Couples' Beliefs in Myths about Marriage and Remarriage

Susan A. Carter
Lee University

Michael Lane Morris and Priscilla W. Blanton
The University of Tennessee

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore what couples preparing to make the transition to marriage believe about marriage and remarriage. One-hundred couples making the transition to marriage from two Tennessee counties were surveyed. Data analyses revealed that the sample possessed beliefs in a variety of myths about marriage and remarriage. Further analyses revealed no significant gender or marital status differences in beliefs about marriage and remarriage. Implications for future family life education research and practice are discussed.

There is relatively little empirical data on the transition to marriage (Holman & Li, 1997; Huston, Surra, Fitzgerald & Cate, 1981; Larson, 1988). The majority of previous research exploring attitudes and beliefs about marriage has primarily included samples of college students or single adults rather than couples who are indeed in the process of making the transition to marriage (Carter & Morris, 1991; Fine, Kurdek & Hennigen, 1992; Holman & Li, 1997; Larson, 1988; Salts, Seismore, Lindholm & Smith, 1994). The few studies (e.g., Abbott & Koopman-Boyden, 1981; Craddock, 1987) that sampled couples who were engaged or preparing for marriage indicated more research with this population is needed and would likely give a more detailed and specific view of couples' attitudes and beliefs about marriage and partners (Holman & Li, 1997).

Additionally, family life educators have been challenged to design, implement, and evaluate programs that address the most salient needs of newly married couples as they experience their first marriage, or a remarriage (Crosbie-Burnett & Giles-Sims, 1994; Ganong & Coleman, 1994; Holman & Li, 1997; Morris & Carter, in press; Skopin, Newman, & McKenry, 1993).

Direct correspondence to the first author: The Department of Behavioral & Social Sciences, Lee University, P.O. Box 3450, Cleveland, TN 37320 (DrSusanC@aol.com). The second and third authors are in the Department of Child and Family Studies, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The authors wish to express appreciation to Julia Malia and Bill Poppen, as well as the anonymous reviewers of this manuscript. Additionally, thanks go to The Building and Enriching Stronger Tennessee (B.E.S.T.) Families program for providing the primary funding for this study.

Key Words: marriage, family life education, marital preparation, marital transition

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Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore and describe beliefs in myths about marriage and remarriage that characterize males and females who are making the transition to marriage.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Marriage and remarriage are life cycle transitions that are normative and anticipated, and yet, have the potential to be highly stressful (Boss, 1988). According to some researchers (e.g., Aldous, 1996; McGoldrick, 1989; Visher & Visher, 1989), these complex and often difficult transitions are frequently perceived as the easiest and most joyous. Such beliefs present newly married couples with many challenging and unrealistic duties and tasks that are not easily realized or fulfilled (Crosby, 1985; Larson, 1988).

Myths

According to Nichols and Schwartz (1997), myths are simplifications or distortions of reality. Individuals' belief in myths is often based on their own lack of experience(s) or adequate information, or have its origins and support from other individuals in the surrounding community. Concerning marriage and family relationships, discrepancies between myth and reality occur when individuals fail to question the most basic suppositions about these relationships.

Marriage Myths. Myths about marriage are passed down through the generations making the transition to marriage proportionately more smooth or more difficult for individuals (McGoldrick, 1989). Myths about marriage can present a newly married couple with many impossible duties and ill-founded beliefs associated with marriage and family relations. Couples will face a variety of issues in the transition to marriage that are impacted by their beliefs in myths about marriage including, but not limited to work and family issues, financial issues, intrafamily issues (including extended families), communication conflicts, lifestyle clashes, and divergent goals (Arond & Pauker, 1987; Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Larson, 1988; Lederer & Jackson, 1968; Holman & Li, 1997; Matlar & Jacobs, 1992; Olson & DeFrain, 1994).

Larson (1988) suggested that a person's beliefs about marriage and how marital satisfaction is achieved may significantly affect one's expectations of marriage. According to Larson (1988), gender and an individual's level of idealization affect beliefs in myths about marriage. Larson's research indicated that women believed in myths to a lesser degree than men. Further, both males and females with romanticized attitudes and views believed in myths more than those who had less romanticized attitudes.

