THE DEVELOPMENT AND FIELD TESTING OF AN INSTRUMENT TO MEASURE MIDDLE SCHOOL COUNSELORS' KNOWLEDGE OF STEPCHILDREN,

by

Monica M. Megivern

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

Student Personnel Services

APPROVED:

Charles W. Humes  Jim Fortune
Co-Chairperson  Co-Chairperson

Johnnie Miles  Theodore Cromack

Linda Little  Douglas Favero

January, 1990

Blacksburg, Virginia
THE DEVELOPMENT AND FIELD TESTING OF AN INSTRUMENT TO MEASURE MIDDLE SCHOOL COUNSELORS' KNOWLEDGE OF STEPCHILDREN

by

Monica M. Megivern
Committee Chairpersons: Charles W. Humes and Jim Fortune

(ABSTRACT)

School counselors are in a position to receive referrals concerning children's reactions to changing family structures and to help a stepchild adjust to stepfamily living. This study assessed the need for training and education of Virginia middle school counselors regarding their knowledge about counseling stepchildren. This was done by measuring their level of knowledge through the development and use of the instrument, Knowledge and Skills for Counseling Stepchildren: A Self Assessment (KSCS).

The focus of this study was the development and refinement of the KSCS. The purpose of the instrument was to assess the training needs of middle school counselors' knowledge about counseling stepchildren. The development of the KSCS took place through conducting item analyses on two pilot studies.

Results of the study established a profile of middle school counselors past preparation, current strengths and deficiencies, and the need for training in the area of counseling stepchildren. The majority of counselors had done no prior reading or taken any coursework on the counseling of stepchildren. Test scores on the KSCS were
negatively skewed, reflecting a low level of knowledge and identifying a need for training and education in this area.

The majority of counselors came from schools where enrollment was 501 to 1,000 and 30% of their caseloads were stepchildren. Counselors from schools where enrollment was 0 to 500 and over 1,000 had caseloads where stepchildren also represented one-third of the students counseled, indicating a consistently high population of stepchildren.

The majority of counselors offered no psychological or educational counseling program specifically for stepchildren. Six counselors offered a program specifically for stepchildren and 15 offered time-limited groups for children with separated or divorced parents that addressed issues pertinent to stepfamily living.

Recommendations include revisions to the KSCS and required coursework on the counseling of stepchildren for state certification of school counselors.
DEDICATION

To Mark, for your encouragement,

patience and love.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Though I did not expect it, the road to this final document was a very humbling experience. Perhaps no other time in my life have I been as aware of my dependence on others for support, encouragement, and help. In giving the acknowledgment section serious thought, it strikes me that there have been many people — friends, teachers, family, colleagues and clients — who have shaped my values and affirmed my worth as a person and therapist. I could not possibly name them all. Those who are named are to represent all who now should share in this brief moment of joy and relief.

To Dr. Charles Humes, my doctoral advisor, I express my most sincere gratitude for his patient and wise advise, and his leadership in working with the committee.

Dr. Jim Fortune, co-chairperson, was a source of constant encouragement, and skillful direction. When he suggested the idea of doing a test rather than a survey, he backed up the suggestion with the total support of his vast knowledge and expertise in test development.

Dr. Ted Cromach seemed to always be available to me in the frantic times. His help was immeasurable (every pun intended) in test item development.

Dr. Johnnie Miles worked with me in the early days to help hone in on the topic that I ultimately selected. For her interest and time I am deeply indebted. Dr. Linda
Little as well kept me, my topic, and my writing on track.

Last of the committee, but certainly not least, was Dr. Douglas Favero, who 10 years ago interviewed me for my first job in the Washington area. Since that day he has been a personal and professional confidant. It gives me great joy to know he remained essential to me through this ordeal.

To the two presidents of the Virginia School Counselors Association who agreed to support my efforts and displayed their dedication to the advancement of school counseling, I give thanks. It is an honor for me to have had them on my side - Frances Runzo and Loretta Kreps.

Ms. Katherine P. Divine, and Dr. Carol G. Barr from the Newport News Public School System, and Dr. Charles Jackson of the Alexandria School System also laid their commitment on the line by allowing me to conduct my pilot studies in their school systems. My special thanks to the three of you, and the counselors who participated in the pilots.

I have come to realize that I did not get to this point in a time capsule, but that I was started on this road a very long time ago by Robert and Norma Megivern, my mother and father who instilled in me a healthy curiosity for inquiry and a consistent desire for education.

A personal friend Peggy Miller-Menzin, who is also a respected colleague, did what friends do absolutely the best; listened. She listened to the frustrations and the ramblings. Peggy was always able to make sense out of the
disjointed thoughts and had the unique ability to make me laugh at myself.

Finally, to that wonderful group that I have come to know as my six stepchildren; Monica, who clipped every article on stepchildren that was printed in the last four years; Molly, who listened with great patience to all my frustrations; Amy, who always asked how the big "D" was progressing; Nora, who found me a place to live the summer I fulfilled my residency requirement in Blacksburg; Matt, who assisted in moving me to Blacksburg, and the youngest, Luke, who consulted in the statistical analysis. I love you all.

Not many doctoral candidates can say their husband typed their dissertation and I am eternally grateful and proud to say that my husband, Mark Peterschmidt has displayed that level of commitment to this project. There were many times that I know he regretted sitting down at midnight to type after putting in a sixteen hour day at work but he did it without a complaint. It was his shared interest in this topic and his encouragement and gentle prodding that is largely responsible for the completed document. You have my deepest thanks and appreciation.

vii
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Statement</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose Statements</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitations</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for the Study</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the Study</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of Divorce on Children</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of Remarriage on Children</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Role of the School Counselor in Student's Adjustment to Stepfamily Life</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumentation</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Instrumentation</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Study I</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Study II - The Northern Virginia Pilot</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of Instrument Development</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection Procedure</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER IV: RESULTS</strong></td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions and Data Analysis</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question One</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table

1 Table of Specifications .......................... 44

2 Form A Pilot: Newport News and Alexandria,
Virginia Public Schools Elementary, Middle and
Secondary School Counselors .......................... 49

3 Form B Pilot: Newport News and Alexandria,
Virginia Public Schools Elementary, Middle and
Secondary School Counselors .......................... 50

4 Table of Specifications .......................... 57

5 Northern Virginia Pilot .......................... 58

6 Combination of Forms A and B Used for Statewide
Study .................................................. 59

7 Table of Specifications .......................... 60

8 Knowledge and Skills for Counseling Stepchildren:
A Self Assessment ..................................... 72

9 Knowledge and Skills for Counseling Stepchildren:
A Self Assessment Measures of Central Tendency and
Score Variability ...................................... 76

10 Scores on KSCS Based on Sex of Middle School
Counselors ............................................. 77

11 Number of Years as a School Counselor ........... 78

12 Scores on the KSCS Based on Professional
Educational Level ..................................... 79

13 Middle School Counselors Training in Counseling
Stepchildren ........................................... 80

14 Number of Stepchildren Counseled Based Upon Size
of Enrollment .......................................... 83

15 Psychological or Educational Program for
Stepchildren ........................................... 85
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Currently one out of every five children under age 18 is a stepchild and by the year 2000 it is projected that the stepfamily will outnumber all other kinds of American families (Glick, 1984; Glick & Lin, 1986; Visher & Visher, 1988). With one million children becoming stepchildren each year (Visher & Visher, 1979) the implications for schools to respond to this changing family structure are vast. During the critical period of adjustment to living in a stepfamily, school personnel are likely to witness behavior in the student that reflects a multitude of conflicting emotions including confusion, sadness and anger which can result in lower academic performance and social interaction problems.

A child's intellectual and emotional growth can be hindered by the school personnel's lack of understanding of stepfamily dynamics. For example, students being given only two tickets to a school graduation forces a loyalty conflict for the stepchild. Students whose last name differs from the parents' last name may feel embarrassed and confused as to how to explain their family structure to school administration. A situation as simple as parent-teacher conferences can become very complicated if divorced spouses attend at the same time bringing their new spouses, the child's stepparents. The possibilities for confusion and complication are numerous and the child can be placed in the
middle.

Elizabeth Einstein and Linda Albert (1986) questioned in *Strengthening Your Stepfamily*, "How can children learn while their heads and hearts are in turmoil? As they worry about how they will fit in with all these new people, when and if they will see their grandparents, whether their new stepparent will stay, children's concentration dwindle and their studies suffer" (p. 98).

School counselors are in a position to receive referrals concerning children's reactions to changing family structures and to help a stepchild adjust to stepfamily living. Are school counselors sufficiently informed about the developmental life cycle of stepfamilies to aid adolescents facing adjustment to the new family unit? Do the credentialing requirements for school counselors adequately prepare the counselor for addressing these problems? These are the practical questions that will be addressed in this study.

**Background**

Family systems theory views the family as a social system in which change is ongoing. Families operate according to principles that apply to all social systems (Bertalanfy, 1968). Specifically, that means that families have characteristics similar to other social systems. Those characteristics include the following: (a) members of the system hold positions that are interdependent, (b) the
system has boundaries, (c) the system is simultaneously adaptive to change and is seeking balance, and (d) the system responds to internal and external forces (Hill, 1970 cited in Brown, 1984).

The newly created stepfamily is an example of systems theory at work. A remarriage or decision to live with another adult who has a child or children from a previous relationship creates a stepfamily (Visher & Visher, 1979) in which each member holds a position that is interdependent on other members.

The members of a stepfamily do not have a shared history in the same way a nuclear family does so there is a developmental need for expansion of the single parent family unit to integrate the new spouse or stepparent and his or her child(ren) (Ransom, Schlesinger, and Derdeyn, 1979). This process of integration results in a restructuring of the old family system to create a new system. The meshing of children from two families can create new birth orders for the children and this calls for a setting of new boundaries.

The stepfamily system may be bombarded with the simultaneous task of adapting to many changes and seeking balance. While the individual members of the stepfamily respond and adapt to these changes, the new system as a whole is naturally seeking a balance or equilibrium. In seeking a balance to the changes facing a stepfamily there evolves a developmental progression. The establishment of
an equilibrium is ultimately achieved by successfully progressing through developmental stages.

McGoldrick & Carter (1980) adopted The Remarried Family Formation schema originally presented by Ramson et al. (1979). This is similar to the concept of life cycle stages but pertains to stepfamily development. The developmental steps, as discussed by McGoldrick and Carter (1980) are necessary to the creation of a stepfamily. The steps are (a) entering a new relationship, (b) conceptualizing and planning a new marriage and family, (c) remarriage and reconstitution of the stepfamily. For each of the steps there is a corresponding task(s) to successful completion of that developmental step.

The adolescent in the context of this new family system faces unique developmental tasks. The adolescent holds a position of interdependence in the newly created stepfamily. Concurrently, the adolescent is developmentally in the process of redefining what interdependence means. This takes the form of moving away from the family system and spending more time in peer relationships in an effort to establish autonomy.

Adolescents faced with a parent's remarriage and the establishment of the new family unit are commonly expected to spend increased time with the stepfamily during the critical adjustment period. The life cycle of the adolescent is naturally and normally moving toward
separation and individualization. While in sharp contrast, the life cycle task of the new stepfamily is focused on establishing a social history of positive, shared experiences. This discrepancy in life cycle phases must be addressed and resolved in order to create harmony in the new stepfamily (McGoldrick & Carter, 1980).

Parental boundaries and limits are normally challenged throughout adolescence. Due to the new union of parent and stepparent, created by the remarriage or decision to live together, there is a new parental subsystem replacing the single parent family. Thus, the adolescent has an added task of establishing a relationship with an additional authority figure, the stepparent. The parental subsystem is forced to realign boundaries to include the new stepparent. This realignment of family system boundaries can be confusing and can serve as an additional challenge to the adolescent.

The adolescent stepchild can be overwhelmed with internal hormonal changes and a body that is externally changing. Forces such as peer group pressure brings added stress to the adolescent surrounded by changes. The adolescent who is in the process of adjusting to a new stepparent and stepsiblings is uniquely challenged to respond and adapt to external forces.

