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Intergenerational Relationships in Stepfamilies

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Most stepfamily researchers and clinicians have focused their attentions on stepfamilies with young children and adolescents, generally ignoring older stepfamilies (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Of course, family structure alterations are not limited to younger adults with minor-age children; stepfamilies exist throughout the life course. In fact, as adults in most industrialized nations live longer, healthier lives, many stepfamilies are not formed until the adults are in the second half of life (U.S. Census Bureau, 1995; Wu & Penning, 1997). Older stepfamilies are quietly growing in numbers in most industrialized nations, and their issues and concerns increasingly will be important and relevant for policy makers, practitioners, and researchers.

Demographic Trends

Recent demographic trends in industrialized nations have increased the relevance of understanding intergenerational relationships in stepfamilies. Although many demographic changes are occurring in these societies, three are particularly pertinent: (a) increased longevity, (b) decreased fertility, and (c) increases in marital transitions throughout the life course.

Longer life spans. In many industrialized nations, older adults are the most rapidly growing segment of the population. For example, by the year 2030 approximately 20% of the U.S. population will be aged 65 and older (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993).

Life expectancies in most industrialized nations have been increasing for decades and projections are that they will continue to increase (Vaupel & Kistowsky, 2005). In most of these societies there are greater numbers of three- and four- generation families than ever before (Uhlenberg & Kirby, 1998). Becoming a grandparent has become a normative part of the life course, and most children can expect to have relationships with grandparents and even great-grandparents throughout most, if not all, of their childhood years. For instance, in the United

States in 2000 about 75% of all people aged 65 and older were grandparents, and approximately two-thirds of all children had four living grandparents throughout their childhoods (Uhlenberg & Kirby, 1998).

Fewer children. Women in the industrialized nations of Europe, the Pacific Rim, and North America, have had fewer children over the last several decades than earlier cohorts (Pinelli, 1995; Uhlenberg & Kirby, 1998). This means that families are smaller, with fewer children per adult. Consequently, although there are more grandparents and great-grandparents now than ever before, they have fewer grandchildren on average than they did just a few generations ago. For instance, American women ages 60 to 64 near the end of the 20th century had about half the number of grandchildren on average than did women 100 years earlier (Uhlenberg & Kirby, 1998).

The demographic combination of longer life spans and lower rates of reproduction gradually has transformed the shape of multigenerational families from resembling triangles (i.e., few elders at the “top” of the family tree being supported by larger numbers of offspring and even larger numbers of grandchildren) to more like a pole (i.e., the numbers of elders, their children, and grandchildren are nearly the same; Bengtson, 2001). Consequently, multigenerational families no longer have many more young people than older people; instead, as the generation born immediately after World War II reaches age 65 there will be only slightly more younger family members than older ones, a situation that likely will continue into the foreseeable future.

Dissolutions and re-partnering. Changes in marriage rates and relationship stability also have affected family structures in maturing societies. In some European societies, for instance, fewer adults marry than was true in the past (De Jong Gierveld, 2004; Jensen, 1998; Pinelli,

1995), and those that do are less likely to remain married until one spouse dies than they were two generations ago (e.g., U.K. Marriage, Divorce and Adoption Statistics, 2000). As a result, the number of older adults who have been divorced has increased. For example, in the United States the number of women older than 65 who were ever divorced increased 650% between 1960 and 1990 (Taeuber, 1992), and since 1990, the number of divorced older adults has increased four times faster than the older U.S. population as a whole (Fowler, 1995). In 1998 25% of adults ages 65-74 had been divorced (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999). Cohabitation rates also have grown rapidly in most industrialized societies over the last few decades (Allen, Hawker, & Crow, 2004), and separation and dissolution of cohabiting relationships have equaled, or in some societies surpassed, divorce rates (Allen et al., 2004). Therefore, growing numbers of older adults will have been in one or more cohabiting relationships throughout their lives. Consequently, it is common for adults and their children to have experienced several household living arrangements due to serial cohabitation or serial marriages of the adults before the children reach adulthood (Allen et al., 2004; Bumpass et al., 1990; Kim & McKenry, 2000).

Remarriage across the life course is widespread. For example, so many divorced people in the United States remarry that nearly half of all marriages are remarriages for one or both spouses (Bumpass, Sweet, & Castro Martin, 1990) and over 10% of these remarriages represent at least the third marriage for one or both partners (U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, 1993). In many remarriages one or both adults have children from prior relationships, and an estimated 10% of U.S. children experience at least two divorces of their custodial parent before they turn 16 (Furstenberg, 1988).

In the relatively near future a large number of individuals are or will have been members of stepfamilies. Among the generation born in the years following World War II will be

unprecedented numbers of individuals who are stepparents. Consequently, stepgrandparents are more prevalent in number than ever before. For instance, nearly 4 in 10 families in the United States have a stepgrandparent (Szinovacz, 1998). By 2030, Americans will have 1 stepgrandchild for every 1.7 biological grandchild (Wachter, 1997). Stepgrandparents reside in complex intergenerational families - some have both stepchildren and children of their own, some may have children and stepchildren from several relationships, and some have adult stepchildren, but no genetic or adopted children. Moreover, they may be remarried, cohabiting, or in what is known as *live apart together* (LAT) relationships, in which separate households are maintained, yet the individuals consider themselves to be a couple and live together periodically (De Jong Gierveld & Peeters, 2003).

Types of Intergenerational Steprelationships

Intergenerational relationships exist within a context of many other family ties. For example, adult stepchildren could have four generations of stepfamily members with whom they interact (e.g., parents and stepparents, grandparents and stepgrandparents, children and stepchildren, and grandchildren and stepgrandchildren).

In order to better understand the complexity of intergenerational steprelationships, it makes sense to consider when they began. Long-term steprelationships that have existed since the childhood of the younger generation differ in many ways from steprelationships that started when members of the younger generation were independent adults. Obviously, some adult-onset steprelationships can exist for decades, such as when a middle-aged parent remarries when his or her children are young adults, but these later-life relationships generally differ from long-term stepparent-stepchild relationships that began when the stepchildren were dependent minors in that opportunities for co-residence and prolonged contact over time are less, emotional bonds

may not be as strong, and opportunities to exchange resources (e.g., money, emotional support, gifts) from older to younger generations are fewer (White, 1994a). These factors likely contribute to differences between long-term steprelationships and those that formed later in life.

Stepgrandparents and Stepgrandchildren

Despite their prevalence, stepgrandparent-stepgrandchildren relationships have seldom been studied and the functions expected of stepgrandparents are largely unexplored and unknown (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Normative expectations for relationships between stepgrandparents and stepchildren often are unclear (Bornat, Dimmock, Jones, & Peace, 1999), although such norms gradually may be developing in many societies (Ganong & Coleman, 1999).

Stepgrandparents are a heterogeneous group. A person becomes a stepgrandparent in one of three ways (see Table 1), and these different paths to the role represent quite different circumstances that affect subsequent stepgrandparent-stepgrandchild relationships (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). These three pathways to stepgrandparenthood may be distinguished based on who is remarrying/repartnering – (1) in *the later-life stepgrandparenthood* model, an *individual* remarries or repartners with a person who has grandchildren already, (2) in *the inherited stepgrandparenthood* model an individual's *adult son or daughter* is the person who is marrying or repartnering with someone who already has children, and (3) in the *long-term stepgrandparenthood* model, the remarriage or repartnering of the grandparent and stepgrandparent occurs years before stepgrandchildren are born; in fact, the parents of the stepgrandchildren were likely to have been children themselves when the remarriage or repartnering of the older generation began. It seems likely that the pathways into the relationships and the contexts within which such relationships are formed affects how

intergenerational relationships between stepgrandparent and stepgrandchild are defined and how those relationships are enacted.

Later-life Stepgrandparenthood

Marrying or cohabiting with someone who has grandchildren creates a situation somewhat similar to that of becoming a nonresidential stepparent to minor-age children. In this context, the new spouse or partner is often a relative stranger to most of the extended family members when the remarriage/repartnering begins, and, in fact, may rarely or never come in contact with adult stepchildren and stepgrandchildren. For example, in Figure 1a, Ann (age 67) was an unmarried and childless woman who married Tom (age 70) in 1995. Tom's son, Joe was 50 when his father remarried, and his only child, Sue was 25. Ann and Tom live in Florida where they met after they had both moved there to retire. Joe lives 3500 miles away in California, and Sue lives in Chicago, a three-hour flight to visit either her parents or grandfather.