Sals et al. (1994) asserted that women have more favorable attitudes toward marriage than men. Carter and McGoldrick (1989) suggested that, although women tend to anticipate marriage with enthusiasm, it has not been as healthy a state for them as for their husbands when epidemiological data are examined. They pointed out that men typically approach marriage with much ambivalence and fear of being ensnared, but do better psychologically and physiologically in the married state than women.
Males and females typically bring to marriage a mixture of gender-related attitudes and beliefs that, in turn, create marital behavior patterns that contain a variety of traditional and non-traditional elements (Duck, 1993; Huston & Geis, 1993; Thoits, 1992). However, traditional gendered assumptions about marital roles do not reflect marital realities. Thus, disagreements over establishing husband and wife roles in marriage are often prevalent (Schwartz, 1994).

Traditionally, men or husbands are in the “superior” hierarchical position, physically taller, older, more educated, possess more income-generating power, and experience their power base outside of the home. In contrast, women or wives work a “double shift” of caring for the husband, kids, and house, while also earning an income, and experience their power base inside of the home (Blanton & Fox, 1995; Hochschild, 1989). According to Carter and McGoldrick (1989), the basis for believing in these marital myths is the reality in our society of a male hierarchy and gender-specific positional power.

Remarriage Myths. According to Booth and Edwards (1992), Ganong and Coleman (1991), and Burr, Day, and Bahb (1993), the probability of divorce is slightly greater for marriages than first marriages, with the probability of divorce increasing for the individual with each subsequent remarriage.

Although divorced individuals sometimes have different beliefs about their new marriages, there are few clearly defined models for remarriage in society (Ganong & Coleman, 1994; Papernow, 1992; Pill, 1990). Visher and Visher (1989) stated that marital roles were often complex in a remarriage. Denial of prior loss and the failure to resolve the intense relationship issues of the first marriage or family may precipitate difficulty in the transition to remarriage (Walsh, 1992). Further, the additional stresses of previous marital patterns (i.e., anger, guilt, and pain), age, ethnicity, and presence of children can affect the newly remarried couple’s marital success or failure (McGoldrick & Carter, 1989).

In the context of remarriage, couples will face a variety of challenges in their transition to marriage. These challenges include: creating a unique family style, renegotiating family relationships, and developing a solid marital bond. In addition, remarriages can become quite complicated when one or both spouses bring children from a previous marriage (Ganong & Coleman; 1994). Ill-founded beliefs concerning the remarried couple’s roles and responsibilities within the remarried family are a major source of dissatisfaction and conflicts that are difficult to manage in a remarriage (Fine, Kurdek, & Hennigen, 1992; Fine & Schwebel, 1991; Walsh, 1992).

METHODS

SELECTION OF THE SAMPLE

Individuals applying for a marriage license in two counties in the state of Tennessee were invited to participate in a study called The Building and Enriching Stronger Tennessee (B.E.S.T.) Families - Newlywed Project. The criterion for eligibility for participating in the study was that the individual be in the process of applying for a marriage license. Included individuals making the transition to marriage.

Description of the Sample. During the course of 3,226 couples applied for a marriage license in Tennessee. A convenient sample of 100 couples from Knox County and 31 couples from Hamilton County returned the informed consent forms and surveys to participate in the study.

Descriptive analyses of the demographic characteristics of the sample indicated that 82% were European American, 1.57% Native American, 1% Asian, and 3.57% did not specify race. The mean age at the time of participation was 20-29 years of age. Educational attainment included: 7.5% had some technical/vocational school degree, 8.5% had earned graduate degree.

In terms of employment status, 15% reported full-time employment, 67% full-time employment, 67% part-time employment, 67% full-time employment, 67% part-time employment, and 67% part-time employment. In terms of income level of the participants indicated that the median income was $1-$9,999, 21% had an income level of $10,000-$29,999, 21% had an income level between $30,000-$49,999, 5% had an income level between $50,000-$69,999, and 2% had an income level over $100,000, and 2%

Couples reported their length of engagement for 0-3 months, 30.5% for 4-6 months, 8% for 7-9 months, 17% for 10-12 months, and 5% for over 12 months. Fifty-two percent of the couples were married, 46% were preparing for a remarriage. Participants who were remarrying (46%) included 29% for a second remarriage, 26% for a third remarriage, and 34% for a fourth remarriage. Additionally, 44% of the participants reporting the primary reason for the last marriage was 83% divorce, 11% death of a spouse, 4% for health, and 2% for other reasons.