In addition, the adolescent stepchild, as a member of a newly created social system is also seeking to adapt to the
social system of the school. This is where the school
counselor has the potential to dramatically effect the
impact on an adolescent child's successful adjustment to
stepfamily living.

Problem Statement

The problem in this study was to assess the training
needs of middle school counselors through the measurement
and documentation of the level of knowledge that counselors
have regarding counseling stepchildren.

Purpose Statements

The purposes of this study were; a) to synthesize the
extant literature related to middle school counselors
knowledge in respect to counseling stepchildren, and b) to
assess the training needs of middle school counselors by
measuring the level of knowledge of counselors regarding
counseling stepchildren through the use of an instrument
created by the researcher called; Knowledge and Skills for
Counseling Stepchildren: A Self Assessment.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of knowledge of middle school
counselors regarding counseling stepchildren?
2. How is the experience, professional education, and
training of middle school counselors related to the
counseling of stepchildren?
3. What is the relationship of middle school counselors' level of practice to their counseling of stepchildren?
Delimitations

This study was confined to public, middle and junior high school counselors. The middle school counselors were selected from middle school counselors who were members of the Virginia School Counselors Association.

Limitations

1. The findings of this study are of relevance to school counselors who counsel students who are stepchildren.

Definitions

Terms germane to this study are identified to assist the reader in having a common context. The terms are defined below and listed in alphabetical order.

Stepchild: A stepchild is an offspring of parents who do not live together, where one or both of the parents has married another person or is living with a person in a committed relationship. The child is considered a stepchild regardless of whether or not the child is residing with the parent who is living with a new partner.

Stepfamily is a household in which there is an adult couple, at least one of whom has a child from a previous relationship. Included in this definition are households in which children may reside for a period of time varying from none to full-time and couples who may not be legally married. (Visher & Visher, 1979)

Test as used in this text is referred to as a needs assessment because the instrument that was developed,
Knowledge and Skills for Counseling Stepchild: A Self Assessment, was found to have adequate reliability for use as an assessment instrument, not a criterion assessment.

Need for the Study

One of the purposes of this study was to assess the need for training and education of middle school counselors regarding their knowledge about counseling stepchildren. The collection of this information is vital to developing counselors' expertise for working with stepchildren.

Research emphasizes that children ages 9-15 have been found to have more difficulty adjusting to a parent's remarriage than younger children (Hetherington & Camara, 1984; Poppen & White, 1984; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980b). The existing credentialing requirements for middle school counselors do not reflect the importance of knowledge regarding an adolescent stepchild's adjustment to stepfamily living (see Appendix D). The literature reflects a few articles addressing elementary school counselor's need to understand a student's family configuration (Kosinski, 1983; Poppen & White, 1984; Prosen & Farmer, 1982) but nothing on the important role that the middle school counselor can serve for the adolescent stepchild who has been found to be at greater risk.

The measuring and documentation of the knowledge held by current middle school counselors can point to strength and deficiencies in current training, education and
credentialing of middle school counselors. It presents an opportunity to hear from counselors about their educational preparation to work with stepchildren. Their experience with the adolescent stepchild will assist in establishing an accurate profile of the training and preparation of school counselors, and identify any deficiencies that exist.

The literature is lacking as to the significance of the role of the middle school counselor in counseling the adolescent stepchild. Without first understanding how counselors are addressing the issue of stepfamily adjustment with adolescents no recommendations to increase counselor's training can be made. It is important to understand what is being done by counselors in the middle school to help adolescents adjust to the new role of stepchild. This study is a first step toward documenting that knowledge.

Assumptions

An assumption of this study was that middle school counselors work with students who are experiencing academic and social problems that are related to the experiences of being in a stepfamily.

Organization of the Study

This study was organized around five chapters. The first chapter includes the introduction, a background statement, a statement of the problem, purpose statements, general research questions, delimitations, limitations, definitions, significance of the study and assumptions of
the study.

Chapter two contains a review of the literature as it relates to the effects of divorce and remarriage on stepchildren and school counselors' interventions with students who are stepchildren.

Chapter three describes the design of the study, instrumentation, population, pilot studies, the factors that contributed to the heterogeneity of the content areas of the test instrument, and the data collection procedure. Chapter four reports the results of the study and answers the research questions. Chapter five includes a summary of the results, discusses the conclusions of the results and recommendations for future work.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This section will review the pertinent and recent literature on the (a) behavioral and psychological effects of divorce on children, (b) the impact of a parent's remarriage on children and (c) the role of the school counselor in students' adjustment to stepfamily life.

In order to understand children's response to their parents' remarriage it is important to first understand the impact that divorce has on their lives.

Effects of Divorce on Children

An overview of the most recent empirical studies addressing the impact of divorce on children will set the stage for a more in-depth review of two of the landmark, longitudinal studies. Demo and Acock (1988) reviewed thirty-four empirical studies published since 1975 that compared non-clinical, children and adolescents from intact families and those from families of divorce on factors of personal adjustment, self-concept, cognitive functioning, interpersonal relationships and anti-social behavior.

The findings can be summarized in the following areas. The studies reflect that young children demonstrate personal adjustment problems at the time of the parents separation (Desimone-Luis, O'Mahoney, and Hunt, 1979; Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985; Hetherington, Cox, and Cox, 1979; Kurdek, Blisk, and Siesky, 1981; Santrock, 1975; and Wallerstein &
Kelly, 1975, 1980a). Children and adolescents are more affected by the amount of parental conflict involved in the separation and divorce than by the change in family structure (Ellison, 1983; Kurdek & Siesky, 1980; Rosen, 1979). This is particularly true for children. Results show that children's negative self-esteem is increased as the amount of parental discord increases (Long, 1986; Parish, Dostal, and Parish, 1981; Raschke & Raschke, 1979).

Studies that did address the possible benefits of a single parent household found that adolescents seem to display increased maturity and responsibility in post-separation households (Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985; Kalter, Alpern, Spence, and Plunkett, 1984; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974; Weiss, 1979).

In the area of academic performance studies showed that children from single parent households display a slight disadvantage in academic performance (Blanchard & Biller, 1971; Feldman & Feldman, 1975; Hess & Camara, 1979; Kinard & Reinherz, 1986; Kurdek, 1981; Radin, 1981). It should be noted that the variables of race and social class were not controlled in these studies on academic performance (Demo & Acock, 1988).

Children of divorced families experience more peer relationship problems than children in intact families (Hetherington, et al., 1979; Santrock, 1975; Wyman, Cowen, Hightower, and Pedro-Carroll, 1985). Adolescents from
divorced families date more and are sexually active at earlier ages than adolescents from intact families (Booth, Brinkerhoff, and White, 1984; Hogan & Kitagawa, 1985; Newcomer & Udry, 1987). However, this does not necessarily imply that adolescents have fewer relationship problems because they have more social interaction with peers than younger children. Adolescents who reside with their mothers in single parent households and in conflict-ridden homes engage in more antisocial behavior than adolescents from intact families (Dornbusch, Carlsmith, Bushwall, Ritter, Leiderman, Hastorf, and Gross, 1985; Kalter, Riemer, Brickman, and Chen, 1985; Peterson & Zill, 1986; Rickel & Langner, 1985).

It is important to point out the limitations of the current methodology of measuring the effect of divorce on children. The factors that create flaws in the prior research are: (a) family structure is classified in simplistic categories with factors such as father-absent households being categorized with the divorced, widowed or parent-incarcerated households; (b) social class and income are variables that are generally not controlled; (c) wide usage of nonrepresentative samples; (d) social and psychological well-being are studied in a narrow dimension; (e) many studies do not look at the possible benefits of differing family structures and; (f) the divorce has not been viewed as a developmental process so there is a lack of
longitudinal research designs (Demo & Acock, 1988).

There are two studies on the effects of divorce on children which standout among the hundreds that have been done. The Hetherington et al. (1978 & 1979) and Wallerstein and Kelly (1980b) longitudinal studies have received great notoriety (Demo & Acock, 1988). They are reviewed here in depth.

The 1971, landmark, ten year, longitudinal study of Wallerstein and Kelly (1980b) consisted of 131 children and adolescents, who were studied with their parents during a period within weeks of the time of the marital separation. The study consisted of a predominately white, middle-class, non-clinical population of divorced families from Northern California. Family members were interviewed again at 18 months and 5 years post-separation. The decision to extend the study to 10 years post-separation was made, in part, as a result of the adolescents' remarks made during the 5-year interviews. The remarks focused on their anxiety regarding their capacity to sustain a committed, long-term love relationship. It was concluded by researchers that following the population for another five years would assist them in assessing whether or not the anxiety that the adolescents expressed at the 5-year follow-up had actually resulted in adults who had problematic love relationships.

At the first stage of the study, within a few weeks of the marital separation, the children and adolescents ages 9-
18 displayed signs of depression, anxiety, rage, guilt and worry about their parents (Wallerstein, 1985). Age and developmental maturity seemed to be the dominant factors that determined the children's ability to cope and adjust to their parents separation (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1976). However, there were differences between latency age children and adolescents' behavior and emotional responses. Those differences were characterized by the latency age children being caught in loyalty conflicts between parents, feelings of powerlessness to reunite their parents and a loss in academic achievement that continued one year post-separation (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1976).

In the adolescent group responses included acute depression, withdrawal from friends and academic work, and anxiety regarding their future. In addition, a significant number of adolescents displayed a maturational growth spurt that was characterized by compassion and helpfulness toward their parents (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974).

At 18 months post-separation it appeared that those children and adolescents whom initially displayed good coping and adjustment skills were now displaying some psychological decline (Wallerstein, 1985). Also emerging during this time was a difference in response between the sexes. Latency age males displayed troubled behavior at home and with peers, in addition to lowered performance at school, while latency aged girls had shown improvement over
their initial reactions (Wallerstein, 1985). At this time, there were no significant differences between the sexes in the adolescent group (Wallerstein, 1985).

At the 5-year stage neither age nor sex were a factor in the behavior or psychological well-being of the children. Factors that did contribute to children's emotional well-being were the quality of the parenting skills in the custodial home, the consistency of the relationship to the non-custodial parent and the lessening of the conflict between the parents (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980a).

Of the 113 original children and adolescents, 40 from 26 different families were found and interviewed in the ten year follow-up. The dominant feelings that they expressed were residual resentment at parents, a sense of loss of a happy childhood experience due to not growing up in an intact family, fear of repeating their parents mistakes in a failed marriage, and sadness that the divorce took time away from their childhood play and school life (Wallerstein, 1985).

In contrast, they also expressed pride in their increased independence and maturity which they attributed to the separation-divorce experience (Wallerstein, 1985). A significant number of the men and women appeared troubled and unsettled in a committed relationship or an occupation (Wallerstein, 1985). There also emerged a high, fixed, identification with being a child of divorce, an identity
that seemed to prevail even though these children are now adults.

In another longitudinal study on the effects of divorce on children Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1982) studied 144 middle-class, white, parents and children. Of the 144 subjects, half were from divorced families where the mother had custody and half were from nondivorced families. The number of boys and girls were divided equally between the two groups. The groups were studied at intervals of 2 months, 1 year, 2 years, and 6 years post-separation.

Results reflect that the latency age boys in the divorced families had more difficulty on a long-term basis in home and school adjustment than girls in divorced families. Both boys and girls in divorced families displayed more problems on a short-term basis than children from nondivorced families. However, upon the remarriage of the mother, there was an increase in the short-term behavioral problems of girls and a decrease in the boys problems (Hetherington, Cox, and Cox, 1985). These findings which used a nonrepresentative sample are supported in the large scale surveys of Guidubaldi and Perry, (1985) and the representative samples of the national surveys of Peterson and Zill, (1986).

