In the past 50 years, research on divorce has grown exponentially. A search of the database *PsychInfo* from 1962 to the present using the search term “divorc*” returned a total of 14,955 citations. A graph of this growth by decade is depicted in Figure 1, indicating an average of 514 citations per year over the last decade. A similar search in *Family Court Review/Family and Conciliation Courts Review (FCR)* returned 347 sources dating from 1982 to 2012. In contrast, during this same time period, only 96 references in *FCR* were identified using four different search terms for remarriage and stepfamilies. In the broader psychological literature, however, interest in remarriage and stepfamilies continues to grow, with roughly 30% the total research in this area over the last 50 years taking place over the last decade.

In this paper, we review research on children living in repartnered families: families in which a residential parent has acquired a new partner following the dissolution of the relationship with the other parent. We use the term “repartnered” because we include research on remarriage along with emerging research on families in which no formal marital ties have been established. We begin by describing different research strategies for studying repartnered families, and identifying their strengths and weaknesses. Next, we describe some of the key findings from studies of repartnered and remarried families. In the final section, we outline a research agenda for work in this area.

**RESEARCH STRATEGIES FOR STUDYING REPARTNERED AND REMARRIED FAMILIES**

When practitioners and policy makers turn to research for answers to their questions, they may experience frustration when scientists equivocate with regard to their findings. We can certainly...
empathize. At the same time, however, there are legitimate reasons for our equivocation. In this section, we will discuss how decisions about research strategies affect the conclusions we draw. We will illustrate such differences with a seemingly straightforward research question: How well do children fare in remarried families?

**COMPARED TO WHAT?**

Were we to design a study to answer this question, our first response would be, “compared to what?” To understand how children adjust to remarried family life, we need to have a reference point. But what should be the reference?

Some studies have compared children in remarried families to children living with their married biological parents (Hetherington’s longitudinal studies [Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992; Hetherington, Henderson, & Reiss, 1999]; Bray’s longitudinal study [Bray & Kelly, 1998]; Amato & Keith’s meta-analyses [Amato & Keith, 1991; Amato, 1994]). All of these studies contained explicit comparisons of children living in stepfamilies to children living with their married biological parents. In addition, these authors also explicitly discussed the variability within each family form. This approach has been criticized for several reasons. First, it implies that the comparison of married biological parents is an ideal standard, and that other family forms are thus somehow inferior. This “deficit perspective” has been roundly criticized (Coleman, Ganong, & Fine, 2000). Second, if we want to understand what is it about remarried family life in particular that affects children, then a comparison with married biological parents is inappropriate because any observed differences between the groups could be attributed to the fact that children in remarried families also experienced their parent’s divorce in addition to remarriage. As an illustration, Manning and Lamb (2003) included children in four distinct groups: (1) married, two biological parents; (2) unmarried single mother; (3) married stepparent; (4) unmarried cohabiting stepparent. With regard to middle school and high school GPA, adolescents living in married-stepfather families fared worse than adolescents living with married biological parents. When the comparison was unmarried cohabiting stepparent, however, children in married-stepparent families had higher GPAs than the comparison. The choice of a particular comparison is essential for answering the question.

Instead of comparing children in remarried families to other family forms, it is possible to study children before and after they enter a remarried family to determine how the transition affected them. Such studies are far less common, because for sufficient numbers of children to be observed before and after a remarriage, a researcher needs to follow a large enough sample for a long enough period of time. Shaff, Wolfinger, Kowaleski-Jones, and Smith (2008) used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, a representative sample, to address the before-and-after issue. These authors
found that the children’s transition from a single-parent family (either never married or divorced) into a married stepfamily ($n = 123$) had no effect on either reading or math achievement. There was some evidence that children who remained in single-parent families ($n = 364$) demonstrated lower math achievement over time. We note that the findings from Shaff et al. (2008) are in accord with the results of Amato’s (1994) meta-analysis with regard to comparing children in stepfamilies to children in divorced-single-mother families with regard to measures of academic achievement.