Specifically, 43% had one child, 30% had two children, 6% had three children, 6% had four children, and 6% had five children, etc. Among the sample, 46% had one child, 30% had two children, 6% had three children, 6% had four children, and 6% had children

INSTRUMENTATION

Participants reported their beliefs in myths and traditions using an instrument with 42 closed-ended questions concerned with beliefs about marriage and remarriage. Acceptance of the belief that traditional marriage is the foundation of a healthy marriage was measured by the Marriage Quiz as developed by Fine, Kurdek, & Hennigen (1992). The remaining 22 items were developed by Carter and McGoldrick (1989) by reviewing the literature on myths contained in marriage and family textbooks (Aldous, 1990).
the process of applying for a marriage license. The sample for this study included individuals making the transition to a first marriage or a remarriage.

**Description of the Sample.** During the course of this 18-month study, a total of 3,226 couples applied for a marriage license in Knox and Hamilton County, Tennessee. A convenient sample of 100 couples \( (n=200) \) (i.e., 69 couples from Knox County and 31 couples from Hamilton County, Tennessee) completed and returned the informed consent forms and surveys indicating their agreement to participate in the study.

Descriptive analyses of the demographic data provided by the couple participants indicated that 87\% were European American, 6.5\% were African American, 1.5\% Native American, 1\% Asian American, 5\% Latin American, and 3.5\% did not specify race. The mean age range of the individuals participating was 20-29 years of age. Educationally, 39\% had completed a high school degree, 7.5\% had some technical/vocational training, 41.5\% had a college degree, 8.5\% had earned graduate degrees, and 3.5\% did not specify.

In terms of employment status, 15\% reported no employment, 12.5\% part-time employment, 67\% full-time employment and 1.5\% other. The reported personal income level of the participants indicated that 13\% had an income level between $1-$9,999, 21\% had an income level between $10,000-$19,999, 29\% had an income level between $20,000-$29,999, 18.5\% had an income level between $30,000-$49,999, 5\% had an income level between $50,000-$100,000, 2\% had an income level over $100,000, and 11.5\% did not specify.

Couples reported their length of engagement in months as follows: 24.5\% for 0-3 months, 30.5\% for 4-6 months, 8\% for 7-9 months, 15\% for 10-12 months, 17\% for over 12 months, and 5\% did not specify their engagement length. Fifty-two percent of the couples were preparing for their first marriage while 46\% were preparing for a remarriage.

Participants who were remarrying (46\%) indicated that 59\% were preparing for a second remarriage, 26\% for a third remarriage, 11\% for a fourth remarriage, and 4\% for a fifth remarriage. Additionally, those participants (46\%) preparing for a remarriage reported the primary reason for termination of their last marriage was 83\% divorce, 11\% death of their spouse, and 6\% annulment. Forty-three percent of the participants preparing for (re)marriage had children. Specifically, 43\% had one child, 30\% had two children, 12\% had three children, 6\% had four children, 6\% had five children, and 3\% had six children.

**INSTRUMENTATION**

Participants reported their beliefs in myths about marriage and remarriage using an instrument with 42 closed-ended statements about marriage and remarriage (see Appendix A). Acceptance of a statement as a myth was based on empirical research data that suggested the statement was not true. The first 20 items constituted the Marriage Quiz as developed and used by Larson (1988). The remaining 22 items were developed by Carter & Morris (1997) and included statements about marriage and remarriage. The items were compiled from reviewing the literature on myths contained in professional journals and several marriage and family textbooks (Aldous, 1996; Benokraitis, 1993; Carter &

Of the 42 items constituting the Marriage and Family Quiz, 32 items were myths about marriage and remarriage. The other 10 items were considered accepted true statements about marriage and remarriage and were used as distractor items to control response style. These distractors included items 2, 5, 6, 12, 16, 25, 26, 34, and 41 (see Appendix A). Participants used a four-point Likert scale (i.e., strongly agree = 4, agree = 3, disagree = 2, strongly disagree = 1) to answer each statement on the quiz.