This is suggestive of children's post-marital separation adjustment being dependent on their residing with the same sex parent. The Hetherington, et al. (1985) study
points to remarriage creating a critical short-term adjustment period that the child of the same sex parent has in sharing that parent with a stepparent of the opposite sex. There emerges implications for short-term therapeutic intervention to assist in the adjustment to the new stepfamily.

Summary

It is critical to the understanding of the therapeutic needs of stepchildren in adjusting to a parent's remarriage to first understand the psychological trauma that was created by the divorce. In this section an overview of those behavioral and psychological effects were presented.

The theme of loss is consistent throughout the empirical literature on the effects of divorce on children. Loss takes various forms such as loss of income to the family, loss of a parent in the home, loss of the family home and school due to a necessary move, or loss of siblings due to splitting parental custody of children. It is these losses that a stepchild is grieving and usually carrying within them at the time of their parents remarriage.

Effects of Remarriage on Children

An overview of the clinical and empirical literature on the effects of remarriage on children was conducted in 1984 (Ganong & Coleman) and updated by the authors in 1986 and 1987. One of the conclusions drawn from these reviews is that there were two primary similarities between the
clinical and empirical literature. The similarities were that each group valued that a stepchild's adjustment to the remarriage was influenced by family functioning and that each group held an underlying assumption of the deficiency in the very position of being a stepchild (Ganong & Coleman, 1987). The authors refer to this phenomenon as the "deficit-comparison approach" where it is assumed by the researcher that a family structure other than the intact nuclear family produces negative results in children (Ganong & Coleman, 1987). An example of this concept is the lay use of the term stepchild as a metaphor for being "less than" or not quite good enough.

A closer look at Ganong and Coleman's (1987) review of the empirical literature revealed that they categorized 62 studies on stepchildren between 1956 and 1987 in the areas of underlying theory, independent and dependent variables, sampling procedures, age of the stepchildren, type of stepfamily, the method of study utilized and results. Besides the consistent use of the deficit-comparison assumption as a framework on which the research was developed, the studies were characterized by Ganong and Coleman (1984) in the following problem areas; small sample size (15 samples were under 100 subjects); non-randomized samples (40) two of which were clinical populations (Garbarino, Sebes, & Schellenbach, 1984 and Kalter, 1977) and one study (Dahl, McCubbin & Lester, 1976) in which the
stepfamilies were those whose husband was absent, not due to a divorce, but due to disappearance in the Vietnam War; a limited number of variables were tested, of those that were, many were not replicated in future studies or if they were, different measures were utilized to test the variables. In addition, the differing types of stepfamilies (i.e. stepfather, stepmother, mutual and custodial or non-custodial) were not delineated and controlled and most frequently, only one member of the stepfamily was utilized to report data a single time via the limited method of a self-report questionnaire (Ganong & Coleman, 1984).

Ganong and Coleman (1984) summarized the first 38 studies (1956-1983) by categorizing the results into three broad areas of psychological, cognitive and social development. Of the remaining 24 studies not used in their 1984 review of the literature two studies were based on clinical populations, one was excluded for no given reason and the remaining 22 were published after the first in depth review in 1984.

The following summarization is based on Ganong and Coleman's (1984) categories of psychological (self-image), cognitive, and social (stepfamily relationships) development utilizing all of the studies (1956-1987) that used non-clinical populations.

The study results are in conflict on the variable of stepchildren's self-image. Many studies found no difference
between stepchildren or children from single parent and nuclear families on self image (Parish, 1981; Parish & Nunn, 1981; Parish & Parish, 1983; Parish & Taylor, 1979; Raschke & Raschke, 1979; Santrock, Warshak, Lindbergh and Meadows, 1982; Wilson, Zurcher, MacAdams and Curtis, 1975). Lower self-images were reported in Kaplan and Pokorny, (1971), Nunn, Parish, and Worthing, (1983), and Rosenberg, (1965). In Boyd, Nunn, and Parish, (1983) the only group that displayed a lower self-image were married college students whose widowed parents had remarried. It should be noted that in the Kaplan and Pokorny (1971) study the only instance of lower self-image was found when the remarriage took place when the child was over eight years-old (Ganong & Coleman, 1984). In addition, Ganong and Coleman (1984) raised questions of experimental error that would affect all of Kaplan and Pokorny's (1971) results.

There should be caution used in making broad generalizations from these studies because the findings of no difference in self-image were all in children of grade school age and those that reflected lowered self-image were adolescents (Nunn, et al., 1983), and adults (Kaplan & Pokorny, 1971) (Ganong & Coleman, 1984). It is also relevant to caution generalizations due to the incomparability of the differing measuring scales utilized to assess self-image. It would be best to say that the results on the variable of self-image are mixed when taking
into consideration the number of limitations in those studies.

In the category of cognitive development, the studies of Bohannon and Yahraes (1979), Burchinal (1964), and Perry and Pfuhl (1963) compared grades between children from intact families and stepchildren with results showing no differences between the groups (Ganong & Coleman, 1984). On SAT scores Chapman (1977) found stepdaughters scoring higher on the verbal score than nuclear and single parent daughters. Males from nuclear families scored higher than stepsons or males from single parent homes (father-absent) on the verbal and total scores of SAT (Chapman, 1977). Santrock (1972) compared grade school stepsons from stepfather families and grade school boys from intact families to boys from single parent homes (father absent) and the groups of boys with fathers and stepfathers had higher achievement and IQ scores than boys from father absent homes. Although the differences between the two groups were not statistically significant, the positive effect for stepsons was increased if the child was five or under when the remarriage took place (Ganong & Coleman, 1984). The comparison was made for grade school girls and the presence of a stepfather was not found to make a difference (Ganong & Coleman, 1984). No differences were found in subjects educational achievement based on Ferris' (1984) longitudinal study that compared family structures.
However, his study reflected that in stepfather and single parent families where the father is absent, the children displayed low educational aspirations.

There are only six studies comparing cognitive development, as evidenced by those discussed above, from the total number of studies reviewed between 1956 and 1987. This suggests the need for additional longitudinal research on cognitive development patterns of stepchildren.

In stepfamily studies between 1956 and 1984, where the quality of family relationships was the dependent variable, the majority of the findings (Bernard, 1956; Bohannon & Yahraes, 1979; Duberman, 1973; Fox & Inazer, 1982; Langer & Michael, 1963; Palermo, 1980; Raschke & Raschke, 1979; Santrock, Warshak and Elliott, 1982; Santrock, Warshak, Lindbergh, and Meadows, 1982; Wilson, Zurcher, MacAdams, and Curtis, 1975) revealed no differences between stepfamilies and other family structures (Ganong & Coleman, 1984). Studies during this time that found stepfamily relationships to be more negative than relationships in other family structures are Bowerman and Irish (1962); Halperin and Smith (1983), and Perkins and Kahn (1979).

Ganong and Coleman's (1987) revised empirical literature review increased the non-clinical population studies by twenty-two. Nearly half of the findings of the twenty-two studies portray stepfamily relationships to be more negative and stressful. A summary of the nine studies
whose results show stepfamily relationships to be conflict-ridden follows; (a) stepdaughters had lower positive verbal behaviors toward stepparents than stepsons (Clingempeel, Ievoli, and Brand, 1984); (b) relationships between stepparents and stepdaughters in stepmother and stepfather families had more problems than relations between stepparents and stepsons (Clingempeel, et al., 1984); (c) when stepfathers had fewer economic resources, their relationships to their stepchildren became less satisfactory (Ferri, 1984); (d) sexual abuse was more likely to occur with stepfather than biological fathers (Russell, 1984); (e) lower stepfamily satisfaction and divorce is related to the presence of stepchildren (White & Booth, 1985); (f) negative communication between children and fathers was higher for stepfathers than biological fathers (Pink & Wampler, 1985); (g) relationship ties to stepparents were higher if the remarriage was due to a divorce and lower if due to a death and stepfathers were generally closer to stepchildren than stepmothers (White, Brinkerhoff, and Booth, 1985); (h) the stepfather-stepdaughter relationship is not as close as other steprelationships (Ganong & Coleman, 1987); (i) the stepfamily structure was found to be more stressful to family members than other family structures (Kennedy, 1985).

One reason for the recent surge in research findings revealing negative stepfamily relationships may be due, in part, to the increase in empirical research being done with
stepfamilies. Between the 1970s and 1980s the number has doubled with the publishing of 16 studies in the 1970s and 35 since 1980 (Ganong & Coleman, 1987).

Summary

The empirical literature reflects a mixed review of the effects of parental remarriage on children. Prior to 1984, the majority of the empirical literature did not reveal that family structural differences contributed to dissatisfaction in family relations. The empirical studies have dramatically increased since 1984. The results of nine out of the twenty-two non-clinical studies added to Ganong and Coleman's original review (1984) reported findings that suggested there was an increase in conflict, dissatisfaction, and stress for members of stepfamilies.

This can be attributed not only to the increase of research being done, but to changes made in how the research was done. In the above discussion about the deficits of the empirical literature it was suggested that researchers need to collect data from more than one respondent in the stepfamily. Of the studies published since 1980, the number reporting multiple stepfamily respondents represents an increase to slightly below one third (Ganong & Coleman, 1987).

However, there remains a severe lack of longitudinal studies in the remarriage field. Only when remarriage is perceived as an evolving process will a more clear and
accurate profile emerge on the effects of remarriage on boys and girls at different ages within the different types of stepfamilies. Probably the Hetherington et al., (1985) longitudinal study of divorce and remarriage begins to give us a more comprehensive picture of the effects that remarriage has on children. As earlier described, latency age girls and boys displayed behavior problems at the time of divorce but, over time the girls improved and the boys problems became worse both in and out of the home in single mother households. In remarried families, boys behavior improved and girls problems increased. This study is only a beginning toward providing the prospective of stepfamily adjustment for children as a developmental process, rather than a snapshot in time from one perspective.

The Role of the School Counselor in Student's Adjustment to Stepfamily Life

The structure of American families continues to change from intact nuclear families to single parent and stepfamilies. These changes have an impact on the educational institutions designed to meet the children's educational needs but the institutions have not adapted by addressing the special needs of stepchildren (Crosbie-Burnett & Skyles, 1989).

In a paper presented to the Wisconsin School Counselor Internship Conference, Crosbie-Burnett (1988) described her study of teacher's reporting on behavioral problems found in
children. She revealed that "school counselors had more contact with stepchildren than with children from 'intact, nuclear families or single parent families." This result was also found in a similar study by Touliatos and Lindholm (1980). In contrast, the literature on school counselors interventions with stepchildren is very small.

A search for professional literature that focused on the role of school counselors in helping stepchildren showed that the first article was published in 1982 (Prosen & Farmer, 1982). Further search has revealed that only seven such articles focusing on school counselors role in helping stepchildren have followed; one in 1983 (Kosinski, 1983); four in 1984 (Gardner, 1984; Herlihy, 1984; Poppen & White, 1984; Strother & Jacobs, 1984) one in 1985 (Skeen, Covi, and Robinson, 1985); and one in 1989 (Crosbie-Burnett & Skyles, 1989). It is not surprising then to learn that 62% of school counselors in a Wisconsin study "reported that the most critical deficit in their training was 'changing family structures' (Olson, 1986)" (Crosbie-Burnett & Skyles, 1989, p. 60).

An in-depth review of the nine articles that focus on school counselor's work with stepchildren follows in the chronological order in which they were published. Prosen and Farmer (1982) give an overview of the various types of stepfamilies, their unique structural characteristics, and the behavior problems of children in stepfamilies. The goal
of this article was to address the needs of stepchildren and how interventions by the school would assist the child in adjusting to the new family structure. The authors stress the importance of all school personnel being aware of issues pertinent to stepfamilies. They specifically suggest small group counseling for stepchildren that combines education about what is normal to expect in stepfamilies and counseling for specific problem areas. Prosen and Farmer point out that groups are not appropriate for all children's needs and so also encourage individual counseling for stepchildren. Their final suggestion is to establish a short-term educational/support group for stepparents. There is a fair amount of space given to the creation of this group and the goals it should focus on to be successful. The article would be a good start for a school counselor to read as a primer or overview to the issues that stepchildren are facing. It should not be considered a complete or in-depth guide for school counselors working with stepchildren.