**HOW SHOULD WE STUDY THAT QUESTION?**

Once the comparison is selected, the study is planned. As with many things, the devil is in the details. In research on family formation and development, there are three key aspects to consider: sampling, measurement, and design. **Sampling** refers to the manner in which participants are identified and recruited, and how well the sample represents a defined target population. **Measurement** refers to how the key concepts are defined and assessed. Finally, **design** refers to how well the study captures development and change. In evaluating research it is important to be aware of the following: (1) no single study can address everything; (2) all studies have limitations; and (3) studies vary in their quality. The first two points are obvious. With respect to the third point, there can sometimes, and perhaps often, be disagreement as to the level of quality. Innovations in one domain (sampling, measurement, or design) may trump limitations in another area, and different scientists may give more weight to one area than another.

Studies of remarriage, stepfamilies, and other family forms can generally be placed into two broad types: large-scale, population-based, representative surveys; and multi-method, multi-informant longitudinal studies using a locally based sample. These broad classifications are by no means exhaustive of the types of research that have been conducted, but a comparison of these approaches sheds light on the types of information obtained from each.

In the first type, large-scale population surveys are often developed so that the data can be used by researchers from a wide variety of disciplines to address a large number of very different questions. As such, they are large, typically have thousands of participants, and are usually nationally representative. Nevertheless, although such studies may contain information related to stepfamily life, they were not designed specifically to study how stepfamilies form and develop. Consequently, they may not necessarily be able to address questions of critical interest. The study may correctly identify which children currently live with a stepparent, for example, but may not collect information on how the courtship between the parent and future stepparent unfolded. It would thus be impossible to examine whether more stable courtship patterns were associated with more stable and satisfying stepfamilies. In addition, relatively more effort is expended to obtain representation, and as a result, the measurement and design aspects of the study may be less emphasized. That is, the study may contain reports from fewer, sometimes only one, respondent per family, and the design may not be sensitive to tracking changes in family relationships.

In the second type, multi-method, multi-informant longitudinal studies using local samples generally give more weight to the measurement side of the problem. The samples tend to be substantially smaller, typically between 100–400 participants. Also, researchers draw participants from a local, as opposed to a national, area. What they may lack in representation, however, is made up with intensive assessment. Generally, information about individual and family functioning is obtained from multiple family members as well as persons outside the family, such as teachers. In addition, direct observations of family interaction are often conducted. Thus, there is more information about a smaller, and perhaps less representative sample.

Using a large-scale nationally representative sample, Astone and McLanahan (1991) reported that children from stepfamilies were at greater risk for dropping out of high school compared to children living with their married biological parents. The odds ratio for this effect, a type of effect size that quantifies the difference between groups, was 1.39, which would be considered a “small” effect. About the same time, Hetherington, Clingempeel and colleagues (1992) published their multi-method, multi-informant longitudinal study using a local sample. These authors found that, soon after
remarriage, 33% of mothers reported that their children were experiencing clinically significant behavior problems. This compared to only 10% of mothers in nondivorced, two-parent families. The odds ratio for this effect was 4.25, which is considered a “large” effect. Who is right? Is the difference favoring married biological parents “large” or “small?”

The difficulty in answering this question lies in the fact that there are many methodological differences between the two studies. When different studies produce conflicting results, then, variations in the methods used could be the culprit. The outcomes they measured were different, the sampling was different, the assessment strategy was different, and so on. Further, statistically speaking, the differences could simply be attributed to chance differences resulting from random sampling. There is really no way to know. Social scientists are necessarily cautious about their findings (or at least should be) until results can be replicated across studies that use different methods.

Fortunately, we have a way out of this dilemma: a statistical method call meta-analysis. Meta-analysis is a way of combining information from different studies and evaluating what differences across studies contribute to the reported findings. Amato and Keith (1991; Amato, 1994) conducted just such a meta-analysis concerning children’s adjustment in stepfamilies compared to children in intact two-parent and single-parent homes using 21 independent studies using 27 different samples. Across all outcomes, the effect size for the former comparison was $\text{-}0.17$, a “small effect,” and $\text{-}0.03$ for the latter comparison, which was effectively no difference. So now we have our effect size, replicated across several studies. We come, then, to our third question.