It is highly likely that Tom will not identify himself as a middle-aged stepchild, nor will he think of Ann as his stepmother. Instead, he might mention his *father's wife* or he might say that Ann was the *woman who married his father*. Adult stepchildren who acquire a stepparent later in life do not think of themselves, nor do they want to identify themselves, as members of a stepfamily (Bornat et al., 1999). This rejection of "step-kin" labels is not necessarily a reflection of the relationship quality between the older stepparent and grown stepchild, but may be more of a reflection of the stigma and discomfort that people associate with stepfamily position labels (Bornat et al., 1999; Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Although there is little research on this, it is highly unlikely that *later-life stepgrandparents* would be defined as kin by stepgrandchildren and their parents (Ganong & Coleman, 2006a). Instead, it is more likely that new spouses or cohabiting partners of grandparents would be seen more as a family friend or acquaintance than

as a member of the family or kin network (Ganong & Coleman, 2006a). It is also likely that *later-life stepgrandparents* would not see themselves as fulfilling any type of grandparent role. Even when they see each other regularly it is probable that stepgrandparent-stepgrandchild relationships formed later in life will not develop into emotionally close relationships; Cherlin and Furstenberg (1986) found that the older grandchildren were at remarriage, the less likely they were to regard stepgrandparents to be as important as genetic grandparents.

Inherited Stepgrandparenthood

The second pathway to stepgrandparenthood is comparable to grandparenthood in that the older adult does nothing to acquire this new status. Instead, an individual “inherits” stepgrandchildren when a grown son or daughter becomes a stepparent by marrying someone with children from a prior relationship. The stepgrandparent not only acquires a son- or daughter-in-law, he or she acquires stepgrandchildren as well. For example, in Figure 1b Ann became a stepgrandmother when her son Joe married Nan, who had a 10-year-old daughter from a prior marriage, Sue.

The nature of inherited stepgrandparent-stepgrandchild relationships is likely to vary, depending on a number of factors, such as distance, gender of the older and middle generations, ages of the stepgrandparent and stepgrandchild, and perhaps the number of genetic grandparents that children have and the number of grandchildren older adults have. It seems reasonable to hypothesize that these relationships will be closer if: (1) they live near each other and have frequent contact, (2) the middle-generation stepparent and the older stepgrandparent are women, (3) stepgrandchildren are younger when their parent remarries or repartners, (4) stepgrandchildren live with the stepgrandparent’s offspring, and (5) the stepgrandchildren have

few or no genetic grandparents available to them and the stepgrandparents have few or no genetic grandchildren available to them.

Contact. Proximity and frequent contact present more chances for stepgrandparents to build affinity with stepgrandchildren by doing nice things for them, giving gifts, and bonding with them over time (Clawson & Ganong, 2002). For instance, stepparents who intentionally engaged in affinity-seeking and –maintaining behaviors developed emotionally closer relationships with minor-age stepchildren than did stepparents who engaged in no affinity strategies or who stopped such behaviors after marriage (Ganong, Coleman, Fine, & Martin, 1999). It is also probable that stepgrandparents who engage in such affinity-seeking and affinity-maintaining behaviors will have closer relationships with stepgrandchild - spending time together in rewarding activities is an important way for relationships to grow closer, so proximity and amount of contact are important.

Gender and kin-keeping. Women in general maintain kin ties in families (McGraw & Walker, 2004), and stepmothers, despite negative stereotypes about them, also tend to function as kin keepers (Schmeekle, 2007; Vinick, 1999; Weaver & Coleman, 2005). Although stepfathers have an easier adjustment in younger stepfamilies than do stepmothers (Ganong & Coleman, 2004), the fact that women mediate the relationships between members of the adjacent generations (Schmeekle; Vinick; Weaver & Coleman) makes it likely that stepchildren's relationships with stepgrandparents differ depending on whether the older adults are step-maternal or step-paternal grandparents. This has rarely been investigated; however, in one British study gender of the stepparents was not related to the amount of contact between stepgrandchildren and stepgrandparents (Lussier, Deater-Deckard, Dunn, & Davies, 2002).

Stepgrandchild age. Younger stepchildren are more likely to accept stepparents' extended family members as new relatives (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986). Stepfamilies also are more likely to try to recreate a nuclear family when children are young, which means that parents and stepparents would encourage stepgrandchildren to relate to their stepgrandparents as grandparents.

Stepgrandchild residence. Whether or not the stepgrandchild lives with the offspring of the stepgrandparent also may affect the relationship. Parents of residential stepparents may be more likely to have contact with their stepgrandchildren than parents of nonresidential stepparents (Lussier et al., 2002). Nonresidential stepparents may themselves have minimal interaction with their stepchildren (e.g., weekends only or maybe short summer visits and holidays, if they don't live nearby), so the opportunity for stepgrandparents to form relationships with their stepgrandchildren may be quite limited.

Available grand-kin. Giles-Sims (2003) found in her case studies of grandmothers that relationships with stepgrandchildren varied depending on whether or not the stepgrandmother had genetic grandchildren. One stepgrandmother with no genetic grandchildren readily adopted a grandparent role, another who had genetic grandchildren tried to treat the stepgrandchild and grandchildren the same but felt guilty because she did not feel as close to her stepgrandchildren.

Kinship definitions. In addition to these demographic predictors, it might be that how the middle generation defines the family and how they perceive extended family relationships greatly affects the nature of stepgrandparent-stepgrandchild relationships. For example, if Joe and Nan in Figure 1b attempt to recreate a nuclear family and live as if they were a first married family, then they would likely encourage Sue to call Joe, "daddy," and to call his parents and stepfather, "Grandpa" and "Grandma" and "Poppy." Moreover, Sue would be encouraged to

regard the older generation adults as grandparents and to expect to be treated as if she were a genetic grandchild. On the other hand, if Joe and Nan operationalized a different model of stepfamily living, then Sue might be encouraged to think of her stepfather as a friend she can count on and his parents and stepparent would be added members to her new kin/social support network (in a positive scenario). Or she might consider Joe as an unwanted intruder into her family, and his extended family might be ignored. Or their overtures to Sue might be rejected, or there might be little encouragement from anyone for the extended stepkin network to develop any type of relationship with Sue.

Henry, Ceglian, and Ostrander (1993) proposed a developmental model for stepgrandparents that applies primarily to inherited stepgrandparents. This model began with tasks related to adjusting to an adult offspring's divorce and subsequent changes in extended family relationships. Henry et al proposed tasks related to accepting adult offspring's new romantic relationship with someone who had children from prior unions, and they described ways that inherited grandparents could try to build relationships with the new spouse and their new stepgrandchildren. This developmental model has not been empirically examined, but Sanders and Trystad (1989) found that acceptance of the middle-generation remarriage by the stepgrandparents and stepgrandchildren was a predictor of subsequent relationships between stepgrandparents and stepgrandchildren. If either the stepgrandparents or the stepgrandchildren were upset about or don't support the remarriage, it was less likely that a good relationship would develop between them.

A final comment about inherited stepgrandparenthood – the prior discussion has centered primarily on remarriage of the middle generation rather than on cohabiting. Although it may be that the dynamics of stepgrandparent-stepgrandchild in cohabiting step-relationships would be

similar to those of remarried couples, stepfamilies are still somewhat of an incompletely institutionalized family system in the United States, and cohabiting couples are even less institutionalized, and more marginalized (Cherlin, 1978). In less conservative societies, such as New Zealand, Australia, and most European countries, the relational dynamics among remarried and repartnered cohabiting families may be more similar. In the United States, however, it would be logical to speculate that few families would see the parents of cohabiting step-couples as stepgrandparents, with the possible exceptions of African American families (Crosbie-Burnett & Lewis, 1993). Instead, they might be seen as friends of the *de facto* stepchildren, or maybe just as acquaintances. This clearly is an area needing further study.