Kosinski's article (1983) is written specifically for elementary school counselors giving them an overview of stepfamily characteristics similar to that described in Posen and Farmer (1982) above. It differs from Posen and Farmer's article in that Kosinski outlines the roles of stepmother and stepfather giving particular attention to the problems that people in these roles face. He gives a short examination of the issues that put pressure on the couple
relationship and on the stepchildren. Given the fact that the article is specifically for elementary school counselors, only three paragraphs are devoted to the problems experienced by stepchildren. In a short section on counselor interventions, Kosinski advocates groups for stepfamilies and stepchildren to provide education and counseling.

In 1984, there were four articles published whose focus was school counselors interventions with stepchildren. Three of them appeared in Elementary School Guidance and Counseling and one in The School Counselor. Gardner (1984) is a child psychiatrist who has written two books for children, one about single parent families and one about stepfamilies. In this article, Gardner writes in depth about the anticipated problems facing the stepchild with an overview of the problem issues affecting stepmothers and stepfathers. Unlike the previously reviewed articles, Gardner gives the school counselor very specific direction regarding what should and should not be said in counseling sessions with stepchildren. The only other technique that he advocates, other than individual counseling with the stepchild, is that of doing work with the child and all biological and stepparent(s). Gardner advocates this technique to the point that he, when referring to individual treatment of the stepchild, goes on to state, "Such treatment is doomed to failure because the time the child
spends exposed to and involved in the conflict is much greater than the time spent in therapy. To help the child, the counselor must work with the other involved parties as much as possible" (p.48). This sounds like a clear mandate to involve the principle parties in the child's school counseling, even when individual counseling is also being given. There is no mention about preparing school counselors to handle the unique tension and family therapy facilitation skills that this type of intervention demands.

Herlihy's (1984) basic assumption is that school counselors have knowledge of normal stepfamily development, the unique structural characteristics of the stepfamily and the origins of the issues that generate problems for stepchildren. These are critical concepts that should be included in the article and not left unstated. In contrast, the article explains, in detail, the Adlerian theoretical approach to counseling children and applies it specifically to counseling children whose parents are in the process of divorce or remarriage. It provides a solid framework and strategies from which to counsel stepchildren but the counselor must have a prior knowledge base of stepfamilies and stepchildren to make proper use of the information.

Poppen and White (1984) give an in-depth explanation of the psychological impact of the process of adjustment to a stepfamily. They do this by explaining the myths attached to stepfamily living that become great sources of
disappointment and later resentment if they are not addressed early. In addition, they look at stress in the stepfamily, both from the source of the stressors and the effects of the stresses. This is the first of the eight articles on school counseling of stepchildren to address the unique problems that early adolescents (ages 10-15) face in adjusting to a stepfamily. The role of the school counselor is given an in depth treatment with many good, concrete examples of counseling techniques to use with stepchildren. This would be an excellent article to use in conjunction with a course for school counselors on counseling stepchildren.

The final article, published in 1984, on school counselors work with stepchildren, is Strother and Jacobs (1984) description of their empirical study on adolescents perceived stresses in stepfamilies and the implications of their findings for school counseling. The subjects who voluntarily participated in this study were 35 girls and 28 boys (63 total), ages 13-18 who had entered a stepfamily as an adolescent. The adolescent participants completed a 41-item questionnaire modified by the researcher from a questionnaire created by Lutz (1980) who also researched stress in adolescent stepchildren. The questionnaire was constructed based on twelve categories of stress from which the 41-items evolved. Participants had four choices from which to respond to the items. Those choices were; 1, not
stressful; 2, slightly stressful; 3, somewhat stressful; and 4, very stressful.

The results revealed that the level of stress for the adolescents did not diminish based on time spent in the stepfamily; i.e. subjects produced mean stress scores higher if they had lived in a stepfamily 2-3 years or 3-4 years and subjects who lived in stepfamilies 0-2 years produced lower mean stress scores. However, the total stress score for all subjects was 2.12 resulting in the conclusion that the overall stress level for these adolescent stepchildren was not high. The fact that the subjects were volunteers suggests that there is a possibility that only adolescents who are comfortable with their adjustment to stepfamily living might volunteer to be part of a study on stress. Also, the total population of the study (63) was very low. It would not be appropriate to generalize the results of this study to all stepfamilies. The study should be replicated with a larger population of adolescent stepchildren that are not volunteers and the scores compared to adolescents in nuclear families as a control.

The main purpose of the study was to identify areas of adolescent stepchildren's lives that are stressful and the results showed that discipline, having a biological parent elsewhere and compounded loss were the top three categories of stress. These results do have an implication for school counselors in revealing possible high risk problem areas for
adolescents.

Skeen, Covi and Robinson (1985) wrote an article giving an overview of the research regarding stepfamilies and stepchildren, outlining the unique characteristics of stepfamilies, the differences between the nuclear and stepfamily, the most prevalent problems confronting stepfamilies, and some suggestions for counselors. As an informational overview, the article does a respectable job in presenting stepfamily issues and in suggestions for counselor sponsorship of educational programs for preparation of couples for remarriage, couple communication workshops and the modification of Parent Effectiveness Training for stepparents. However, there were very few specific counseling intervention suggestions and only three short sentences about school counselors working with stepchildren on an individual or group setting utilizing techniques such as books or puppets. This is followed by suggesting that school counselors encourage teachers to work with stepchildren and then making reference to an earlier article that two of the three authors of this article wrote for the publication Young Children (Skeen, Robinson, Flake-Hobson, 1984). The article in Young Children is focused on teacher intervention with stepchildren adjusting to their parents' remarriage. In this article, the school counselor is not even mentioned as a referral source for teachers who have students who are stepchildren and are having problems
in the adjustment to a parents' remarriage. It seems obvious that the second article appearing in the Journal of Counseling and Development, (Skeen, et al., 1985) is an adaptation of the first article in Young Children. The second article as an adaptation for counselors, is very poor and not only totally misses the opportunity to emphasize the importance of school counselors work with stepchildren but goes so far as to suggest counselors encourage teachers to work with stepchildren. It seems the authors have confused the roles of teachers and school counselors.

The most recent article, Crosbie-Burnett and Skyles (1989), makes a case, through documentation of current research on changing family structures and demographic data, for educational policies to become more responsive to stepchildren and their families needs in schools and secondary institutions. The authors cite research findings pointing to the stress involved in children adjusting to stepfamily life and the critical role that school counselors can have in facilitating a smooth transition. The article also referred to a Wisconsin state-wide study finding that school counselors believe their training lacked in preparing them to work with changing family structures.

Crosbie-Burnett was the researcher for two separate studies (Crosbie-Burnett & Newcomer, in press; Crosbie-Burnett & Pulvino, in press) that provided teachers, grade school students and school counselors with knowledge about
stepchildren. Teachers and counselors evaluated the training as being helpful and increasing their competency in responding to the problems of stepchildren. This article points to the important function that school counselors serve in counseling students who are stepchildren and thereby assisting in their healthy adjustment to stepfamily life. In addition, it makes a strong case for supplemental training through seminars and inservices for practicing school counselors and for the inclusion of course work about changing family structures and specifically stepfamily development into the curriculum of counselor training programs at the graduate level.

A study that has implications for school counselors work with stepchildren is the Bryan, Ganong, Coleman and Bryan (1985) article which described the authors interest in learning about student and professional counselors and social workers attitudes toward stepchildren and stepparents. The 375 subjects consisted of 256 females and 119 males. The breakdown of student and professional subjects follows; 105 undergraduates in counseling or social work, 147 graduate students (all student subjects were enrolled at the same midwestern state university), and 123 professionals employed in counseling or social work. The professionals were recruited to participate in the study through agencies in whose employ they served or through the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy and the
National Association of Social Workers statewide meetings. The study defined inexperienced professionals as those having 2 or less years of work experience.

The instrument designed for this study was called the First Impressions Semantic Differential (FISD). It contained a brief paragraph describing a scenario about a family using key concepts like parent and child. The only variations that were made in the family scenario were that of the key concepts which resulted in the change of the family structure; i.e. father would be changed to stepfather, son to stepson, etc. The respondents would be asked to read the paragraph and respond by rating their "first impressions" of the people described on 40 scales.

Results were that the amount of work experience had a significant effect on respondents perceptions of nuclear or stepfamilies. Students and professionals with under 2 years experience perceived members of nuclear families more positively than members of stepfamilies. Experienced professionals did not perceive the members of the different family structures differently.

Several possible explanations are offered by the authors. Although the results are not the last word on professional helpers displaying bias toward stepfamilies, the study does raise concerns about the training of counselors concerning stepfamilies (Bryan, et al., 1985).
Summary

According to the empirical literature reviewed above, children's adjustment to parental divorce is dependent on the age and sex of the child when the separation occurred, the consistency and quality of the relationship with the noncustodial parent, the level of ongoing conflict between the biological parents and the child residing with the same sex parent. Even when all of these factors are in favor of the child, adaptation to loss and change takes time (Poppen & White, 1984). Wallerstein and Kelly (1980a) suggests that the recovery time for children can be two to five years.

In the majority of cases, remarriages take place prior to the grief recovery process being complete (Poppen & White, 1984). The implications for problems due to unresolved grief alone are imposing but combine that with the additional changes that may be perceived as losses when attempting to establish a new family lifestyle and adjust to new family member(s) then the possibilities for problems become overwhelming.

The results of the review of the empirical literature on the effect of parental remarriage on children are mixed. However, the most recent studies suggest there is an increase in conflict, dissatisfaction and stress for stepfamily members. Children's concerns and preoccupation with stepfamily adjustment accompany them to school and as earlier noted, school counselors see more students that are
stepchildren than students from single parent or nuclear families (Crosbie-Burnett, 1988 and Touliatos & Lindholm, 1980).

Research points to the ages 9-15, the period of adolescence and the time leading up to it as being the most difficult for stepchildren to adjust in a stepfamily (Hetherington & Camara, 1984; Poppen & White, 1984; and Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980a). This targets middle school counselors who serve at the age level where it would be most likely to have students experiencing the problems related to stepfamily adjustment. The earlier study (Crosbie-Burnett & Skyles, 1989) cited that school counselors do not feel prepared to handle the needs of children that changing family structures create. Therefore, it becomes clear that there needs to be a response to school counselors perceived lack of training on family structural changes. The next step is to assess the need for training of middle school counselors regarding counseling stepchildren.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

One of the purposes of this study was to measure and document the level of knowledge that middle school counselors in the Commonwealth of Virginia have regarding the counseling of stepchildren. The focus of the study was the creation of the instrument called Knowledge and Skills for Counseling Stepchildren: A Self Assessment (KSCS).

This chapter describes the methodological procedures utilized for the creation of the instrument, a definition of the population, the results of two pilot studies, an explanation of the factors that contributed to the heterogeneity of the content areas of the KSCS, and a description of the data collection procedure.

Instrumentation

The methodological procedure for the creation of this instrument follows the development of a domain-referenced test (Bowering, Fortune and Wood, 1985). A domain referenced test is created by "objectives that are organized into broad categories called domains, each of which reflects what its underlying set of objectives share in common" (Isaac & Michael, 1981, p. 208).

In the creation of Knowledge and Skills for Counseling Stepchildren: A Self Assessment (KSCS), the first step was to develop a table of specifications in order to organize the content of the test so that common sets of objectives or
domains could be established and measured (Bowering, et al., 1985). The establishment of the table of specifications
enabled the tester to more clearly define the content areas
of the domain and to specify the objectives. Bowering,
Fortune and Wood (1985) view the table of specifications
not only as a means of documentation but as "essential for
grouping categories of similar behavior, for eliminating
redundancies, for establishing the representativeness
(coverage) of the test items, and for guiding the actual
selection and development of test items" (p. 118).