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

In a previous paper (Greene, Anderson, Forgatch, DeGarmo, & Hetherington, 2012), we posed a series of statements with regard to research on divorce that appeared contradictory. We now apply a similar approach to research that addresses our original question. True or false:

1. Children in stepfamilies are at a significant increased risk for problematic behavior.
2. Most children in stepfamilies display no serious difficulties.
3. Substantial numbers of children in stepfamilies are better adjusted than those living in married, two-biological-parent homes.

If you answered true to all three questions, you passed the test!

How can this be, when the three statements sound so different? The problem is that each statement is a simple summary, a sound-bite, if you will. Each statement contains only a portion of the truth, not the whole truth. Let us look at each one in turn.

Are children in stepfamilies at a significant increased risk for problematic behavior? Using the results from the meta-analysis of Amato (1994), the effect size across all studies and all outcomes comparing children in stepfamilies to children in intact two-parent families is $\text{-}0.17$. Turning this statistic into a more familiar metric, it means that 15.87% of children in intact families score one standard deviation or more above the mean on a measure of problem behavior, and 20.33% of children in stepfamilies score one standard deviation or more above the mean. That represents a 28% increase in the probability of having elevated problem behaviors. If we go out to two standard deviations or more above the mean, the probabilities for children in intact and stepfamilies are 2.28% and 3.36%, respectively, a 47% increase in the probability of elevated behavior problems. Certainly an event that would increase risk of elevated problems somewhere between 28% and 47% would count as “significant.” The first statement is true.

Yet a closer look at the same statistic can give a different picture. Twenty percent of children in stepfamilies have elevated behavior problems using the one standard deviation rule. This means that 80% of children in stepfamilies are not experiencing elevated problems (and 96.6% are in the normative range using the two standard deviation rule). Most children in stepfamilies display no serious difficulties. The vast majority of children adapt to their new circumstances just fine.
Finally, Amato (1994) discussed the overlap in distributions in these two groups. Because of this overlap, 43% of children in stepfamilies score better than the average child in an intact two-parent family (and 43% of children in intact families score worse than the average child in stepfamilies). Even using the largest effect size found in the meta-analysis, this means that 36% of children in stepfamilies fare better than the average child in an intact family. Thus, the third statement is true as well: *substantial numbers of children in stepfamilies are better adjusted than those living in married, two-biological-parent homes.*

We do not want to give the impression that statistics can say whatever they want. To the contrary, a careful meta-analysis such as Amato’s provides the best evidence of the size of the differences between children in different family contexts. The purpose of the above is to convey that the answer to a seemingly simple question such as “*How well do children fare in stepfamilies?*” is more complex and nuanced than a simple summary statistic can convey, just as any sound-bite narrowly presents information.

In sum, the best research we have indicates that children in stepfamilies are at a significantly elevated risk relative to children living with married biological parents, but the overall difference is not large. Further, there is substantial overlap between these distributions, with some children in stepfamilies showing more positive adjustment than the average child in married-biological-parent families. Finally, within stepfamilies, there is variation in how children are adjusting, meaning that remarriage does not affect all children in the same way. Research further shows that, when the comparison is divorced single-parent homes rather than married-biological-parent homes, the differences have dramatically reduced if not disappeared entirely (Amato, 1994; Amato & Keith, 1991). What this means is that any differences between children in stepfamilies and children in intact families are attributable to the divorce itself, rather than remarriage, or that any risks associated with remarriage are balanced out by the benefits (Anderson, Greene, Hetherington, & Clingempeel, 1999; Sweeney, 2010). Research also indicates that children in cohabiting families exhibit relatively poorer outcomes than children in married stepfamilies (Manning & Lamb, 2003; Raley, Frisco, & Wildsmith, 2005). Why this is the case is not yet clear. It is possible that cohabiting stepfamilies are on the pathway to remarriage (Ganong & Coleman, 2004), and are thus more likely to be in a transition phase; cohabiting stepfamilies may have fewer economic resources (Morrison & Ritualo, 2000); or that cohabiting stepfamilies have greater family boundary ambiguity (Brown & Manning, 2009). Contemporary research seeks to identify the myriad potential confounding factors in an attempt to explain such differences. In the next section, we review key findings from studies of repartnering and remarriage.