To score the Marriage and Family Quiz, the 10 items accepted as true statements should be eliminated and the remaining 32 items agreed with by the participant (i.e., agree or strongly agree on the Likert scale) should be summed. The range of scores on the overall quiz is 0-124. The range of scores for each separate scale is as follows: the marriage scale (0-104) and the remarriage scale (0-20). The higher the participant’s score, the greater is his/her level of belief in myths about marriage and remarriage.

In order to test the reliability of the Marriage and Family Quiz: 1) each statement was graded by 32 family life professionals on a four-point Likert-type scale denoting the degree of confidence (i.e., not confident, somewhat confident, confident, and very confident) that each statement was an ill-founded belief or myth held by the general public about marriage and remarriage. Those statements generating less than 70% degree of confidence that the item was a myth among the professionals were omitted from the study.

Cronbach’s alpha procedures (Cronbach’s Alpha) (Cronbach, 1951) were performed. The Marriage and Family Quiz produced the following alpha coefficients: (a) the 15 items from Larson’s Marriage Quiz (1988) (r=.83); (b) the marriage scale (i.e., the combination of Larson’s and Morris and Carter’s (1998) items dealing with marriage) (r=.80); (c) the remarriage scale (r=.60).

**RESULTS**

In order to test that there were no gender or marital status (i.e., first married versus remarried couples) differences in beliefs in myths about marriage and remarriage, analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedures were performed. No significant main effects for gender or marital status differences in beliefs in myths about marriage and remarriage were found.

Descriptive data analyses revealed that couples believed in a number of myths about marriage and remarriage. The mean for the sample on the marriage scale was 65.17 with the individual scores ranging from 49 to 98. The mean for the sample on the remarriage scale was 11.43 with individual scores ranging from 5 to 18. Item means and percentages of agreement with each myth for the sample, males, and females are presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marriage</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myth 1</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myth 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myth 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remarriage</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myth 4</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myth 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myth 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The numbers in the table represent the mean agreements for each myth.*
Quiz, 32 items were considered and used as accepted as true and were used as strongly disagree =

6 = strongly agree =

Quiz: 1) each somewhat confident,

which was employed full time, the husband usually does at equal

same scale (r=.60).

ious beliefs in beliefs in

in a number of spouses ranging

myths for the

TABLE 1: Item Means and Percentage of Participant Agreement With Myths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>% Agreement with Myth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. If marriage and divorce are to be avoided, it is best to remain single.</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>88.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. First marriages are usually stable.</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>88.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Most couples want to have children.</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>79.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Most couples want to stay together.</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Most couples practice monogamy.</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>56.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Most couples believe in faithfulness.</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Most couples are satisfied with their marriages.</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Most couples are happy.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Most couples are satisfied with their children.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Most couples are satisfied with their lives.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Most couples are satisfied with their finances.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Most couples are satisfied with their work.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Most couples are satisfied with their leisure activities.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Most couples are satisfied with their social lives.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Most couples are satisfied with their family life.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Most couples are satisfied with their religious life.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Most couples are satisfied with their educational life.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Most couples are satisfied with their political life.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Most couples are satisfied with their cultural life.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Most couples are satisfied with their artistic life.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Most couples are satisfied with their spiritual life.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Most couples are satisfied with their health.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Most couples are satisfied with their emotional life.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Most couples are satisfied with their intellectual life.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Most couples are satisfied with their financial life.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Most couples are satisfied with their physical life.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Most couples are satisfied with their sexual life.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Most couples are satisfied with their social life.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Most couples are satisfied with their recreational life.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Most couples are satisfied with their occupational life.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Most couples are satisfied with their educational level.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Most couples are satisfied with their income.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Carter, Morris & Blanton/Couples' Beliefs in Myths
### Table 1 (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>% Agreement with myth</th>
<th>% Agreement with myth/Male</th>
<th>% Agreement with myth/Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### DISCUSSION

Although there were no significant gender differences in beliefs about marriage and remarriage, the results suggest that the anecdotal notion as well as the empirical first transition to marriage believe in myths about marriage and remarriage. In particular, Pauker, 1987; Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Fitzpatrick et al., 1994; Holm & Li, 1997; Huston-Carnegie, 1987; Morris & Morris, 1997; in press; Walsh, 1992 inferred that the high percentage of agreement (i.e., about marriage and remarriage) within the total sample and racial diversity in the population of couples' beliefs about marriage and remarriage is indicative of couples' idea about marriage and remarriage within the total sample.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

First, because the sample for the present study represents a diverse group of couples, future research should not generalize these findings to all couples. Such examination would likely give a more detailed understanding of the variability of myths associated with marriage and remarriage.