The content areas for the table of specifications for
the KSCS were grounded in the current theory and research on
stepchildren and their adjustment in stepfamilies. Ganong
and Coleman (1987) reviewed the current research on the
effects of parental remarriage on children and they found
that "the issues clinicians identified most frequently
included: adjustment to stepfamily formation (62 studies);
role confusion within the stepfamily (56 studies); loyalty
conflicts (57 studies); dealing with loss and mourning (42
studies); and conflicts between co-parents (41 studies),"
(Ganong & Coleman, 1987, p. 102). Four of the five content
areas correspond to four content areas of the table of
specification for the KSCS as follows; (a) characteristics
of a stepfamily in formation, (b) loyalty conflicts, (c)
role ambiguity and (d) loss and mourning issues.

The fifth content area in the table of specifications
is that of adolescent stepchildren. This was added because empirical research points to remarriage adjustment being the most difficult for ages 9-15 (Hetherington & Camara, 1984; Poppen & White, 1984; and Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980a). A comprehensive picture of children's adjustment to stepfamily living must include the adolescent's unique problems.

The next task in the creation of the table of specifications was to decide on the educational objectives. Bloom and Krathwohl's (1956) Taxonomy of Educational Objectives was used for behavioral objectives that would be applied to the content areas. The first objective identified on the KSCS table of specifications was that of identification of terms and vocabulary. The second objective was the identification of facts, principles and characteristics specific to each of the five content areas. The first and second objectives correspond to Bloom and Krathwohl's (1956) category of knowledge.

The third objective was an understanding of the earlier content objectives. The objective of understanding demonstrates the ability to comprehend the feelings and behaviors of stepchildren that would be consistent with the facts, principles or characteristics associated with each content area. The objective of understanding is synonymous to Bloom and Krathwohl's (1956) term of comprehension.

An objective of application (Bloom & Krathwohl, 1956) was added to each objective cell. This was done so that
each educational objective included the application of that knowledge and comprehension into counseling intervention skills that were appropriate to each of the five content areas.

The importance of each context area was then determined by assigning a percentage weight to the area that will specify how much of a contribution the cell can make to the entire test (Bowering, et al., 1985). The percentage weight for the first four content areas were based on the number of studies that clinical researchers performed on the most frequently studied effects of remarriage on stepchildren (Ganong & Coleman, 1987). Ganong and Coleman (1987) found that 62 studies were done on issues related to stepfamily formation. This translated to the content area of characteristics of a stepfamily in formation and a weight of 40% was assigned. There were 57 studies on loyalty conflicts, 56 studies on role confusion within the stepfamily, and 42 studies dealing with loss and mourning. The percentage weights that were assigned to the content areas were loyalty conflicts 20%, role ambiguity 20% and loss and mourning issues 10%. The additional content area of adolescent stepchildren was assigned a weight of 10%.

The weights of the behavioral objectives were listed in ascending order of complexity on the table of specifications (Bowering, et al., 1985). The first objective of identifying terminology and its application is given a
percentage weight of 12%. The second objective is the identification of facts, principles, and characteristics and their application to the content areas. This objective is weighted 38%. The third objective of understanding and application is the comprehension of feelings and behaviors that can be anticipated by the concepts and terms laid out on the above objective levels of the table of specifications. This level is given the highest weight of 50%. Application refers to the practice of counseling intervention skills that would be appropriate to each content area and is to be considered a vital part of each level of behavioral objectives.

The table of specifications as shown on table 1 was as follows after weights had been assigned to content areas, objectives, and cells (Mehrens & Lehmann, 1973). The percentages inside each cell represents the contribution that each cell made in the form of test items to the total test (Bowering, et al., 1985). Once weights were assigned to the content areas and behavioral objectives a decision on the type of test to be utilized was made. This decision was not only dependent on the best way to measure the behavioral objectives but the following factors were also considered; (a) the test purpose, (b) the number of subjects, (c) the time needed for preparation and scoring, and (d) the time the subjects can devote to the activity (Mehrens & Lehmann, 1973). After assessing these factors, an objective,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Stepfamilies In Formation</th>
<th>Loyalty Conflicts</th>
<th>Role Ambiguity</th>
<th>Loss and Mourning</th>
<th>Adolescent Stepchildren</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Identification of Terms and Vocabulary/Application</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Identification of Facts, Principles and Characteristics/Application</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III Understanding of Feelings and Behavior generated by the above concepts/Application</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 1

Table of Specifications
multiple-choice instrument was selected because it would be the best means of assessing the need for knowledge about the counseling of stepchildren by school counselors.

Preparation of an item pool for the content of the cells followed the decision on the type of instrument to be constructed. The data for the content of the cells were based on the theoretical and treatment literature for counseling stepfamilies and stepchildren (McGoldrick & Carter, 1980; Hansen & Messinger, 1982; Papernow, 1984; Sanger, Brown, Crohn, Engel, Rodstein and Walker, 1983; Visher & Visher, 1979, 1988). Each cell of the table of specifications can be thought of as a category that is attached to a "domain of items" (Bowering, et al., 1985). Creation of an item pool not only meant writing items that matched the content of the cells but the following factors also effected the construction; (a) the testing time available, (b) time for scoring, and (c) the frequency of administration (Bowering, et al., 1985). In item construction, it is recommended that 20% more items be written than needed in order to take into consideration the removal of poor items in the item analysis (Aiken, 1976). It was estimated that due to time constraints of counselors who would be taking the test that it would be limited to a maximum of 50 items. A total of 88 items were constructed for the item pool of the KSCS.
Survey Instrumentation

A survey instrument was administered in conjunction with the KSCS (see Appendix A). It consisted of the following short answer demographic data: (a) the number of years as a school counselor, (b) sex, (c) size of the school the counselor was assigned to, (d) the area(s) in which the counselor was certified, (e) the level of certification, (f) current level of job setting, (g) area(s) of graduate degree, (h) level of degree, (i) the number of total students counseled in the past year, (j) the number of stepchildren that are included in the total number counseled, (k) courses or books read that dealt with counseling stepchildren, and (l) whether or not the respondent was offering any psychological or educational programs for stepchildren.

The respondents on the first pilot were also asked to list the top five problems that are expressed by students they counseled who were stepchildren. The responses were compiled and tallied. The five problems reported most frequently were listed in the second pilot and in the final statewide study. Respondents in the second pilot were requested to rank the five problems between 1 and 5 with 1 being the problem most frequently experienced by stepchildren and 5 being the problem least frequently experienced. The identical format was retained for the statewide study of middle school counselors.
Population

The population for this study consisted of all middle school counselors in the Commonwealth of Virginia that are members of the Virginia School Counselors Association (VSCA). This population was selected because; (a) members in VSCA represent school counselors who demonstrate a high standard of professionalism, (b) members would represent a variety of demographic school settings such as metropolitan, urban and rural and (c) members would represent the ethnic diversity of students within the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The membership list of the Virginia School Counselors Association (VSCA) was obtained through permission from the president of the VSCA. The population selected for the study was 157 middle school counselors from the VSCA membership data base. Due to the small number in the population it was decided to send the KSCS and the short-answer survey to the entire population. Twenty of the 157 counselors from Northern Virginia were selected for the second pilot. The remaining 137 counselors were utilized in the final, statewide study.

Pilot Study I

The first pilot consisted of 43 elementary, middle and secondary school counselors from the Newport News, Virginia and Alexandria, Virginia Public Schools. It was conducted during April, May and June, 1989.

The 88 item pool was randomly divided into two test
forms (A&B) to alleviate fatigue of respondents and reduce the time needed to complete the instrument. The directions given for the administration asked participants not to use any reference materials to look up correct answers. It was recommended that participants answer all questions at one sitting but that they could take as much time as needed to complete all questions. The multiple-choice questions contained five options and participants were to circle the one correct answer.

Participants in the pilot completed Form A and Form B. Form A was completed by 22 school counselors and Form B by 21. To identify poorly functioning questions an item analysis was completed on both forms, with the goal of discarding poor questions or revising ineffective ones (Aiken, 1976).

Stanley and Hopkins (1972) identify "the immediate purposes of an item analysis are to determine the difficulty and discrimination of each item" (p. 267). Difficulty refers to how hard the item is to answer correctly (Stanley & Hopkins, 1972). Discrimination refers to whether or not the item is able to distinguish between high and low scoring participants (Stanley & Hopkins, 1972).

Table 2, column 2 lists the percent of respondents correctly answering each item (1-44) on Form A of the KSCS. Table 3, column 2 lists the percent of respondents correctly answering each item (1-43) for Form B. It should be noted
Table 2
Form A Pilot
Newport News and Alexandria, Virginia Public Schools
Elementary, Middle and Secondary School Counselors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Question</th>
<th>Percentage Answering Item Correctly</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>.1125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>.1073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>.0963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>.3958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>-4.234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>2.269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>.0487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>-.1637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>.3737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>.3012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>.1384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>.3142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>.0573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>00.0</td>
<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>-1.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>-3.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>.2418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>.0997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>.0342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>-0.205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>3.415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>-0.0551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td>-0.0808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q25</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>0.2116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q26</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td>2.765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q27</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>1.707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q28</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>0.0446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q29</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>0.1395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q30</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>0.0342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q31</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>-0.2048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q32</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>0.1015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q33</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>0.1369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q34</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>0.4056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>0.0414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>0.5223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q37</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>0.0154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q38</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td>0.1308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q39</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>0.3020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q40</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>0.1325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q41</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>0.1618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q42</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>0.1063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q43</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>0.2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q44</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>0.2847</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS
N OF CASES = 22.0  N OF ITEMS = 44  ALPHA = 0.4860
Table 3
Form B Pilot
Newport News and Alexandria, Virginia Public Schools
Elementary, Middle and Secondary School Counselors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Question</th>
<th>Percentage Answering Item Correctly</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>.3499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>.1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>.2219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>.1059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>95.2</td>
<td>.7639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>.0941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>.1376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>.0605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>.3204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>.4869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>.2102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>.2585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>.1691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>.1638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>.5743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>.4214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>.5063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>.0851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>.2528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>.6576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>.3338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>.2367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>.2896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>.2198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q25</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>.3526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q26</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>-.1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q27</td>
<td>81.0</td>
<td>.3825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q28</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>-.3758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q29</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>.1164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q30</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>.3238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q31</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>.0049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q32</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>.5713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q33</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>.3195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q34</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>.0801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>.3689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>.2130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q37</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>.6180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q38</td>
<td>81.0</td>
<td>.5279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q39</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>.3165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q40</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>.3569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q41</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>.1577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q42</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>.3863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q43</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>.3897</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS
N OF CASES = 21.0
N OF ITEMS = 43
ALPHA = 0.8019
that due to an oversight, Form B was missing one item that should have been included from the item pool.

Item difficulty is reported by the percentage of people correctly answering each item (Bowering, et al., 1985). The easier the item, the higher the percentage. The more difficult the item the lower the percentage. Items near 100% and items near 0% do not differentiate the ability of the test takers. The range of difficulty for items on Form A is 0-100% with an average of 56.82%. The range of difficulty for items on Form B is 4.8-95.2% with an average of 54.81%.

Two additional forms of test analysis are item discrimination and the reliability for the entire test. Bowering, et al., (1985) describe the discrimination index as showing "the extent to which an item is able to differentiate between examinees performing well on the test and those performing poorly" (p. 126). The reliability is a measure of a test's consistency to yield the same measure under a variety of test conditions (Aiken, 1976). Bowering, et al., (1985) defines reliability "as a measure of the extent to which there is random error in the test scores" (p. 128).

The coefficient alpha was chosen to calculate the reliability coefficient because of its applicability for tests scored with distinct right or wrong answers. The coefficient alpha also yields an item discrimination index
as seen on Table 2, column 3 of Form A and Table 3, column 3 of Form B. This item-total correlation reflects the power of each item to differentiate between high and low scoring participants.