Long-Term Stepgrandparents

In the final pathway to stepgrandparenthood, an older stepparent becomes a stepgrandparent when an adult stepchild who the older stepparent had helped raise becomes a parent (see Table 1 and Figure 1c). Many of the factors that are potentially important to this type of stepgrandparenthood are related to the relationship between the oldest and middle generation stepkin - the age of the child when the step-relationship began and the emotional closeness and quality of the step-relationship may be particularly relevant to how middle-generation stepchildren perceive the connections between their children and their stepparents. Given that the middle generation serves as gatekeepers to children, limiting or freely granting grandparents' access to grandchildren (Kornhaber, 1996), the quality of the relationships between the stepgrandparents and the middle generation may be pivotal.

For instance, in a long-term stepparent-stepchild relationship, particularly one that began when the stepchild was a pre-adolescent and he or she lived with the stepparent, it is probable that stepgrandparent-stepgrandchild relationships will resemble grandparent-grandchild

relationships in most, if not in all, ways, especially when stepparent-stepchild relationships have been generally positive. There is evidence, however, that long-term stepgrandparents can function as grandparents even when stepparent-stepchild relationships have been affectively neutral or even emotionally distant; in a small, in-depth study of adult stepchild-older stepparent relationships, Clawson and Ganong (2002) found that adult stepchildren re-considered their negative judgments about older stepparents when they saw how close their children felt towards the older stepgrandparents. Clawson and Ganong concluded that close and loving relationships between long-term stepgrandparents and their stepgrandchildren helped facilitate the development of closer relationships between stepgrandparents and their adult stepchildren, even years into the relationship.

The cultural norm of having multiple grandparents is one reason why *long-term stepgrandparents'* relationships may be similar to genetic grandparent-grandchild ties. In Western cultures people expect children to have multiple grandparents, and, given increases in life spans, many children now have great-grandparents as well. All of these grandparents are given names to identify them and to distinguish them from the other grandparents. So, children in families in which there are no steprelationships in the last few generations may have a Grandpa and Grandma, a Nanna and Poppa, a Big Grandma and Big Grandpa, all of whom are loved and recognized as grandparents who have legitimate claims to the grandchildren's affections. It is relatively easy for *long-term stepgrandparents* to be named and recognized as one of the cast of grandparents a child might have. For example, in Figure 1c Sue has three grandparent figures on her father's side – Tom and Carol, her divorced grandparents, and Ann, her long-term stepgrandmother who helped raise Sue's father. Sue may have additional grandparents and stepgrandparents on her mother's side of the family, as well as, perhaps, great-

grandparents. If intergenerational relationships are positive, Sue will have little difficulty identifying these older adults by unique names.

Stepparents face a cultural norm that says a child cannot have more than two parents – this normative barrier is absent for *long term stepgrandparents* (and potentially for other types of stepgrandparents as well). Stepgrandchildren are therefore less likely to experience loyalty conflicts between grandparents and stepgrandparents, are less confused about having multiple grandparents, and are able to more readily accept that they can relate to multiple adults in grandparent roles. This is especially true for stepgrandchildren who have always known their stepgrandparents, such as in long-term stepgrandparenthood situations. Children may eventually become aware that Poppa is a stepgrandparent rather than a genetic grandparent, but if their parents do not make the steprelationship an issue, stepgrandchildren do not make clear distinctions about how their relationships with long-term stepgrandparents are different from their relationships with their grandparents.

Of course, jealous genetic grandparents can interfere or hostile relationships between adult stepchildren and their stepparents can hinder the development of stepparent-stepgrandchild relationships, despite the presence of helpful cultural norms. For example, in Figure 1c Carol could try to undermine Ann's relationship with Sue. Although there is a growing literature on loyalty conflicts among stepchildren (e.g., Afifi, 2003; Afifi & Schrodt, 2003; Clingempeel, Colyer, & Hetherington, 1994), similar work with stepgrandchildren has not been done. There are other factors that may influence those relationships as well (e.g., distance, and perhaps sex of the adult stepchild and older stepparent). However, cultural beliefs about grandparents may help stepgrandparents in much the same way that cultural beliefs make stepparenting harder.

Research on Stepgrandparents and Stepgrandchildren

Researchers have not distinguished between these different types of stepgrandparents. Consequently, it is rarely clear in studies how long stepgrandchildren have known their stepgrandparents (e.g., all their lives, 2 years), and sometimes it is not clear how much contact they have had (e.g., daily, never met them). Although the early studies on intergenerational step-relationships have been largely exploratory and rudimentary, they have reported that some stepgrandparents play an important part in the lives of their stepgrandchildren. Although relationships between later-life and inherited stepgrandchildren and stepgrandparents are typically less involved than grandparent-grandchildren ties, many stepgrandchildren think of their stepgrandparents as valuable resources and see stepgrandparent relationships as important (Henry, Ceglian, & Matthews, 1992; Sanders & Trygstad, 1989). Although Sanders and Trygstad found that children rated their grandparents as more involved with them than their stepgrandparents, 48% of stepgrandchildren viewed the stepgrandparent relationship as either important or extremely important, and 63% wanted more contact with stepgrandparents.

Grandparents and Grandchildren in Stepfamilies

Although clinicians have focused some attention on grandparents (Kalish & Visher, 1981; Visher & Visher, 1996), only a few stepfamily researchers have studied grandparent-grandchild bonds. Table 2 presents a model of the pathways to grandparenthood in stepfamilies.

Grandparents Who Remarry or Repartner Later in Life

On the surface, the later life remarriage or repartnering of a grandparent might be expected to have little effect on relationships with genetic or adopted grandchildren. For example, in Figure 1a, Tom was Sue's grandfather before his remarriage, and he remains her grandfather after his remarriage.

However, later-life unions have the potential for residual effects on grandparent-grandchild and parent-child relationships. Some scholars have found inheritance issues to be important and sources of concern in later life stepfamilies (Bornat et al., 1999), so it is likely that grand[arents forming new partnerships later in life is of significant interest to younger kin. There also may be concerns about who would provide physical caregiving when older adults form new romantic unions (Bornat et al.; Kuhn, Morhardt, & Monbrod-Framburg, 1993).

The previous marital/relationship history of the grandparent may be relevant; how grandchildren and adult children respond to the new union is likely to be related to whether the grandparent was widowed, divorced, or separated from the other genetic grandparent, how long the grandparent had been single, the number of prior relational transitions the grandparent had experienced, and whether he or she had maintained close relationships with younger kin (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). The nature of the new relationship – remarriage, cohabiting, or LAT, might also make a difference in how younger generations relate to older couples formed later in life – in a Dutch study cohabiters and LAT couples had weaker ties with children than remarried adults (De Jong Gierveld & Peeters, 2003). There may be gender dynamics at work in the acceptance of these new unions and the development of relationships, too (Schmeekle, 2007; Vinick, 1999), although findings about gender and intergenerational relationships in stepfamilies have been mixed (Mills, Wakeman, & Fea, 2001; Szinovacz, 1997).

Characteristics of the grandparents new partner also may be relevant – prior marital histories (i.e., number, type of relationships, years single before the later-life union), number of children and grandchildren, physical health status, income, age, and other factors may be relevant in predicting the nature of grandparent-grandchild and parent-child relationships after later-life remarriage or cohabitation. If the grandparent remarries a person with grandchildren,

then he or she becomes a later-life stepgrandparent and stepparent to an adult stepchild. These new family statuses may not be recognized by the new step-kin, but they will not be ignored by the younger genetic kin, who might see the step-kin as possible threats to family wealth (through inheritance) or to the quality of their relationships with their parent or grandparent. Evidence for this is mostly anecdotal, however. Kuhn and colleagues contended that older stepfamilies formed from later-life remarriages must deal with many of the same issues as younger stepfamilies (Kuhn et al., 1993), including, presumably, maintaining genetic kinship ties. This contention has not been examined empirically.

Complex Stepfamily Grandparents

The older adults whose adult son or daughter remarried or repartnered with someone who had children were described earlier in this chapter as *inherited stepgrandparents*. Some of these individuals also are grandparents if their son or daughter had reproduced either before the new union or after its formation. For instance, in Figure 1b, if Joe had children before his remarriage to Nan, or if he and Nan had a baby together, then Ann would be both an inherited stepgrandmother to Sue and a grandmother to Joe's children (not shown on the figure). Stepfamily households in which both adults bring children from prior unions are often called complex stepfamilies, so this type of grandparenthood is labeled the *complex stepfamily grandparent*. These grandparents may have grandchildren living with their offspring or with their former daughters- or sons-in-law, or the grandchildren may be grown and on their own.