Second, because of the increasing number of remarriages, the results of the present study suggest that researchers should continue to examine beliefs about marriage and remarriage among couples who have previously been married. Further exploration of possible differences in beliefs about marriage and remarriage (i.e., first marriages versus remarriages) would likely give a more detailed understanding of the variability of myths associated with marriage and remarriage.

Fourth, the results of this study support the need for the development and implementation of family specifically marital preparation programs, which focus on dispelling myths about marriage and remarriage.
DISCUSSION

Although there were no significant gender differences found in beliefs in myths about marriage and remarriage, the results from the study supported both the anecdotal notion as well as the empirical findings that couples making the transition to marriage believe in myths about marriage and remarriage (Arond & Pauker, 1987; Carter & McGoldrick, 1989; Fitzpatrick et al., 1992; Ganong & Coleman, 1994; Holman & Li, 1997; Huston & Geis, 1993; Larson, 1992; Larson, 1988; Morris & Carter; in press; Walsh, 1992). Therefore, it may be inferred that the high percentage of agreement (i.e., indication of belief in myths about marriage and remarriage) within the total sample and for subgroups of males and females is indicative of couples' idealized attitudes and beliefs in a variety of myths associated with marriage and remarriage.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

First, because the sample for the present study did not represent the ethnic and racial diversity in the population of couples making the transition to marriage, its findings should not be generalized to all couples making the transition to marriage. Diversity in race and culture may influence beliefs in myths about marriage and remarriage (Friedman, 1989; McGoldrick, 1989). Therefore, future research should strive for a more diverse representation of ethnic and racial backgrounds in samples.

Second, because of the increasing number of remarriages and remarried families in our culture (Ganong & Coleman, 1994; Glick, 1989), future research using the Marriage and Family Quiz might benefit from the addition of more items which focus on beliefs in myths about remarriage. Additional use and subsequently examination and analysis of the Marriage and Family Quiz would help to further identify its strengths and limitations as a psychometrically sound measure of couples' beliefs in myths about marriage and remarriage.

Third, based on the results of the present study and on the lack of research which has focused on this particular area and population, there is a critical need for future research to further explore beliefs in myths about marriage and remarriage among couples actually making the transition to marriage (Carter & Morris, 1997; Fine et al., 1992; Holman & Li, 1997; Larson, 1988; Salts et al., 1994). Further exploration of possible differences and similarities according to gender and group (i.e., first marriages versus remarriages) is also recommended. Such examination would likely give a more detailed and specific description of couples' beliefs about marriage and remarriage.

Fourth, the results of this study support the need cited in the literature for the development and implementation of family life education programs, specifically marital preparation programs, which target couples making the transition to marriage and focus on dispelling beliefs in myths about marriage and remarriage (Carter & Morris, 1997; Crosbie-Burnett & Giles-Sims, 1994; Fitzpatrick et al., 1992; Ganong & Coleman, 1994; Morris & Carter, in press; Skopin et al., 1993; Walsh, 1992).
In this study, the need for family life education programs that dispel myths associated with marriage and remarriage was demonstrated by the high percentage (50% or more) of agreement (i.e., belief in the myth) among the sample with eleven of the myths about marriage and remarriage. Similar to past studies (Carter & Morris, 1997; Larson, 1988), there was a high percentage of the sample in the present study that believed in myths about marriage and remarriage. Educational efforts should focus on dispelling myths associated with trends and issues, such as:

- The effect of children on marital satisfaction,
- Trends in division of labor in households in which both partners work full-time,
- The changes in marital satisfaction over the life span,
- The effects of cohabitation on marital satisfaction,
- The effects of different kinds of self-disclosure on marital satisfaction,
- The type of love that leads to marital satisfaction over the course of the marriage,
- The effects of extramarital sex on the marital relationship,
- The effects of religion and religious faith on marital stability,
- The effect of divorce on a child's later marital success,
- The dynamics of family relationships within remarried families, and
- The effects of remarriage on marital satisfaction.