Item to total correlation in Form A ranged from -.4234 indicating a negative relationship between high and low scores and .5223 indicating the item's higher ability to discriminate the difference between high and low scoring participants. Item to total correlation in Form B ranges from -.3758 to .7639. Overall, on both forms, the item to total correlation was in the .2-.3 range representing an item having low ability to distinguish between high and low scores.

Form A of the KSCS yielded a reliability coefficient of .4860 and Form B a coefficient of .8019. This can be interpreted as 49% of the variance in the test scores on Form A being attributed to the trait being measured and 51% to random error. On Form B 80% of the variance is attributable to the trait being measured and 20% to random error.

The decision was made to conduct a second pilot of the KSCS based on the high level of random error and the low item to total correlation reflecting the low ability the test items have to discriminate between high and low scoring participants.
Pilot Study II - The Northern Virginia Pilot

School counselors for the second pilot of the KSCS were selected from the total population (N=157) members of the Virginia School Counselors Association who identified their work setting as a middle or junior (high) school. This pilot of 20 counselors was based on their residing in Arlington or Fairfax counties of Northern Virginia and on having no previous exposure to the first pilot study. This was done to expedite the return process. The second pilot, referred to as the Northern Virginia Pilot, was conducted in September, 1989.

Those who were selected were sent a letter (see Appendix B) of endorsement from the current and immediate past-president of the Virginia School Counselors Association. This letter informed the counselors that they would be receiving a request to participate in a study on middle school counselors and the counseling of stepchildren. It urged their participation in completing the short-answer survey and the multiple-choice instrument, Knowledge and Skills for Counseling Stepchildren: A Self Assessment.

Two days later a packet containing the following materials were sent to those selected; (a) a letter co-signed by the researcher and her advisor, Dr. Charles Humes, describing the nature of the study (see Appendix C), (b) the short-answer survey, (c) the test instrument, (d) a form for the respondents' name and address if individual scores were
requested, (e) a stamped, self-addressed return envelope and (f) a packet of consumable tea used as incentive for respondents to complete the instruments. The letter from the researcher informed the school counselors that they would be contacted by phone in three days to confirm receipt of the material and encourage prompt return of survey and test questions.

Fifteen of the twenty counselors who received the KSCS and survey returned the material. One of the five who did not return the material was no longer a school counselor, one had left the Northern Virginia area with no forwarding address, one refused to participate based on fear that the results were somehow going to be used against her at the job or reflect poorly on her school in her present assignment. The other two non-respondents refused on the basis of being too busy.

A total of 33 items were selected from Forms A & B based on their item to total correlation. Several items were revised to eliminate ambiguous questions and unclear statements. An additional seven multiple-choice questions were created to make a total of 40. These changes resulted in a change in the weight of the content areas and some individual cells of the table of specifications. This is shown in Table 4.

The survey instrument was modified by asking respondents to rank between 1 and 5 problems they identified
most frequently among stepchildren they counseled. The five problems selected for ranking were the top five most frequently identified by school counselors in the first pilot.

The item analysis for the KSCS on the Northern Virginia Pilot included an assessment of item difficulty and item discrimination for each test question. Table 5, column 2 lists item difficulty as the percentage of respondents correctly answering each of the 40 items.

The percentage of item difficulty ranged from 6.76% to 100% with an average of 56.8%. The item-total correlation for item discrimination ranged from -0.3957 to 0.5618. This is shown in Table 5, column, 3. The reliability coefficient for the Northern Virginia pilot was 0.2005. This can be interpreted as 20% of the variance in the test scores was attributable to the variance in the trait being measured and 80% to random error. The second pilot was conducted for the purpose of increasing item to total correlation and decreasing the random error but this goal was not achieved.

The criterion that the KSCS is attempting to measure, that of the level of knowledge that middle school counselors have about counseling stepchildren, seems to be made up of heterogeneous domains or content areas. The heterogeneity of the content areas contribute to the high error variance yielding a reliability for the KSCS that renders it too low to be used as a criterion test. However, by combining test
items from Forms A and B of the first pilot that had item to
total correlations that were less extreme, the KSCS was able
to arrive at a reliability coefficient of .6330 on 33 items.
An item-total correlation for these items and their
reliability coefficient appears in Table 6.

This changed the weight of the content areas and some
individual cells of the table of specifications. This is
shown in Table 7.

These items have a reliability that renders the test
acceptable as an instrument for measuring the level of
knowledge of a group rather than individual scores. The
final study of middle school counselors in the Commonwealth
of Virginia was conducted with these 33 items.

Anastasi (1982) explains that "inter-item consistency
is influenced by two sources of error variance: (1) content
sampling (as in alternate-form and split-half reliability);
and (2) heterogeneity of the behavior domain sampled"
(p.115). Alternate-form and split-half reliability were not
used in the administration of the KSCS in either of the two
pilots. Heterogeneity of the domains or content areas of
the KSCS table of specifications were examined closely to
assess this factor.

Analysis of Instrument Development

The creation of the KSCS grew out of the need to
fulfill the purpose of assessing the training needs of
middle school counselors regarding their counseling
## Table 4
### Table of Specifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I: Characteristics of Stepfamilies in Formation</th>
<th>II: Loyalty Conflicts</th>
<th>III: Role Ambiguity</th>
<th>IV: Loss and Mourning Issues</th>
<th>V: Adolescent Stepchildren</th>
<th>Total Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identification of Terms and Vocabulary /Application/</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Identification of Facts, Principles and Characteristics /Application/</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Understanding of Feelings and Behavior generated by the above concepts /Application/</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 5

**Northern Virginia Pilot**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Question</th>
<th>Percentage Answering Item Correctly</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>.2132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>-.2781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>-.1010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>.1174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>.3107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>.0512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>.4528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>-.3522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>-.3187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>-.1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>.3462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>-.3296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>.3253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q17</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>.1435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>.2945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>.0228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>-.1607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>.3286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>.2132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q23</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>-.3296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q24</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>.5618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q25</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>.3286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q26</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>.1393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q27</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>-.0838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q28</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>.0069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q29</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>-.1369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q30</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>-.1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q31</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>.1120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q32</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>.2093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q33</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>.3889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q34</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>.4138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>.0493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>-.2335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q37</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q38</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>.1040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q39</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>-.3957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q40</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>.2157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS**

N OF CASES = 15.0    N OF ITEMS = 40    ALPHA = 0.2005
Table 6
Combination of Forms A and B
Used for Statewide Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form and Number of Question</th>
<th>Corrected Item-Total Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>.1009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A35</td>
<td>-.1682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A13</td>
<td>.3916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>.0054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A14</td>
<td>-.0332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A17</td>
<td>-.0681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A27</td>
<td>.0236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A37</td>
<td>.0605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A42</td>
<td>-.0989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>-.0035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A12</td>
<td>.2203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A29</td>
<td>.0678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A19</td>
<td>.1747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A38</td>
<td>.1198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A39</td>
<td>.4436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A40</td>
<td>-.0237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A41</td>
<td>.0236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7</td>
<td>.0859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A43</td>
<td>.3304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A25</td>
<td>.4854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B27</td>
<td>.2453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>.2449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B13</td>
<td>-.0035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B30</td>
<td>.4723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B38</td>
<td>.6152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B15</td>
<td>.3894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B16</td>
<td>.4846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B19</td>
<td>.2064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B20</td>
<td>.3459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B22</td>
<td>.1680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B36</td>
<td>.2171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B25</td>
<td>.3676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B10</td>
<td>.2995</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS
N OF CASES = 21.0
ALPHA = 0.6330
N OF ITEMS = 33
Table 7
Table of Specifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Stepfamilies in Formation</th>
<th>Loyalty Conflicts</th>
<th>Role Ambiguity</th>
<th>Loss and Mourning Issues</th>
<th>Adolescent Stepchildren</th>
<th>Total Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identification of Terms and Vocabulary /Application/</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Identification of Facts, Principles and Characteristics /Application/</td>
<td>15.15%</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
<td>6.06%</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Understanding of Feelings and Behavior generated by the above concepts /Application/</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
<td>6.06%</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>51.42%</strong></td>
<td><strong>21.21%</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.09%</strong></td>
<td><strong>12.12%</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.06%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
stepchildren. Four out of five content areas or behavior domains of the KSCS were based on the issues that research clinicians studied most frequently in relationship to the effects of parental remarriage on children (Ganong & Coleman, 1987). These content areas do not imply a cohesive internal consistency conducive to the homogeneity of test items but suggest factors that are loosely related because they are experienced by children whose parents remarry. The more heterogeneous the content areas of the KSCS are the more heterogeneous the test items. The heterogeneity of test items contributes to a low inter-item consistency and results in a low reliability coefficient.

A gap exists between the knowledge base that created the framework for determining the content areas for the KSCS and curriculums for school counselors. The KSCS content areas consisted of knowledge and theory from the field of marriage and family counseling and grief counseling. The content of the questions was based in the current knowledge and theory on the treatment of stepfamilies and stepchildren (McGoldrick & Carter, 1980; Hansen & Messinger, 1982; Papernow, 1984; Sanger, et al., 1983; Visher & Visher, 1979, 1988).

Reviewing the literature on the curriculum of counselor preparation programs and marriage/family counseling courses reveals that there have been three national surveys between 1982 and 1987 (Meadows & Hetrick, 1982; Peltier & Vale,
These surveys have attempted to determine the status of marriage and family counseling within counselor preparation curriculums.

A brief summary of these surveys follows in an attempt to explain the differences between the curriculum of counselor preparation programs and the knowledge base of the KSCS.

Meadows and Hetrick (1982) surveyed a random sample of 114 chairpersons of counselor preparation programs with a return rate of 90%. They reported that school counseling was listed most often as a specialization within a department and that a specialization in marriage/family counseling was offered in 17 of the 101 departments reporting (Meadows & Hetrick, 1982). It should be noted that 56 of the 101 departments offered courses that related to marriage/family counseling. There is no mention of students specializing in school counseling being required or encouraged to take marriage and family courses as a part of their curriculum.

The Meadows and Hetrick (1982) survey also requested that chairpersons rank 30 counseling competencies deemed to be essential to marital and family therapy. Respondents were to rank these competencies based on how appropriate they were for the general counselor. Meadows and Hetrick (1982) noted that "these marriage and family competencies
tend to emphasize increased knowledge of changing family, parental and marital roles" (p. 51).

Peltier and Vale (1986) surveyed 417 chairpersons of counselor preparation programs with 244 returned responses analyzed. Their results showed that 154 (63%) departments offered courses in marriage/family counseling compared to 56 out of 101 (55%) in the Meadows and Hetrick (1982) survey. This represents an increase in marriage and family course offerings in programs training counselors. There is no data on whether or not these specific courses are being required of students preparing to be school counselors or if the content of the courses being offered even addresses children's responses to divorce and parental remarriage.

Gladding, Burggraaff and Fenell (1987) surveyed chairpersons of 510 programs for counselor preparation. Results showed a return rate of 274 questionnaires that were used in the analysis. This study revealed 195 (71.2%) course offerings in marriage and family counseling, a higher rate than the two previous studies.

These studies show a steady increase in marriage and family courses being offered in counselor preparation programs. Although Meadows and Hetrick (1982) stress "the work of the school counselor has expanded to include a larger role in counseling parents, often in family groups" (p. 48) there is no mention of systematic integration of any marriage and family course work for the school counselor.
Coursework that is required in a counseling curriculum is partially based on state certification requirements for school counselors. Therefore, it is important to investigate what state departments of education are requiring of school counselors for certification. In the Commonwealth of Virginia, endorsement requirements for school counselors (see Appendix E) do not mention specifically any marriage/family counseling courses nor of any courses addressing changing family structures.

Crosbie - Burnett and Skyles (1989) wrote that educational policy changes are necessary to enhance the awareness, sensitivity and services toward stepchildren in schools. They recommended that school personnel, including school counselors, be required to take coursework in changing family structures for certification (Crosbie-Burnett & Skyles, 1989). They go on to emphasize that; "Colleges and universities that prepare school personnel need to be encouraged to integrate this topic into their training" (Crosbie - Burnett & Skyles, 1989, p. 62) Crosbie - Burnett and Skyles (1989) describe the need for development of a "new curricula that includes stepfamily structures in the content" (p. 63).

