participant as to the rights of the subject to confidentiality, privacy, or withdrawal at any time from the research experience.

The research activities listed below are exempt from IRB review based on HHS regulations published in the Federal Register, Volume 46, No. 16, January 26, 1981, p. 8387.

1. Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (a) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (b) instruction techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

2. Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), if information taken from these sources is recorded in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.
3. Research involving survey or interview procedures, except where all of the following conditions exist: (a) responses are recorded in such a manner that the human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, (b) the subject's responses, if they became known outside the research, could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject's financial standing or employability, and (c) the research deals with sensitive aspects of the subject's own behavior, such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol. All research involving survey or interview procedures is exempt, without exception, when the respondents are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office.

4. Research involving the observation (including observation by participants) of public behavior, except where all of the following conditions exist: (a) observations are recorded in such a manner that the human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, (b) the observations recorded about the individual, if they became known outside the research, could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject's financial standing or employability, and (c) the research deals with sensitive aspects of the subject's own behavior such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol.

5. Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological 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.

Your research is exempt from review based on exemption number 3.

Sydney Peterson
Staff Assistant
March 5, 1985

Dear [Name]:

As you know, I contacted you several weeks ago and asked for your help with a research project on stepsibling relationships. I realize the questionnaire you received contains many questions and will require some time for you to fill out, but I really need the information you have to share. Nobody else but you can give me the experiential information I need.

I would like the survey back by March 19th at the latest because I plan to analyze the data you hopefully will have supplied, and write a paper based on these data for presentation at the National Council for Family Relations Fall Meetings, which will deal with issues of family relationships after remarriage had occurred. Thus, you can see time is short, so if you could complete your questionnaire by March 19th I'd be very grateful.

If you have already completed the survey and it is in the mail, many thanks. If you have yet to complete it, please do so at your earliest opportunity and return the survey and post card separately.

Sincerely,

Sharyn M. Crossman, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Family and Human Development

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