**KEY FINDINGS FROM STUDIES OF REPARTNERED AND REMARRIED FAMILIES**

Because of the volume of published research in this area, we follow the lead of others (Amato, 2010; Pasley & Garneau, 2012; Sweeney, 2010) and make no pretense of an exhaustive review. We highlight areas of commonality across research, and point out areas of controversy, as well as continue to focus on the methodological strengths and limitations of the studies reviewed. We begin with an examination of the pathways to repartnering after divorce, followed by research on family relationships in repartnered families. In a final section, we review literature on cross-household relationships.

**TRANSITIONS IN REPARTNERING AFTER MARITAL DISSOLUTION**

There are many paths to repartnering after marital dissolution. Some will repartner quickly, others will wait; some will remarry, others will cohabit without remarriage; some will divorce quickly, others will remain separated and never divorce. Repartnering or the desire to remarry may, in fact, be a catalyst for finalizing a divorce after a long separation. With such variation in mind, we examine transitions in repartnering after marital dissolution.
Rates of repartnering and remarriage vary across individual factors such as race, age, and median family income. Using data from the National Survey of Family Growth, a nationally representative survey of over 10,000 women, Bramlett and Mosher (2002) provide the most comprehensive analysis of how demographic factors affect repartnering and remarriage. Ten years after separating from a marital partner, 43% of non-Hispanic black women, 64% of Hispanic women, and 76% of non-Hispanic white women have cohabited with a new partner (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). With respect to remarriage after legal divorce, by 10 years after divorce, 49% of non-Hispanic black women, 68% of Hispanic women, and 79% of non-Hispanic white women have remarried. There are also differences across racial and ethnic groups concerning the length of time from separation to divorce. The median length of separation to divorce is less than 1 year for non-Hispanic whites, two years for Hispanics, and two and a half years for non-Hispanic blacks (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). Cohabitation and remarriage occur more rapidly for younger women and for those with higher median family incomes. Rates of repartnering and remarriage also depend on neighborhood factors such as community male unemployment rate, percent below poverty, and percent receiving public assistance, with longer time periods between transitions associated with greater economic disparity and disadvantage (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002).

Increasingly, stepfamilies are being formed after a nonmarital birth, and a decreasing share involve legal remarriage (Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006; Cherlin, 2010; Sweeney, 2010). Both types of unions dissolve at higher rates than first marriages, although cohabiting, non-married unions evidence greater instability, a finding replicated in both qualitative and quantitative studies (Coleman, et al., 2000; Sweeney, 2010; Xu, Hudspeth, & Bartkowski, 2006). For many, however, cohabitation is a pathway toward legal remarriage (Ganong & Coleman, 2004).

Beyond the more formal repartnering transitions of cohabitation and remarriage, there are other transitions that occur that may have consequences for children’s adaptation (Anderson & Greene, 2005). One study of recent divorce filings reported that by one year after filing for divorce, 61% of children have been aware of a parent beginning to date, 39% have had a parent’s partner spend the night, and 53% have had a parent in a serious relationship with a new partner (Anderson et al., 2004). Such informal transitions have not been the focus of much investigation, although it seems clear from the literature on stepfamilies that greater exposure to relationship transitions and household instability are associated with greater problems in children’s adjustment (Amato, 2010; Bulanda & Manning, 2008; Capaldi & Patterson, 1991; Cavanagh, Crissey, & Raley, 2008; Cavanagh & Huston, 2008; Fomby & Cherlin, 2007; Pasley & Garneau, 2012; Wu & Thomson, 2001), a process Sweeney (2010) has termed “cumulative family instability.”