Turning to the content area of loss and grief counseling on the KSCS presents a similar problem. There is a lack of formalized coursework available on the subject of this content area and the answers to the questions on loss
and grief counseling may be unknown to the counselors. Yet the counselor's knowledge of the normal process of mourning is integral to counseling stepchildren because the issue of loss is central to the stepchild. The remarriage of a child's parent is the result of a loss. That loss may be due to a death or a divorce. Regardless of the reason, it is perceived as a loss. Grieving that loss is a necessary task for a child before a remarriage can be accepted.

Rosenthal and Terkelson (1978) surveyed counselors and counselor educators in the state of New York regarding their opinions on how appropriate grief counseling is in schools and what training school counselors have received in this area. Their results showed that a majority of the respondents believed grief counseling and death education to be appropriate responsibilities for school counselors. They also found that counselors do not believe they are trained to adequately provide grief counseling (Rosenthal & Terkelson, 1978).

A second nationwide survey of school counselors and counselor educators was conducted by Rosenthal (1981). The responses of school counselors were 564 out of 1,000 and 236 out of 472 chairpersons of counselor preparation programs. The results showed that 87% of the school counselors were involved with grief counseling and 93% believed that counselor education programs should provide the training necessary to do grief counseling. The responses of
counselor educators revealed that 86% of their students conducted grief counseling and 97% believed that it is appropriate for school counselors to do grief counseling. Results also showed that 94% of the counselor educators thought that the training of grief counseling belonged in counselor education programs, however only 13% of the programs actually offer that training. Of the school counselors that responded 61% had no training in death and grief counseling and when asked for the reason for the lack of training, the majority responded that training was not available.

The researcher assigned each test item of the KSCS to a domain based on the body of knowledge from which that item came and the test was reanalyzed. This resulted in determining that the knowledge upon which the KSCS was based had three separate dimensions at its source. The multidimensions are (a) concepts based in family systems theory, (b) theory and practice of grief counseling and (c) knowledge specific to stepfamily formation, adjustment, and treatment. The KSCS selects from knowledge sources that are multidimensional, contributing to test questions that are not homogeneous. There is a lack of homogeneity on a test when the subject matter is not tightly organized and when there is a lack of interdependence among the knowledge base of facts (Ebel, 1972). This is described by the multidimensionality of the KSCS. The lack of homogeneous
test questions results in lowered reliability on a test instrument (Ebel, 1972).

When the reliability was computed on the single dimension of concepts based in stepfamily formation, adjustment and treatment the reliability was .7376. This was greater than the reliability on Form A (.4860) from the first pilot and on the Northern Virginia pilot (.2005). This suggests that the multidimensionality of the KSCS contributes to the lack of homogeneity and the lower reliability on the test instrument. However, it was not greater than the reliability for Form B (.8019) of the first pilot.

Another factor which contributed to the low reliability coefficient on the KSCS is the item difficulty. Results of the analysis of item difficulty on the pilot studies showed consistently low scores. When scores are clustered together either at a low or high extreme there is low variability among the test scores (Mehrens & Lehmann, 1973). The test scores on both pilot studies were clustered on the low extreme resulting in low variability among the scores. The low variability among test scores on the KSCS reduces the reliability coefficient (Mehrens & Lehmann, 1973).

The KSCS was found not to have sufficient reliability for a criterion assessment. However, there was sufficient reliability (.63) among the 33 items used in the final form for it to be utilized as a needs assessment instrument. The
KSCS was able to assess level of knowledge on counseling stepchildren as it reflected deficiencies on a group rather than individual level. The results of both pilot studies show that the middle school counselors, as a group, do not have a solid knowledge base of the content areas of the KSCS.

Data Collection Procedure

The letter of endorsement from the current and immediate past-president of VSCA that was used in the Northern Virginia pilot was sent to all 137 VSCA middle school counselors in the statewide study conducted September-November, 1989. Two days later a packet identical to that in the Northern Virginia pilot was sent to the population. Respondents were requested to return the completed materials twelve days after the initial mailing. Each short-answer survey, the KSCS, and return envelope were coded to enable the researcher to follow-up non-responses. In the first ten days, twenty-five responses were received.

Fowler's (1984) method of follow-up for mail surveys was utilized. Ten days after the first mailing a postcard was sent to all non-respondents thanking those who may have recently returned the material, stressing the importance of their participation, and requesting that those who have not completed the material do so, and return it. In the ten day period following the mailing of the postcard thirty-five responses were received.
Ten days after the postcard a second letter was sent which emphasized that participation is essential for the success of the study and urged prompt return of completed material. Another copy of the short-answer survey and KSCS was attached to the second letter as recommended by Fowler (1984). The second letter, survey, and copy of KSCS yielded an additional twenty-three responses, following the second letter.

Fourteen days after the mailing of the second packet of materials phone calls were made to a random sample of the fifty-four remaining non-respondents. Selection was made based on gender and population. Seven females and two males from rural areas and seven females and two males from urban or metropolitan areas were selected for contact. A total of 30 phone calls were made that yielded direct contact with 23 non-respondents. Those who said they had recently sent in the material were not counted toward the total male/female and rural/urban contacts. Phone calls continued until 14 female non-respondents and four male non-respondents equally divided by rural and urban/metropolitan areas were contacted. In the ten days following the phone calls, five responses were received for a total of 88 or 64% overall response rate. Cut-off for receipt of materials was ten days after the phone calls to non-respondents. One set of KSCS and short-answer survey was returned after the cut-off date and could not be used in the data analysis.
A total of 137 middle school counselors that were members of VSCA were mailed the short-answer survey and multiple-choice instrument, KSCS. Of the 88 returned instruments, 18 were excluded from data analysis: nine of those returned were no longer middle school counselors and had been reassigned to elementary or high school settings, five were no longer school counselors, three were returned only partially completed and one was returned with a note from the respondent stating she wished not to participate in the study. There were 70 instruments that were usable for analysis; 13 males, 57 females.

Summary

In this chapter, a methodological procedure for the creation of a survey instrument and multiple-choice questions to measure middle school counselors knowledge about stepchildren was described. The population for the study was defined and the procedure for obtaining the population data base was explained. The results of the first and second pilot studies were reported. The factors that contributed to the heterogeneity of the content areas and test items that resulted in the low reliability were explained. The data collection procedure for the statewide study was described.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the need for training and education concerning the counseling of stepchildren by middle school counselors through measuring and documenting their current level of knowledge about counseling stepchildren. The instrument designed for this assessment, Knowledge and Skills for Counseling Stepchildren: A Self Assessment (KSCS) was used to assess group strengths and deficiencies in counseling stepchildren.

A total of 88 instruments were returned for a response rate of 64%. There were (N=70) instruments that were analyzable: 13 males, 57 females. This chapter will report the results of the study as they answer the research questions.

Research Questions and Data Analysis

Research Question One: What is the level of knowledge of middle school counselors regarding counseling stepchildren?

There were a total of 33 multiple-choice items on the KSCS. Respondents had five choices of responses with one correct answer. The scores ranged from a high of 28 to a low of eight correct answers. Table 8 lists the range of scores and the frequency with which they occurred.
Table 8

Knowledge and Skills for Counseling Stepchildren:
A Self Assessment

33 Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Cumulative Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of respondents N=70
A more concise method of examining a set of scores is to report their indexes of central tendency (Ary and Jacobs, 1976). Indexes of central tendency summarize information about the distribution of scores (Ary and Jacobs, 1976). Table 9 lists the three indexes of central tendency.

The mean or average of the test scores is 18.62. The mean represents 56% of the items correct on the test. The mean is less than the numerical value of the median at 20.33. This is indicative of a negatively skewed distribution of scores. The mode is 20.

Another way to examine a distribution of scores is the spread between the scores or the measure of variability (Ary and Jacobs, 1976). The measures of variability are reported in Table 9.

The range of scores is the difference between the highest score of 28 and the lowest score of eight, and is 10 for this distribution.

The standard deviation for a set of scores is a measure of the variability or spread of the distribution (Ary and Jacobs, 1976). The standard deviation for the KSCS is 2.73.

The mean scores are compared based on sex of the respondent in Table 10. Females mean score was 18.66 and males mean score was 18.46.

Summary

This description of the distribution reflects a set of scores that is negatively skewed, meaning that more people
scored below the mean than above it. The variability between the scores is indicated by the standard deviation which is 2.73. Sex of the respondent does not represent a difference in performance on the KSCS.

Research Question Two: How is the experience, professional education level, and training related to the counseling of stepchildren?

The scores of the middle school counselors were divided according to their experience and the mean and standard deviation for each group is reported. Table 11 separates the experience of the middle school counselors into five year intervals.

Counselors ranged from a high of 18 in the group with 11-15 years experience to a low of seven in the group with over 20 years experience. Counselors with over 20 years experience had a group mean of 15.7. This was the lowest of all groups reported. Counselors with 11-15 years experience represented the highest group mean reported (n=20.2).

The group means for the different professional educational levels is reported in Table 12. The majority of respondents held a masters degree (n=63) but there were five educational specialists or Certificate of Advanced Graduate Specialization (CAGS) and one doctoral level counselor. The master's group and educational specialist's group had a .1 difference in group means. This indicates no difference between groups based on educational level.
The area of training was divided into two questions on the survey. Counselors were asked if they attended any courses or seminars which addressed the counseling of stepchildren. Recognizing that training can be personal research and reading on a topic, counselors were asked if they had done any reading on counseling stepchildren or stepfamily issues. The results of those responses are in Table 13.

The majority of respondents (n=61) had no class or seminar on the counseling of stepchildren. Of the seven respondents that reported training, five received it through workshops at a local level sponsored by a mental health center, hospital and regional chapters of the Virginia Counselors Association. One received training on stepchildren as part of the Systematic Training for Effective Parenting sponsored by a state university. Only one respondent received training as part of a formalized class at a state university. No one received training in a counselor preparation program with a course in the counseling of stepchildren.

Over half of the respondents (n=45) had not read anything about the counseling of stepchildren. The mean for this group was 18.6. The mean for the group that did some reading about counseling stepchildren was 19.1.
Table 9
Knowledge and Skills for Counseling Stepchildren:
   A Self Assessment
Measures of Central Tendency and Score Variability
   N=70 Scores on 33 Items

Mean = 18.62     This represents 56% of the items correct on the test.
Median = 20.33
Mode = 20
Range of Scores 28-8=10
Standard Deviation 2.73
Table 10
Scores on KSCS Based on
Sex of Middle School Counselors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 11

Number of Years as a School Counselor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>0-5 Score Freq.</th>
<th>6-10 Score Freq.</th>
<th>11-15 Score Freq.</th>
<th>16-20 Score Freq.</th>
<th>Over 20 Score Freq.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>22 (1)</td>
<td>24 (1)</td>
<td>22 (1)</td>
<td>20 (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>20 (1)</td>
<td>23 (2)</td>
<td>21 (3)</td>
<td>19 (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>19 (2)</td>
<td>22 (2)</td>
<td>20 (2)</td>
<td>18 (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>18 (1)</td>
<td>21 (1)</td>
<td>19 (2)</td>
<td>17 (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>17 (2)</td>
<td>20 (6)</td>
<td>18 (2)</td>
<td>15 (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>15 (1)</td>
<td>19 (3)</td>
<td>17 (1)</td>
<td>13 (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>14 (4)</td>
<td>18 (1)</td>
<td>16 (2)</td>
<td>8 (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>17 (1)</td>
<td>14 (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td><strong>M=18.6</strong></td>
<td>16 (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td><strong>M=18.9</strong></td>
<td>12 (2)</td>
<td><strong>M=15.7</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>n=16</strong></td>
<td><strong>n=18</strong></td>
<td><strong>n=16</strong></td>
<td><strong>n=7</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>SD=2.17</strong></td>
<td><strong>SD=2.03</strong></td>
<td><strong>SD=3.05</strong></td>
<td><strong>SD=3.84</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Non-response  
M for Total Group 18.6

SD for Total Groups = 2.73
Table 12
Scores on the KSCS Based on Professional Educational Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Educational Specialist or CAGS</th>
<th>Doctorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n=63</td>
<td>n=5</td>
<td>n=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M=18.7</td>
<td>M=18.8</td>
<td>Score of 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD=3.55</td>
<td>SD=1.82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Non-Response
Table 13
Middle School Counselors Training in Counseling Stepchildren

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class or Seminar</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading on Counseling Stepchildren</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

The majority of respondents held a masters degree. Performance on the KSCS was not affected by the level of education held by the respondent.