The maintenance of the grandparent-grandchild relationship after remarriage or repartnering of the middle generation offspring may be dependent on (1) when the grandchildren were born, (2) who has physical custody of the grandchildren (if they are young), (3) the quality

of the relationships between the older and middle generation adults, and (4) the amount of contact between grandparents and grandchildren.

When the grandchild was born. The timing of the birth of grandchildren in complex stepfamily grandparenthood is important. If the grandchild was born to the new remarriage/repartnering union, then the complexity of the extended family is quite different than if the grandchild was born into a prior union of the adult offspring. If the grandchild was born to the remarried/repartnered child and his/her new spouse/partner, then grandparent-grandchild relationships likely would be similar to grandparent-grandchild relationships in first marriage families. From the grandchild's perspective there may be little or no difference between their family and an extended family of once-married adults (except for the possible presence of half-siblings from a previous union of one or both of their parents). From the grandparent perspective, there also is no difference. However, if the grandchild was born to the adult offspring's prior union, then the nature of the grandparent-grandchild relationship is likely to be dependent on a number of factors, including where the child lives (with the grandparents' child or former child-in-law), what the custody arrangement is, and how well the grandparents get along with middle generation adults.

Physical custody of the grandchild. Most grandparents probably want to continue to maintain ties with their grandchildren after their children divorce or separate, but because the relationships between grandparents and young grandchildren are mediated by the adults of the middle generation (Kornhaber, 1996), where the grandchildren live predicts how often and when grandparents interact with grandchildren. After divorce, the parent with physical custody of children typically regulates grandparents' access to them (Johnson, 1992). Because mothers most often have physical custody of young children, maternal grandparents are more likely to be

involved with grandchildren than paternal grandparents, in part because mothers often serve as gatekeepers. Even when the involvement of maternal and paternal grandparents is similar immediately following divorce, over time paternal grandparents have significantly less contact with grandchildren, and they provide less social and emotional support to them (Johnson, 1992). Paternal grandparents may only see their grandchildren when the children are visiting their son. Given the evidence that some remarried fathers “substitute” stepchildren with whom they live for their nonresidential biological children (Manning & Smock, 2000), paternal grandparents may have a hard time maintaining relationships with grandchildren after their son remarries or repartners if grandchildren live most of the time with their mother. In fact, when sons “substitute” sets of children, there may be pressure on paternal grandparents to do the same. Of course, grown grandchildren are able to maintain ties with grandparents without parental mediation, although they may be affected by parents’ relationships with grandparents.

In Western societies, when married or cohabiting offspring with minor-age children find themselves single again, grandparents often provide them with financial support, child care, emotional support, advice, and even a place to live (Johnson, 1992). This support is then reduced when the offspring remarries or repartners (Bray & Berger, 1990; Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986; Clingempeel, Colyar, Brand, & Hetherington, 1992; Gladstone, 1989), a phenomenon called the *latent function hypothesis*.

Quality of relationships. The roles of grandparents may need to be renegotiated when an adult child separates or divorces and then remarries or cohabits with a new partner. In first-marriage families grandparents generally follow the lead of the middle generation adults for how they should function (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986; Kornhaber, 1996), but this is harder to do when the middle-generation couple is no longer together and who may, in fact, disagree with

each other about how much and in what ways they want grandparents involved. It is imperative that the older and middle generation adults get along if grandparents are to maintain relationships with grandchildren after middle generation adults remarry or repartner.

Relationships between former in-laws are hard to maintain for a lot of people after divorce because (1) the interactions become cold and impersonal, (2) they feel ill-at-ease with each other, or (3) they engage in hostile behavior (e.g., yelling, accusing) (Ambert, 1988). In fact, some grandparents take sides and reject not only their ex-in-laws but their grandchildren as well (Ambert). In the United States, grandparents have reacted to their lack of control over whether or not they see their grandchildren by pushing for laws that are designed to give them the legal right to see their grandchildren after offspring divorce. Maintaining positive relationships with former in-laws may be a cheaper and more effective way of ensuring continuing contact than litigation – more research is needed on how grandparents negotiate their ties with former children-in-law who have physical custody of their grandchildren.

Maintaining contact. Maintaining contact has been found to be an important factor affecting normative beliefs about intergenerational obligations (Coleman, Ganong, Hans, Sharp, & Rothrauff, 2005; Ganong & Coleman, 1998a). Regular contact may be interpreted as an indication or relationship closeness.

Although geographical distance between grandparents and grandchildren are related to frequency of contact for grandparents in general, Bornat and colleagues (1999) did not find distance to be related to grandparent–grandchild relationships. The advent of technology such as email, cell phones, and computer-assisted calling may mediate the effects of distance for maintaining intergenerational relationships, however (Hughes & Hans, 2004).

Bridges or walls? Clinicians have long asserted that grandparents can be either helpful or harmful to remarried adult children's attempts at developing and maintaining a positive stepfamily life – they can build bridges or they can build walls (Visher & Visher, 1996). They build bridges by accepting the remarriage, offering assistance when requested, and otherwise allowing the next generations to develop in their own ways. On the other hand, they can build walls by criticizing a new stepparent's attempts to help raise their grandchildren, by taking sides when former spouses argue over finances or child-rearing, by actively trying to break up a child's new marriage (or the remarriage of a former son-or daughter in-law), by refusing to accept into their family new stepgrandchildren or a new son- or daughter-in law, by using money and inheritance as weapons to punish or to divide younger generations, and by clearly favoring genetic grandchildren, particularly children born into the remarriage, over stepgrandchildren (Kalish & Visher, 1981). Grandparents usually have little or no control when a child or former child-in-law divorces and remarries, so some try to exert control in ways that are destructive to the remarriage or to the establishment of a functional stepfamily. Although researchers have found that grandparents are perceived by grandchildren to be important sources of emotional support for them after a parental remarriage (Kennedy & Kennedy, 1993; Mills et al., 2001), overall there has been little research on relationships between grandchildren and complex stepfamily grandparents.

Grandparents in Long-Term Stepfamilies

In long-term stepfamilies, the grandparents are the biological parents who had minor-age children from prior unions when they remarried or repartnered, and who remained in this long-term relationship at least until their children grew up and reproduced. The intergenerational relationships among grandparents in long-term stepfamilies are likely to be similar to

grandparent-grandchild relationships in ever-married nuclear families, if the grandparent helped raise the grandchildren's parent and maintained emotionally close relationships with them over the years (Clawson & Ganong, 2002; Ganong & Coleman, 1999). Having helped raise the middle generation implies taking care of them financially, emotionally, and physically when the children were young, and then aiding them in various ways as they transitioned into young adulthood. Maintaining contacts with nonresidential children and helping them when possible also would be important for grandparents in long-term stepfamilies who did not live with their children when the children were young (Coleman et al., 2005; Ganong & Coleman, 1998a). Although a few scholars have conducted studies of grandparents and grandchildren in long-term stepfamilies, little is known about these relationships.

Relationships among Adult Step/Children and Older Step/Parents

The availability of several large, longitudinal data sets that extended data collection from birth or early childhood into adulthood (e.g., the British National Child Development Survey) or that followed adolescents into adulthood (e.g., U.S. Panel Study of Income Dynamics) have contributed to increases in research examining relationships between adult stepchildren and their stepparents and parents. The focus of many of these investigations was the long-term effects of parents' remarriages on adult offspring (39 such studies were conducted between 1990 and 1999 alone; Coleman, Ganong, & Fine, 2000). Although the effects of parental remarriage are beyond the scope of this chapter, there also was research on intergenerational relationships - early home leaving, coresidence with parents, closeness of relationships with parents and stepparents, and exchanges of resources.