Finally, to summarize, the results from this study have helped to give a more detailed and specific view of individuals' beliefs about marriage and remarriage. Because there is little empirical data on the transition to marriage, this study has helped to increase our knowledge about this complex transition. In the past, the majority of research exploring beliefs about marriage did not sample individuals in the process of making the transition to marriage; therefore, this study's use of a sample of individuals in the process of making the transition to marriage is unique and informative. Additionally, this study's focus on exploring gender differences and similarities in beliefs in myths about marriage and remarriage in individuals making the transition to marriage contributes to an understanding of the salience of gender issues for this developmental transition.

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As defined earlier, myths are simplifications of reality (Nichols & Schwartz, 1991). A belief about marriage may be ill-founded because there is little research literature on marriage that the belief is based in stretcher: One’s beliefs about marriage should always be questioned and investigated (Peek, 1988).

The brief discussion of each item attempts to be a complete review of its area. Therefore, some of the most pertinent myths are listed. Each subject is briefly explained to justify why a statement is true or a myth.

1. A husband’s marital happiness is usually higher if his wife works full time than if she is a full-time homemaker. (True statement)
   *Recent research shows there is no difference in the marital satisfaction of husbands with working wives versus those with stay-at-home wives. This has been a consistent finding in recent research (Kumpfer, 1987).

2. Today most young, single, never-married adults are men. (True statement)
   *Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, marriage has declined for both men and women. However, the trend has been more pronounced for women. In 1970, 85% of women aged 18 to 24 were married. By 1980, this had dropped to 75% (Ray, 1984).

3. In most marriages, having a child is a joint decision made by both spouses. (Myth)
   *Most studies have shown a discrepancy in the perception of responsibility for children, with the mother holding more responsibility than the father (Sporakowski & Hughston, 1978).

4. The quality of the couple’s sex life is affected by marital happiness. (Myth)
   *Studies have shown that couple’s sex life may not be affected by marital happiness, but instead by other factors such as satisfaction with the relationship (Schwartz, 1994).

5. The number of divorces in the United States in 1980 was higher than in 1985. (True statement)
   *The number of divorces increased significantly between 1980 and 1985 (Saxton, 1983).
APPENDIX A

RESEARCH FINDINGS ON THE MARRIAGE AND FAMILY QUIZ ITEMS

As defined earlier, myths are simplifications or distortions of reality (Nichols & Schwartz, 1997). A belief about marriage, remarriage, or parenting may be ill-founded because there is little or no evidence in the empirical research literature on marriage that the belief is true. Therefore, evidence for one's beliefs about marriage should always be critically examined (Larson, 1988).

The brief discussion of each item and the references for each item were not intended to be a complete review of the literature on a particular subject. Therefore, some of the most pertinent and contemporary research on each subject is briefly explained to justify why each item was considered an accepted true statement or a myth.

1. A husband's marital happiness is usually lower if his wife is employed full time than if she is a full-time homemaker. (myth)
   *Recent research shows there is no consistent or significant difference in the marital satisfaction of husbands or wives based on the employment status of the wife (Hoffman, 1986; Piotrkowski, Rapaport, & Rapaport, 1987).

2. Today most young, single, never-married people will eventually get married. (true statement)
   *Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the proportion of the United States adult population marrying at least once varied only slightly between 94% and 96% (Glick, 1984).

3. In most marriages, having a child improves marital happiness for both husband and wife. (myth)
   *Most studies have shown a decrease in marital satisfaction for one or both spouses when a child is born (Harriman, 1986).

4. The quality of the couple's sex life is the single best indicator of overall marital happiness. (myth)
   *Studies have shown that couple communication as the key predictor of overall marital satisfaction; satisfaction with sex life is considered desirable but not always essential (Quinn & Davidson, 1986).

5. The number of divorces in the United States increased between 1960 and 1980. (true statement)
   *The number of divorces increased from 33.2% in 1960 to 53% in 1980 (Saxton, 1983).