There are several reasons why cumulative family instability is related to problematic behavior in children. First, changes in family structure involve reorganization of roles, relationships, and routines within families. Generally speaking, short-term periods of disequilibrium are to be expected following marital transitions, with recovery occurring after a period of adaptation. Hetherington and Kelly (2002) report a period of five to seven years to establish a new equilibrium following a remarriage, although the length depends on the particular resources and support available. The period of adaptation appears shorter for families with younger children and longer for complex stepfamilies (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).

Second, transitions in couple relationships have been associated with declines in parenting quality, leading to a seeming paradox in repartnered families: repartnering is associated with improved well-being for mothers after divorce (Wang & Amato, 2000), but parenting quality appears to deteriorate in the first two years after remarriage for mothers, with recovery occurring later (Hetherington et al., 1992). For fathers, transitions in both mothers’ and fathers’ repartnering have been associated with reductions in frequency of visits with children (Juby, Billette, Laplante, & LeBourdais, 2007), although the evidence on this point is not conclusive (Aquilino, 2006). Further, parents with greater numbers of relationship transitions are also more likely to evidence antisocial behavior and poorer parenting practices, which in turn are associated with problematic behavior in children (Capaldi & Patterson, 1991). Thus, some of the disadvantages observed for children in repartnered families may arise from the stresses and changes associated with adapting to their parent’s
relationship transitions, the cumulative impact of experiencing multiple transitions, or disruptions in parenting practices as adults adapt to new roles and routines (Coleman et al., 2000; Sweeney, 2010). Whether these reflect causal processes or selection characteristics is an on-going debate among family scholars (Sweeney, 2010).

CHILDREN’S RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENT’S NEW PARTNERS

More than three decades ago, the sociologist Andrew Cherlin (1978) wrote about remarriage as an “incomplete institution,” and his ideas continue to hold sway in contemporary research. Many scholars have argued that the role of the stepparent is ambiguous, lacking clear norms regarding expectations (Ganong & Coleman, 2004; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002) and this is especially true for cohabiting stepfamilies (Brown & Manning, 2009). In the most common stepfamily form, that of biological mothers and stepfathers, some of this ambiguity derives from the notion that biological mothers serve as gatekeepers for nonresident fathers’ involvement (Pruett, Williams, Insabella, & Little, 2003).

There is ambiguity in the legal role of stepparents as well (Mahoney, 2006). For example, states vary in the extent to which stepparents have access to stepchildren when the couple’s relationship ends. Ambiguity in the stepparent role may be a source of conflict within families (Coleman, Fine, Ganong, Downs, & Pauk, 2001), leading to poorer outcomes (Hanson, McLanahan, & Thomson, 1996).

Some research indicates that stepfathers may display lower quality parenting such as less effective monitoring and increased disengagement (Anderson et al., 1999; Fisher, Leve, O’Leary, & Leve, 2003; Hetherington et al., 1992). Parenting quality was also found to be lower among cohabiting stepfamilies relative to married stepfamilies (Berger, Carlson, Bzostek, & Osborne, 2008). Several studies have found that stepfathers are less close to their stepchildren than are biological fathers (Hetherington et al. 1992) but there is evidence that shared residence may override this difference (Hofferth & Anderson, 2003; Schmeckle, 2007). Research suggests that stepparents who are able to establish close bonds with their stepchildren initially provide supportive behaviors rather than attempts at discipline (Bray & Kelly, 1998; Ganong, Coleman, Fine, & Martin, 1999; Hetherington et al., 1992). Stepparents may disengage from stepchildren who resist their positive attempts to engage with them (Fisher et al., 2003; Hetherington et al., 1992). Younger children and boys appear more receptive to stepfathers (Bray & Kelly, 1998; Falci, 2006; Pasley & Garneau, 2012). Adolescents in particular may be especially resistant to accepting authority from a stepparent (Coleman et al., 2000; Hetherington, 1989). It should be noted, however, that most of this research has been conducted with families containing residential biological mothers and stepfathers. Far less research has been conducted on residential father/stepmother families. In both cases, however, children who are close to their biological parent also report closer ties to their stepparent (King, 2007).