Home leaving. In several studies in the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States, researchers have reported that adolescents who lived in stepparent households left the household

at younger ages on average than did adolescents living with both parents (e.g., Aquilino, 1991a; Golderscheider & Goldscheider, 1998; Kiernan, 1992). Apparently, these stepchildren left to set up their own households because they were less likely to attend school or join the military than were children in nuclear family households. Early home leaving may be more prevalent for stepdaughters than stepsons (Aquilino, 1991a), although not all studies have found gender differences (Hill, Yeung, & Duncan, 1996).

Early home leaving has generally been attributed to the more stressful atmosphere in step-households (e.g., Cooney & Mortimer, 1999; Kiernan, 1992) or to conflict with parents and stepparents (Young, 1987). The presence of stepsiblings as a significant predictor of home leaving suggests that greater stepfamily complexity might contribute as well (Aquilino, 1991a). More children in the household and the resulting financial demands might lead stepfamily households to encourage home leaving - Golderscheider and Goldscheider (1998) found evidence suggesting that members of stepparent households (adults and adolescents) had greater expectations for early independence of adolescents than did members of other types of households. Other researchers found that both parents and stepparents thought that they had fewer obligations to financially support children than did parents in first marriage families (Aquilino, 2005; Marks, 1995), which may indicate a greater willingness in stepfamilies to encourage young adults to strike out on their own.

Crosbie-Burnett and colleagues (2005), assuming that all stepchildren who left households early were pushed out of the household by the parent and stepparent or left voluntarily due to highly stressful conditions, proposed a number of explanations for adult stepchild extrusion, including: (a) insecure attachments between stepchild and parent and between stepchild and stepparent, (b) greater power in the hands of the presumably extruding

stepparent, and (c) extruding the stepchild because of the stepparent's beliefs that such action would reduce the stepparent's stress or would otherwise increase the likelihood of improving the quality of stepfamily living. In a commentary on this essay, Ganong and Coleman (2005) cautioned against unidirectional explanations; they favored research designs that utilize bi-directional models of influence (stepchildren affecting the adults as well as vice versa). They also criticized research models of stepfamily living that assume stepchildren are members of only one household (increasingly in the United States stepchildren spend some time with both biological parents after divorce) and they questioned whether early home leaving was always due to negative reasons. For example, one factor that has not been examined is the possibility that earlier home leaving by adolescent and young adult stepchildren involves moving in with their other parent or other relatives (Ganong & Coleman, 2005). In addition to needing further research on the reasons for earlier home leaving, it would be helpful to have longitudinal studies of the effects of home leaving on parent-child and stepparent-child relationships.

Coresidence. It is not unusual for adult offspring to reside in multi-generational households with their parents; sometimes the older generation has taken in the younger to assist them during rough financial times, and sometimes the younger adult shares his or her residence with aging parents, sometimes to provide care and sometimes for financial reasons (Cohen & Casper, 2002). Research findings about adult children sharing a residence with older parents and stepparents have been mixed. One researcher reported that adult children were less likely to live in a remarried parent's home (Aquilino, 1991b), but in another study, only adults who grew up with a father and stepmother were less likely to take older parents into their homes than were individuals from nuclear families; there were no differences in coresidence when they had grown up with a mother and stepfather (Szinovacz, 1997). Differences between young adults from

father-stepmother and nuclear family households disappeared when closeness to parents and demographic variables were considered. In yet another study, adults who had a stepfather were not significantly less likely to share a residence with their mothers than were young adults whose parents were still married (White & Rogers, 1997). In these studies, differences in intergenerational closeness have been the main factor used to explain differences in coresidence between stepchildren and adult children of married parents.

Closeness to parents and stepparents. Remarried parents have less contact with their adult children than do married parents (Aquilino, 1994; Bulcroft & Bulcroft, 1991; De Jong Gierveld & Peeters, 2003; Lawton, Silverstein, & Bengtson, 1994), and parents in cohabiting and LAT relationships have less frequent weekly contact with adult children than do remarried parents (De Jong Gierveld & Peeters, 2003). Frequency of contact between adult children and their parents is often assumed to be an indicator of emotional closeness, although not all studies have found a strong connection between contact and perceived closeness (White, 1992).

Some studies have reported strong gender effects. For instance, in a U.S. longitudinal study, mothers' remarriages had positive effects on closeness of relationships with adult children for mothers, nonresidential fathers, and stepfathers, but fathers' remarriages had negative effects on their relationships (White, 1994b; White & Wang, 2001). White (1994b) also found that daughters were more negatively affected by parental remarriage than were sons, a finding consistent with several studies of minor age stepchildren.

Not all studies have reported these gender effects, however. Aquilino (1994), using the same data set as did White (1994b), found that remarriage of custodial parents had only slight effects on relationship quality and children's contact with custodial parents, and the effects were similar for mothers and fathers. Mothers' remarriage did reduce contacts with nonresidential

fathers, but custodial fathers' remarriages had large negative effects on relationship quality with nonresidential mothers and on contact frequency. Sons and daughters did not react differently to parental remarriage (Aquilino, 1994). Cooney et al (1995) found that maternal remarriage was related to limited intimacy with both parents for children, but paternal remarriage contributed to mother-son intimacy.

It is hard to know what the mixed findings on gender and adult child-parent relationships mean. Schmeekle (2007), in an unusual qualitative longitudinal design, found that traditional gender practices in raising children had residual effects on adult stepchild-stepparent and parent-child relationships in stepfamilies. Gendered practices in relating to offspring as adults also affected relationship closeness, not only among stepfamily household members, but also among nonresidential parents and the entire stepfamily. Her study illustrated the complex nature of gender effects in stepfamilies (e.g., stepmothers were kinkeepers, but parents and stepparents regardless of sex served as relationship gatekeepers for their own kin). It may be that egalitarian stepfamily couples relate to children and stepchildren in different ways than do more traditionally gendered couples, which results in divergent long-term relationship dynamics; more research is needed to determine the relevance of gender on relationship outcomes.

Most of the studies on parent-adult child and stepparent-adult stepchild closeness have utilized reports of either parents or stepparents in large data sets. Adult children and stepchildren may have different views about these relationships, however, so researchers should make efforts to obtain their perspectives as well (Aquilino, 1999; Schmeekle, 2007). Small-scale qualitative designs could add immeasurably to what is known about relationship quality between children and adults in stepfamilies. For instance, fathers in Vinick's (1999) in-depth study of 36 long-term remarried couples illustrated how they made attempts at rectifying disengaged relationships with

nonresidential children from whom they had drifted away, and other qualitative studies have started to reveal the important kin-keeping roles played by older stepmothers (Schmeekle, 2007; Vinick, 1998). Little is known about the long-term family processes in stepmother households (see the Coleman, Troilo, and Jamison chapter in this volume for a review of stepmother research), and how they might differ from those of stepfather households, so additional research, whether retrospective or longitudinal designs, would be enormously helpful. The longitudinal design of Schmeekle (2007) is a good example of employing qualitative methods to assess gendered dynamics in stepfamilies from the stepchildren's perspectives.

Resources exchanged. Although not all studies report differences between first marriage and remarriage families in resources exchanged between adult children and parents and stepparents (e.g., Eggebeen, 1992), and the differences were often not large, most researchers have reported that, on average, remarried parents provide less financial and instrumental support to adult (step)children than do parents in first marriages (White, 1992; 1994a). Mothers who are remarried may give some types of support as much as do married mothers (Amato et al., 1995; Marks, 1995; Spitze & Logan, 1992), and they exchange more resources with children than do remarried fathers (Amato et al, 1995; White, 1994b).

Conversely, adult children who lived in stepfamilies exchange less support on average with parents and stepparents than do adults from nuclear families (Pezzin & Schone, 1999; White, 1994a). For instance, Amato et al (1995) found that even though remarried mothers gave as much to their adult children as did married mothers, they received less support from children than did married mothers.

With rare exceptions, studies of resource exchanges between adult children and parents and stepparents have compared members of step-households to those from first marriage

households and single-parent headed households. This ignores the possibility that adult stepchildren may have adults from two households (e.g., remarried/repartnered mother and remarried/repartnered father) with whom they may exchange resources. Given the small differences often found between household types (e.g., White 1994a found that 47% of adult children from first marriage families received help from parents compared to 41% from stepfather households and 38% from stepmother households), it is likely that adult stepchildren may receive as much support as those from ever-married parents if both households are included. Of course, this also means that some adult stepchildren have 3 or 4 older adults living in two households with whom they might need to provide support, so researchers must be careful when studying intergenerational aid in stepfamilies to accurately assess the demands and resources available to people in complex stepfamilies.

Intergenerational Obligations in Stepfamilies

Parent-Child Relationships

Several reasons have been proposed to explain why stepfamily members do or do not make intergenerational transfers of resources. Differences between remarried/repartnered parents and parents in first marriages in support of adult children have been attributed to a number of factors. For example, parental divorce and separation of cohabiting couple relationships when children are young, and the relationships between children and parents that subsequently evolve, may result in adult offspring having fewer reasons to help parents later in life, especially parents who did not live with them when they were children.

Parents' remarriage/repartnering also may disrupt parent-child bonds when children are young. In a series of studies about normative beliefs about intergenerational obligations following divorce and remarriage, Ganong, Coleman and colleagues found that (a) kinship, (b)

intergenerational closeness or relationship quality, and (c) prior patterns of assistance between generations (i.e., reciprocity) were significant influences on judgments about whether intergenerational responsibilities existed, and, if so, how much help should be given (Coleman & Ganong, 1998; Coleman et al., 2005; Ganong & Coleman, 1998a; 1998b; 1999; 2006). Other contextual factors were important for attributing how much help to give, such as available resources and other demands on kin, but these were not as important as perceiving kinship bonds, closeness, and reciprocity.

Kinship counts, but so does relationship quality and reciprocity. Traditionally, in most societies kinship status between adults and offspring is important because intergenerational kinship means that there are special bonds of duty and responsibility between generations. Parents are expected to take care of children when they are young and dependent, and in turn children have obligations to help parents when they become old and frail. Such cultural expectations have been called family obligation norms, filial obligations, filial piety (in Asian cultures), and filial responsibilities (Ganong & Coleman, 1999). In the past, and in traditional societies now, kinship obligation norms influence what people do when younger or older family members are in need of assistance.

Social scientists have argued that kinship definitions are more flexible than in the past (Hareven, 1996; Scanzoni & Marsiglio, 1993). Instead of limiting family membership to individuals related by the traditional standards of genetic and legal bonds (Schneider, 1980), today's post-modern families are said to rely on more fluid markers of kinship, such as mutual affection and shared interests (Hareven, 1996; Scanzoni & Marsiglio, 1993). Divorce, cohabiting relationship terminations, and remarriage/repartnering can result in changes in how family members define who is in and who is out of their kin networks. Parents who diminish the amount

of contact they have with their children after separation or divorce may lose kinship status in the eyes of their children, for instance, as may parents who have conflicted or hostile interactions with children and who are emotionally distant. If remarriage of a parent creates emotional distance between parents and children, or if aid to children is reduced by remarriage, then there also may be effects on how kinship between parent and child is perceived.

Studies of normative beliefs about intergenerational obligations have found that kinship is immutable for only a minority of Americans (Ganong & Coleman, 1999). That is, for approximately 25% of the participants in multiple studies examining multiple tasks, intergenerational obligations between parents and adult children were unaffected by marital transitions, relationship quality, prior patterns of helping, or other factors (Coleman et al., 2005; Ganong & Coleman, 1998a; 1998b; 1999; 2006). The exception was inheritance, where nearly all thought that genetic kin took precedence over stepkin (Coleman & Ganong, 1998).

Most people, however, perceived lower obligations and suggested less help be given when parent-child relationships were emotionally distant, contact had not been maintained after divorce or remarriage, and parents had not aided children in the past. In such situations, intergenerational exchanges were more discretionary than obligatory. Kinship was still relevant, but did not automatically carry with it special considerations that overrode other relational factors.

Relationship closeness. Genetic ties were not enough to compensate for poor quality, hostile, or negligent parent-child relationships in the past (Ganong & Coleman, 1998a; 1998b; 1999). Under these circumstances, adults children were seen not to be obligated to aid older parents; instead, any help was discretionary and much more limited than when parent-child bonds were emotionally close. Not maintaining contact over time may lead to decisions not to

allocate resources to help parents when children reach adulthood and parents reach old age (Cooney, 1994). Frequent contact between parents and children following divorce, separation, or remarriage may be necessary for there to be feelings of kinship, attachment to the parent, and a sense among children that there are debts to be repaid. Children may be seen as having a lesser debt to repay than they would have had if parents had maintained contact with them and had remained emotionally close and had continued to provide financial, tangible, and emotional support to them.

Reciprocity. Adult children were not thought to be obligated to help parents who were not perceived to have fulfilled parental responsibilities to care for the children when they were young (Coleman, Ganong, & Cable, 1997; Ganong & Coleman, 2006b). Family obligation norms no longer applied when genetic kin had not observed the *norm of reciprocity* between generations (younger family members owe older family members for having raised them). Kinship ties meant something to these samples of Americans, but without maintaining emotionally close ties and past histories of mutual helping, it was almost as if the special loyalties and responsibilities attendant to sharing kinship were lost (Coleman et al., 1997; Ganong & Coleman, 1999; 2006b).

Stepparent-Stepchild Relationships

Kinship? Stepgrandparents, stepparents, and stepchildren may become family members, even without legal connections (via adoption) or without sharing genetic ties (Schmeekle, Giarrusso, Feng, & Bengtson, 2005; Widmer, 2006). However, several studies have found that the inclusion of step-kin as part of a family network is quite variable (Schmeekle et al., 2005; Widmer, 2006). Young stepchildren identify various configurations of people as members of their families, sometimes including stepparents and sometimes not (Gross, 1987), and they utilize a broad array of criteria for kinship, such as sharing genetic ties, living together, living

with the child's nonresidential parent, and being important to the child for some reason (Funder, 1991). Some adolescent stepchildren consider their stepparents to be parents, friends, or outsiders, depending on the nature of the relationship (Fine et al., 1998). Adult stepchildren also employ a variety of criteria to decide who is in their family networks (Schmeekle et al., 2005). Stepfathers (Marsiglio, 2004) and stepmothers (Weaver & Coleman, 2005) also have been found to vary greatly in how and when they claim stepchildren as kin. Some stepparents and stepchildren attain/are assigned quasi-kin status (Ganong, Coleman, & Weaver, 2002), which is loosely defined as a type of kinship bond that lacks some of the glue of genetic bonds – affection, loyalty, and a sense of obligation exists among quasi-kin, but perhaps not as much as to genetic kin. In summary, relationships with intergenerational step-kin can be considered to be: (a) the same as genetic kin, (b) a relationship almost like kinship, (c) close friendships, (d) causal acquaintanceships, (e) strangers, or (f) something much more negative. How step-relationships are defined is an important factor in understanding and predicting resource exchanges between older stepparents and adult stepchildren.

Decisions about exchanging resources between older stepparents and adult stepchildren may involve the same factors as decisions regarding resource allocations between children and parents. For instance, when step-relationships are perceived as kinship bonds, then norms of filial obligations apply as if there were genetic and legal ties (Coleman et al., 2005; Ganong & Coleman, 1998a).

Relationship closeness and reciprocity norms. Stepparents and stepchildren who develop emotionally close relationships or who have helped each other in the past (i.e., the stepparent had helped raise the stepchild or they had mutually assisted each other as adults) were perceived to have obligations to assist each other as much as possible, and at levels similar, but not quite

equal, to older parents and adult children who had close ties and reciprocal exchanges (Coleman et al., 2005; Ganong & Coleman, 1998a; 1998b; 1999). When long-term stepfamily relationships are emotionally close, then family members are expected to assist each other in times of need.

In general, emotional bonds between stepparents and stepchildren tend to be less cohesive than parent-child bonds because: (a) stepparents and stepchildren often have spent little time together, reducing chances to develop close bonds; (b) stepchildren may feel loyalty to their parents that prevents them from trying to get close to the stepparent; and (c) some stepparents rush into parental (e.g., disciplinary) roles before they have developed an emotional bond, which deters them from establishing warm relationships with stepchildren (Ganong et al., 2002). The weaker emotional bonds in stepfamilies may contribute to structurally weaker social networks than in first marriage families (White, 1994a; Widmer, 2006), resulting in lower family solidarity and fewer felt obligations between stepfamily members.