NEGOTIATING MULTIPLE HOUSEHOLDS

One of the challenges faced by members of repartnered families is that of negotiating multiple households. This can involve structural aspects, such as visitation, access, and parenting time or social aspects, such as negotiating and managing new roles, relationships, and responsibilities. Pasley and her colleagues (Pasley & Garneau, 2012; Pasley & Lee, 2010) discussed the challenge of “interested outsiders” in stepfamily life, namely former spouses and nonresident parents. Outsiders may increase the degree of conflict present in stepfamilies, due to negotiating factors such as parenting time (Dunn, Cheng, O’Connor, & Bridges, 2004; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Moreover, when family relationships span multiple households, family boundary ambiguity, that is, a lack of clarity or agreement about family composition, becomes more common (Brown & Manning, 2009; Stewart, 2005). Longer periods of instability following family formation have been reported for more complex stepfamilies (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).

Some researchers have pointed to the importance of building alliances with the nonresidential biological father as a way to strengthen stepparent-stepchild ties (King, 2007; MacDonald & DeMaris,
When children have high quality relationships with both stepfathers and nonresident biological fathers, improved outcomes in internalizing and externalizing are noted (King, 2006).

**AN AGENDA FOR RESEARCH**

Having provided an overview of findings from research on repartnered families, we now turn to future directions for the field. Some of our suggestions are methodological, some address existing gaps in our knowledge, and others are geared toward the changing demography of repartnered families.

**WITHIN-FAMILY CHANGE**

Most studies compare children in repartnered or remarried families to other family forms. Although statistical adjustments can be made to account in part for selection factors, these models do not entirely eliminate the problem. A focus on within-family transitions would strengthen the case that the changes themselves account for children’s adjustment difficulties. Further, studies of change should involve multiple waves of data rather than simple pre-test posttest designs, which some authors have argued actually hamper the study of change (Rogosa, 1995; Singer & Willett, 2003). In two-wave designs, true change is completely confounded with measurement error, so only very limited causal conclusions can be drawn, if any (Singer & Willett, 2003). Stated differently, with only two assessment times, the only pattern of change that can be identified is a straight line, and there is no way to determine whether change actually follows a straight line or some other form. Multiple waves of data allow for testing different patterns of change and can more readily establish how changes in one domain relate to changes in another. Studies that use diary methods (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003) can more closely track changes in repartnering to changes in children’s adjustment, and can more effectively estimate the effect period, that is, the minimum length of time over which the predominant effect of change takes place (Cohen, 1991). Failure to attend to the effect period, a limitation of most longitudinal studies, can seriously bias estimates of the association between transitions and other variables such as children’s adjustment (Cohen, 1991). Collins and Graham (1991) provide a succinct example of this problem. Suppose that theory predicts that friends’ alcohol use is an important determining factor in adolescents’ alcohol use, and a study measures alcohol use in September and January. If friend’s use in September predicts adolescent’s use in January, and a weak relation emerges, what can be made of such a result? The relation could in fact, be weak, or as Collins and Graham (1991, p. 27) describe, “the relation between adolescent use in January and friends’ use during Time X is strong, but September is not Time X.” Both theory and method should be better attuned to how much time elapses between cause and effect.

**INFORMAL TRANSITIONS**

A focus only on formal transitions such as cohabitation and remarriage misses a great number of other transitions children encounter (Raley & Wildsmith, 2004). Further, it is often unclear when cohabitation really begins, as cohabitation is typically a gradual process (Manning & Smock, 2005). One study found that 75% of divorced mothers with dating experience reported an overnight stay with the partner prior to cohabitation (Anderson, Hurley, Greene, Webb, & Sullivan, 2009). In addition, parents may become involved with a new partner, introduce them to their children, engage in family activities with them, and break up without having lived together. The fluidity of repartnered relationships may have important consequences for children’s adjustment and family relationships (Anderson & Greene, 2005).