Step-relationships formed in later-life would not have the opportunities that long-term stepparents and stepchildren would have to build emotional bonds and exchange resources with each other, thus reducing the likelihood that older stepparents and adult stepchildren would exchange resources or perceive each other as kin (Ganong & Coleman, 2006a; Ganong et al., 1998). Although direct reciprocity norms may not apply in later-life step-relationships, other types of reciprocity influenced judgments about intergenerational assistance – for instance, some people thought that older stepparents should be helped by adult stepchildren as a way to repay the stepparents for help they provided to the genetic parents or as an indirect way to repay parents for their past aid by helping their new spouses/partners.

There are other reasons why exchanges between stepparents and stepchildren might be less than parent-child exchanges. Stepparent-stepchild bonds are ambiguous and cultural

guidelines regarding appropriate behavior regarding mutual responsibilities and interactions in stepchildren-stepparent relationships are either absent or unclear (Cherlin, 1978). Also, in most societies there are few legally-mandated responsibilities between stepchildren and stepparents. Even when stepparents develop close relationships with stepchildren, and many do, most stepparents are additional adults in the lives of adult children, rather than substitutes for deceased or absent divorced parents. Consequently, in some families resources may not be adequate to include stepparents. If stepparents are seen as having less right to receive aid than parents do, then they will be more likely to have to seek assistance from non-familial sources.

The importance of *norms of kinship obligations* and *reciprocity*, and the relevance of *emotional attachments* between generations help explain decisions about intergenerational transfers between stepchildren and stepparents. It may be that the more closely step-relationships resemble parent-child relationships in affect felt between the generations, the more likely similar decisions will apply. For example, when step-relationships resemble close parent-child bonds, when the stepparent and stepchild have spent years together in the relationship, and when stepparents have served as the functional equivalents of parents (e.g., helping raise children, providing children with resources), then decisions about intergenerational transfers may apply to step-relationships just as they do to genetic parent-child relationships. The more step-relationships deviate from parent-child ties, the less likely that similar decisions about intergenerational transfers between stepchildren and stepparents will be made (Ganong & Coleman, 1999).

Summary

Flying below the radar screen, intergenerational relationships in aging stepfamilies have grown rapidly in most industrialized societies, and older stepfamilies and their issues will soon

be confronting practitioners and policy makers in large numbers. Although there has been an explosion of informative research in the past 15 years, there are many areas remaining to be investigated. Researchers need to differentiate between the different types of stepgrandparents and grandparents, noting when stepfamilies formed. Longitudinal studies of grandparents and stepgrandparents are needed. Researchers should be aware that there are multiple perspectives to be considered when studying intergenerational relationships in stepfamilies, and each generation should be included, if not in every study, in the body of work that is accumulating. Qualitative methods should continue to be employed because they offer great insights into family processes.

Future studies could examine the development of step-relationships or they could investigate patterns of how *bridges and walls* are constructed by either stepgrandparents or grandparents. A number of questions are pertinent: What resources are exchanged between step-kin? How are responsibilities to step-kin negotiated? What are stepchildren's concerns about aging stepparents? How does death of a parent affect intergenerational relationships between step-kin? How are inheritance issues resolved in stepfamilies? How do cohabiting stepfamilies in later life differ from remarried intergenerational stepfamilies? What are the effects of serial parental relationships on parent-child bonds? What roles do gender expectations play in the development and maintenance of intergenerational relationships in stepfamilies? The list of unaddressed or under-addressed questions could go on and on. Much remains to be known about intergenerational relationships in stepfamilies – to paraphrase Robert Browning's positive note on aging, in this area of study, "the best is yet to be."

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Table 1. Pathways to Becoming a Stepgrandparent

Later-life Stepgrandparenthood				
Child (G3)	—————→	<u>Grandchild's (G3) birth</u> G3 is born	—————→	<u>Remarriage of G1</u> G3 becomes a stepgrandchild
Adult child (G2)	—————→	G2 becomes a parent	—————→	G2 becomes an adult stepchild
Parent (G1)	—————→	G1 becomes a grandparent	—————→	G1 gets remarried, status to G2 and G3 does not change
Stepparent (SG1)	—————→	not in family yet	—————→	SG1 becomes a stepgrandparent to G3
Inherited Stepgrandparenthood				
Child (G3)	—————→	<u>Child's (G3) birth</u> G3 is born	—————→	<u>Remarriage of G2</u> G3 becomes a stepchild and stepgrandchild
Adult child (G2)	—————→	not in family yet	—————→	G2 gets remarried becomes a stepparent to G3
Parent (G1)	—————→	not in family yet	—————→	G1 becomes a stepgrandparent to G3
Long-term Stepgrandparenthood				
Child (G3)	—————→	<u>Remarriage of G1</u> not born yet	—————→	<u>Child's (G3) birth</u> G3 becomes a grandchild (G1) and stepgrandchild (SG1)
Adult child (G2)	—————→	becomes a stepchild	—————→	becomes a parent to G3
Parent (G1)	—————→	remarries SG1	—————→	G1 becomes a grandparent to G3
Stepparent (SG1)	—————→	remarries G1, becomes a stepparent	—————→	SG1 becomes a stepgrandparent to G3

Table 2. Types of Grandparents in Stepfamilies**Later life Remarried/Repartnered Grandparenthood**

Child (G3)	—————→	<u>Grandchild's (G3) birth</u> G3 is born	—————→	<u>Remarriage or other Union of G1</u> G3 is still grandchild ; becomes a stepgrandchild to G1's partner
Adult child (G2)	—————→	G2 becomes a parent	—————→	G2 is still an adult child ; becomes an adult stepchild
Parent (G1)	—————→	G1 becomes a grandparent	—————→	G1 gets remarried, status to G2 and G3 does not change

Complex Stepfamily Grandparenthood

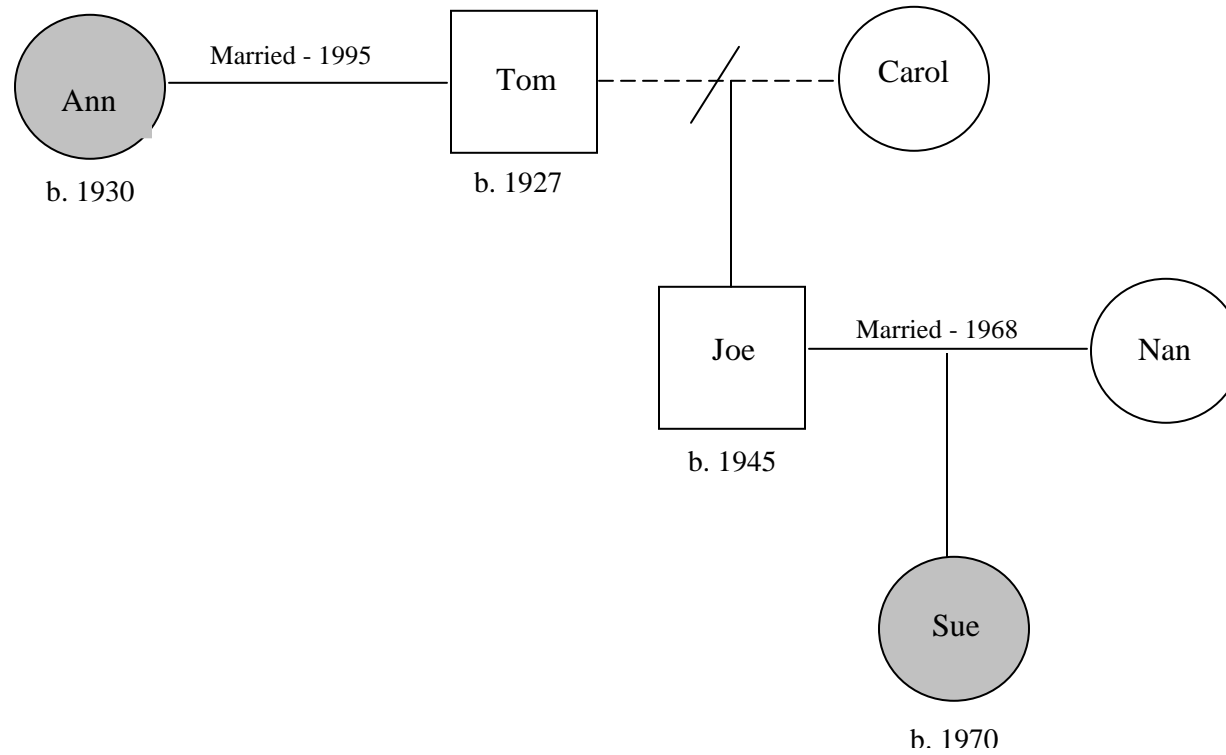
Child (G3)	—————→	<u>Grandchild's (G3) birth</u> G3 is born	—————→	<u>Remarriage or Other Union of G2</u> G3 becomes a stepchild and stepgrandchild
Adult child (G2)	—————→	G2 becomes a parent	—————→	G2 gets remarried, may become a stepparent ; is a parent to G3
Parent (G1)	—————→	G1 becomes a grandparent	—————→	G1 is a grandparent to G3; may become a stepgrandparent