**CROSS-HOUSEHOLD NEGOTIATION**

As parents repartner, new partners become integrated into existing family relationships. Yet there is little research on how this process unfolds given that most research relies on comparisons of
repartnered families with other family groups. There is some evidence that repartnering triggers increased strain in the cross-household negotiation of co-parenting and parenting time (Anderson & Greene, 2011). Obtaining information from both spouses is also critical for understanding how parents adapt to their former spouse’s new partners, given that there is often disagreement on how frequent visitation occurs (Braver, Wolchik, Sandler, Fogas, & Zvetina, 1991).

**COMPLEX STEPfamilies**

Repartnered families are often more complex than simply adding a new member to the household. New partners may bring residential children of their own, there may be nonresidential stepsiblings, and the repartnered couple may have mutual children. The increased complexity of these families can add additional challenges (Brown & Manning, 2009; Dunn et al., 2004; Hetherington & Kelly, 2002), yet there is little research on how family members adapt to these challenges. Future work on repartnered families should obtain information from multiple households in addition to multiple family members.

**NEVER-MARRIED FAMILIES**

An increasing number of repartnered families are formed after the dissolution of a relationship involving no legal marriage (Sweeney, 2010). Although there have been an increasing number of studies involving this population, there is a need for more work in this area, particularly with regard to how former couples manage custody and parenting time. Given that these relationships are even less institutionalized than remarried families (Sweeney, 2010), there are likely greater challenges in negotiating roles and relationships after dissolution. In addition, such families are likely to be faced with a greater disparity in economic resources (Morrison & Ritualo, 2000), further exacerbating the potential distress faced by children.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Repartnering after relationship dissolution has been gaining more attention in the research literature, and the children in repartnered families are at higher risk for adjustment problems. Research has highlighted several possible mechanisms for this risk, including depletion of parenting resources and cumulative family instability. Repartnered families are challenged with the formation of new roles, responsibilities, and relationships, and are faced with negotiating these relationships across multiple households. Improvements in methodology and attention to the dynamic and complex configurations of repartnered families should be the focus for the next generation of family scholars.

**NOTES**

1. As a reviewer pointed out, this is admittedly a crude way to establish the growth in this area because the term can apply to other populations. Nevertheless, the very rapid rise in research that occurred during the 1970s corresponds with the rapid rise in divorce rates, providing some validity to our approach.

2. We applied the same crude approach to estimating this number as we did for the divorce literature, conducting a *PsychInfo* examination of keywords related to remarriage. Even a cursory examination of the returned literature by decade shows substantial increases over time (using only the term “remarriage,” for example, *PsychInfo* returned 3676 citations from the period 1962–2012, and 1367 citations from 2002–2012); thus 37% of the total returned citations over the last 50 years were in the last decade. We cannot comment on the precision of the *PsychInfo* results that were returned, only to note that conducting a comprehensive review of the literature would be a daunting task.

3. Amato and Keith (1991) did not report confidence intervals for their effect sizes.

4. Although we have referred consistently to Amato’s work, two qualitatively-based decade reviews (Coleman et al., 2000; Sweeney, 2010) have reached similar conclusions.
REFERENCES


Edward Anderson received his Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Virginia. He is currently an associate professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences at the University of Texas at Austin. He and his wife, Shannon Greene, collaborate on research concerning adaptation to family transitions, parental repartnering after divorce, and family process in divorced and remarried families.

Shannon Greene received her Ph.D. in marriage and family therapy from Texas Tech University and completed post-doctoral training in prevention research at Arizona State University. She is currently a faculty research associate in the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences at the University of Texas at Austin and is a licensed marriage and family therapist in private practice. She and her husband, Edward Anderson, collaborate on research concerning adaptation to family transitions, parental repartnering after divorce, and family process in divorced and remarried families.