Grandparenthood in Long-term Stepfamilies

Child (G3)	—————→	<u>Remarriage of G1</u> not born yet	—————→	<u>Child's (G3) birth</u> G3 becomes a grandchild (G1) and stepgrandchild (SG1)
Adult child (G2)	—————→	becomes a stepchild	—————→	becomes a parent to G3
Parent (G1)	—————→	remarries or cohabits	—————→	G1 becomes a grandparent to G3

Pathways to Stepgrandparenthood

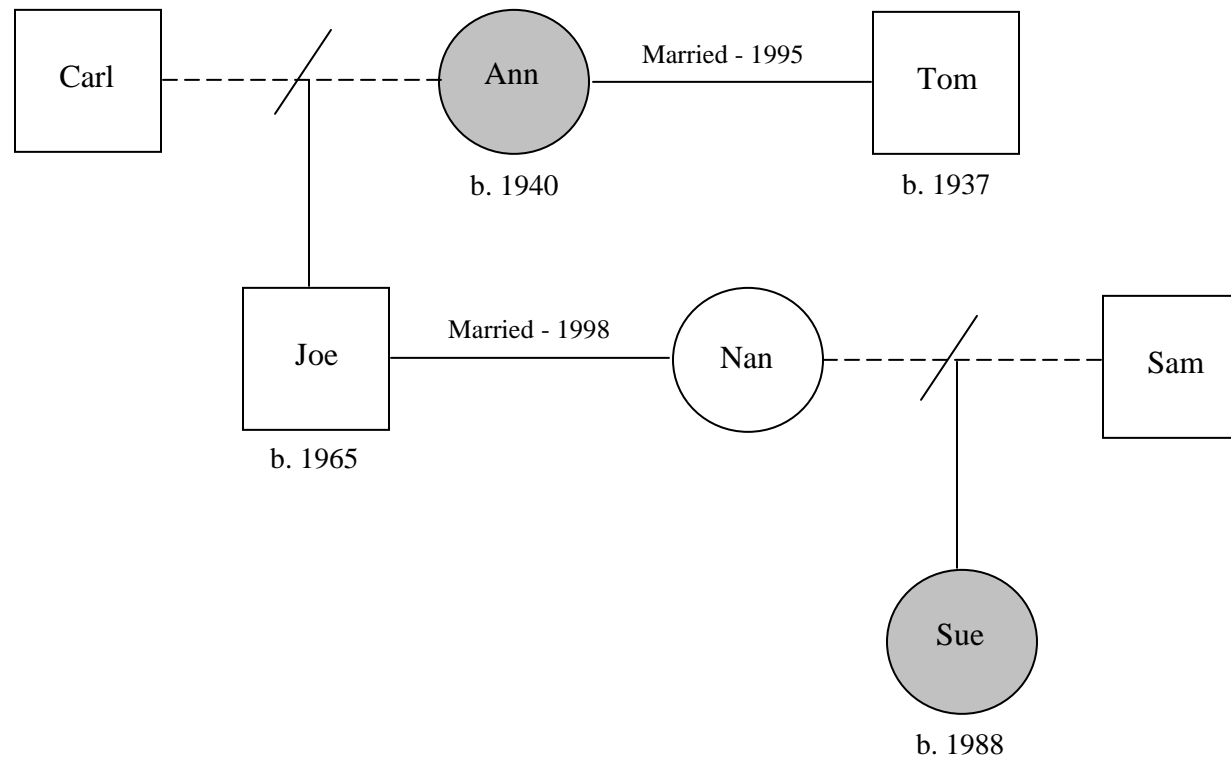
FIGURE 1a - LATER LIFE STEPGRANDPARENT¹



¹ Sue was 25 when Ann married Tom and became Sue's stepgrandmother.

Pathways to Stepgrandparenthood

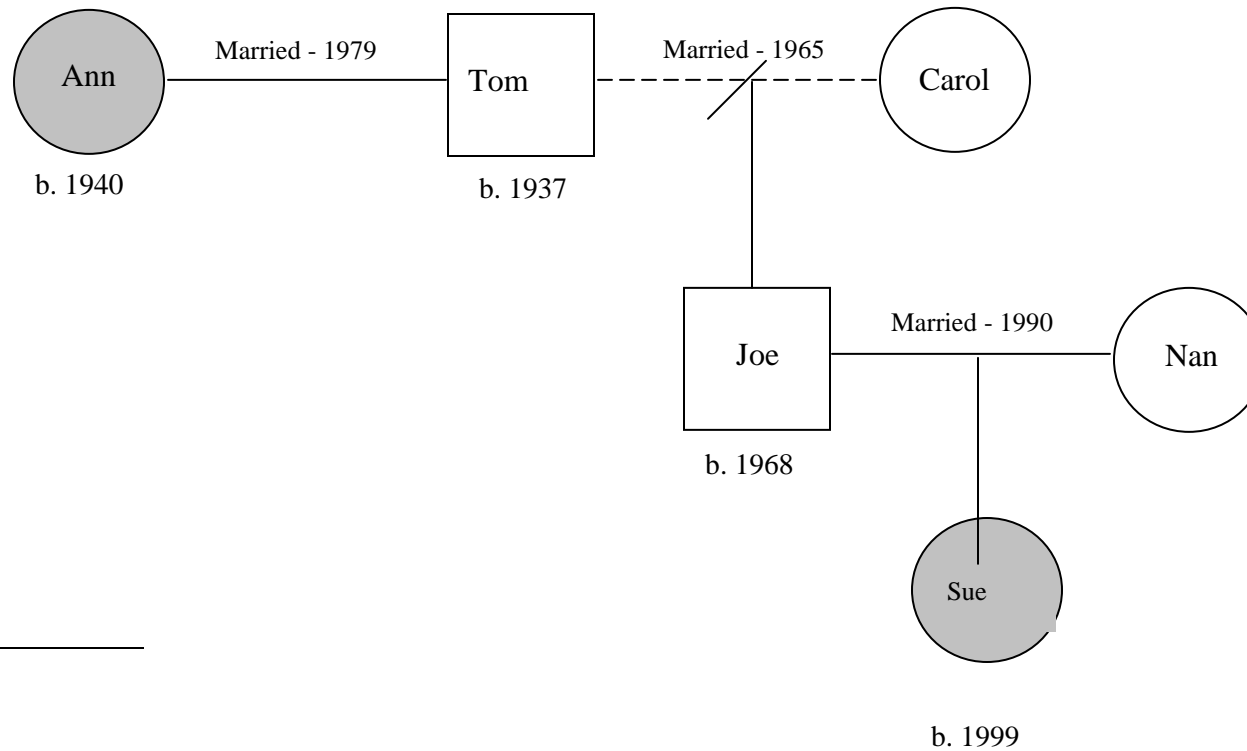
FIGURE 1B - INHERITED STEPGRANDPARENT¹



¹ Ann and Tom had been married 3 years when Joe married Nan and became a stepfather to Sue. Sue was 10 when Ann became her step grandmother

Pathways to Stepgrandparenthood

FIGURE 1C – LONG-TERM REMARRIED STEPGRANDPARENT¹



¹ Ann and Tom had been married 20 years when Sue was born, making Ann a stepgrandmother. Joe had lived with Tom since he was 3, and he had lived with Ann since she joined the household when he was 11.