The range of respondents' work experience was 0-5 years to over 20 years. The largest group of respondents represented 11-15 years experience and the mean for this group was 20.2.

The area of training was represented by counselors who had done personal research and reading on counseling stepchildren to those that had a formalized class or seminar. The majority of respondents had done no prior reading or taken any coursework on the counseling of stepchildren. Only seven respondents received any coursework and six of those were through workshop formats. One received information about counseling stepchildren as part of a formalized class at a state university. It is pertinent that none of the seven received training in a counselor education program.

Research Question Three: What is the relationship of middle school counselors' level of practice to their counseling of stepchildren?

In the first pilot participants were asked to list the five most frequently experienced problems that stepchildren encountered. Those results were tallied. The survey instrument was then modified by using the five problems
listed most frequently in the first pilot and asking respondents to rank between 1 and 5 (1 the most frequently experienced problem and 5 the least experienced problem) the problems identified most frequently among stepchildren they counseled. The results of the statewide study lists the following problems in descending order of the rankings received; (1) Lack of good relationship with stepparent, (2) Loss of special relationship to parent due to remarriage of parent; (3) Stepchildren torn between loyalty issues pertaining to parents and stepparents; (4) Adjustment to new school, home, and friends due to establishment of new home with stepfamily, and (5) Problematic arrangements with visitation and custody. The rankings are based on 66 of the 70 respondents. There were four respondents that did not rank the problems. These results reflect a contribution from respondent's experiences in working with stepchildren and are descriptive of one level of practice with stepchildren.

Counselors were asked the size of their school, the number of students counseled in the past year and the number of those students counseled that were stepchildren. Table 14 shows the division of schools according to size, the number of students counseled, the number of those students that were stepchildren and the average score on the KSCS that the counselors received in those schools.

The majority (n=32) of the counselors were in schools
Table 14

Number of Stepchildren Counseled Based Upon Size of Enrollment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>00-500</th>
<th>501-1,000</th>
<th>1,001-1,500</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Students Counselled</td>
<td>1,788</td>
<td>9,526</td>
<td>3,842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Stepchildren Counselled</td>
<td>540 (30%)</td>
<td>2,851 (30%)</td>
<td>1,180 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=7</td>
<td>n=32</td>
<td>n=12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Response</td>
<td>M=16.7</td>
<td>M=18.5</td>
<td>M=19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD=1.48</td>
<td>SD=3.85</td>
<td>SD=2.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>1,501-2,000</th>
<th>Over 2,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Students Counselled</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Stepchildren Counselled</td>
<td>200 (30%)</td>
<td>60 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=2</td>
<td>n=1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M=20.5</td>
<td>M=19.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD=1.5</td>
<td>SD=2.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
where enrollment was 501-1,000. Counselors at schools of this enrollment reported that 30% of the students counseled were stepchildren. The mean score on the KSCS for counselors from schools of this size was 18.5. Counselors at schools with enrollment under 500 reported the lowest group mean score on the KSCS (M=16.1). Despite the small number of respondents from schools where enrollment was 1,500 and over, the numbers of stepchildren seen by counselors remained high, 20-30%. This is evidence that regardless of the population or the rural vs. urban setting, the high number of stepchildren remained consistent.

Another way to assess the level of practice of middle school counselors in the counseling of stepchildren was to ask respondents if they currently offered any psychological or educational counseling program specifically for stepchildren. Table 15 shows the responses to this question.

The majority (n=48) of counselors did not offer a program for stepchildren. The mean for that group on the KSCS was 18.4. Those offering a group specifically for stepchildren (n=6) had a group mean of 19.0. Fifteen counselors reported offering a group for children of separated and divorced parents. Comments from these counselors indicated that although the group was not specifically for stepchildren, it did address stepfamily issues that could be encountered by stepchildren.
Table 15

Psychological or Educational Program for Stepchildren

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Program Offered</th>
<th>No Program Offered</th>
<th>No response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n=6</td>
<td>n=48</td>
<td>n=1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M=19.0</td>
<td>M=18.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD=1.58</td>
<td>SD=3.67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Program offered for children of separated and divorced parents had 15 responses for M=19.8, SD=2.59.
Summary

The third research question addressed middle school counselors' level of practice regarding the counseling of stepchildren. Counselors were asked to rank five problems that they identified most frequently among stepchildren they counseled. The lack of a good relationship with a stepparent was ranked as the most frequently experienced problem that middle school counselors experienced in the stepchildren they counseled. Problematic arrangements with visitation and custody was the least experienced problem.

Middle school counselors practice in the counseling of stepchildren showed the majority of counselors (n=32) came from schools where enrollment was 501-1,000 and 30% of their caseloads were stepchildren. Counselors from schools where enrollment was 0-500 (n=7) and over 1,000 had caseloads where stepchildren also represented one-third of the students counseled, indicating a consistently high population of stepchildren.

The majority of counselors (n=48) offered no psychological or educational counseling program for stepchildren. Six counselors offered a program specifically for stepchildren. Fifteen counselors offered small group, time-limited sessions for children with separated or divorced parents that addressed some issues pertinent to stepchildren.
Results of Telephone Sample of Non-respondents

Non-respondents were divided by gender and the population areas in which they resided. Out of 54 non-respondents; seven rural females, two rural males, seven metropolitan/urban females, and two urban/metropolitan males were interviewed by telephone. Non-respondents were asked a total of six questions. Those questions were; (a) Why haven't you been able to complete the survey and multiple-choice questions?, (b) Under what circumstances would you be willing to complete them?, (c) To what degree do you perceive counseling stepchildren to be a concern of yours as a school counselor?, (d) What size is your school?, (e) How long have you been in the school?, and (f) Does your school have Chapter One funding?

The size of the schools for male and females from rural areas ranged from 306-900 in enrollment. Experience for this group ranged from 1 to 26 years in the same school. Three of the rural schools had Chapter One funding, indicating a presence of lower income families in the school.

The size of the schools for males and females from metropolitan/urban areas ranged from 500-1,840 enrollment. Experience for this group ranged from one year to 22 years in the same school. One of the metropolitan/urban schools had Chapter One funding.

Responses to question one regarding their reason for
not completing and returning the survey and KSCS did not
derrier based on gender or population factors. Seventeen of
the eighteen non-respondents said they were too busy with
work, had no time, or were overwhelmed with multiple
commitments that prevented completing the material. One,
metropolitan/urban female stated that the reason she did not
complete the material is that she had no coursework in this
area and didn't know any of the answers.

The responses to the follow up question inquired under
what circumstances the person would have completed and
returned the material resulted in fourteen counselors
stating that if they had more time or another counselor to
share their caseload, they would have participated in the
study. Two counselors; one female, rural and one female,
metropolitan/urban, said that they started the multiple-
choice questions on the KSCS and found them too difficult
and quit. The rural female said, "I started on it, felt
like I didn't know the answers and got to feeling so
ignorant that I gave up." Two other counselors, one female
rural and one female, metropolitan/urban said they had no
idea how many stepchildren they had in their caseload so
they did not complete the rest of the survey or KSCS.

The third question received overwhelming and emphatic
responses from six metropolitan/urban females, four rural
females and both rural males. Their responses were
characterized by these comments; "This is a great problem;"
"Stepchildren are more and more the norm, they need additional help;" "We're all concerned about it (stepchildren), I more than most;" "This is very much a concern of mine, I have a large percentage of students who are stepchildren." The remaining counselors, one metropolitan/urban female, three rural females and two urban males were less emphatic about stepchildren being their top priority. They indicated concern but made it clear that the problems of stepchildren were not the major problems of their students. One urban female in this group who was less concerned commented that; "They (stepchildren) are not my number one priority, drugs and academic problems are."

**Summary**

The responses of the eighteen counselors who did not participate in the study did not differ on gender or population as to non-participation. The majority stated they did not participate based on a lack of time. There was one metropolitan/urban female who was the exception. She stated that lack of coursework and knowledge of the answers were her reasons for not participating. It is pertinent that all non-respondents said that the problems faced by stepchildren were a concern to them. Twelve of the 18 said it was a top priority and six reported, although they were concerned about the problems of stepchildren, that it was not their highest priority.

Chapter 5 will discuss the conclusions that can be
drawn from the results and will state recommendations for further work.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

One million children become stepchildren each year (Visher & Visher, 1979) and there is growing pressure for schools to respond to this changing family structure. School counselors are in a position to address the problems that occur for a stepchild in adjusting to stepfamily living. The intent of this study was to assess the need for training and education of middle schools counselors regarding their knowledge about counseling stepchildren. This was done by measuring their level of knowledge through the development and use of the instrument, Knowledge and Skills for Counseling Stepchildren: A Self Assessment (KSCS).

The creation of the KSCS grew out of the purpose of assessing the training needs of middle school counselors regarding their counseling stepchildren. The development of the KSCS took place through conducting item analyses on two pilot studies. The item analysis yielded a low reliability on both pilot studies which reflected the low scores and heterogeneity of items. A total of 33 items were selected for the final study based on item-total correlations and a reliability coefficient adequate to assess group needs. The final study was sent to 137 middle school counselors who were members of the Virginia School Counselors Association.

91
The results of the statewide study shows a negatively skewed distribution of scores. In answering research questions one, "what is the level of knowledge of middle school counselors regarding counseling stepchildren?" the response would be that they have a low level of knowledge about the counseling of stepchildren. The comments of a few non-respondents reinforce that the KSCS was perceived as a difficult test. Five people (3%); two non-respondents who were contacted in the telephone survey, two who partially completed the KSCS and returned it and one counselor who telephoned the researcher, said they did not complete the material because they did not know the answers to the questions and gave up.

The second research question inquired how experience, professional education level and training are related to the counseling of stepchildren. The findings showed that counselors with 11-15 years experience scored highest above the mean and counselors with over 20 years experience scored lowest below the mean.

Professional education level did not reflect a difference in performance on the KSCS. Those counselors that had attended a workshop on counseling stepchildren did not score better on the test than respondents that had no training. The majority of respondents had done no reading about the counseling of stepchildren.

The third research question asked "what is the
relationship of middle school counselor's level of practice to their counseling of stepchildren? Counselors from schools where enrollment was 0-599 and 1,001-1,500 had caseloads where stepchildren represented one-third of the students counseled. The majority of the counselors in this study came from schools where enrollment was 501-1000 and stepchildren represented one-third of their caseload. Scores on the KSCS for counselors in schools of enrollment of 0-500 scored the lowest group mean and counselors where enrollment was 1,001-1,500 scored highest above the mean.

The majority of counselors offered no psychological or educational counseling program specifically for stepchildren. Six counselors reported offering a program specifically for stepchildren and 15 offered time-limited groups for children with separated or divorced parents that addressed some issues on adjustment to stepfamily living.

Conclusion Based on Instrument Development

The results of this study established that the test instrument, Knowledge and Skills for Counseling Stepchildren: A Self Assessment (KSCS) was made up of heterogeneous content areas that contributed to low interitem consistency and a low reliability coefficient. The heterogeneity of content areas contributed to a high error variance yielding a reliability for the KSCS that rendered it too low to be used as a criterion test. However, it can be concluded that the reliability on 33
items was sufficient for the KSCS to be used as an instrument to assess the level of knowledge of middle school counselors as a group.

In the exploration of the heterogeneity of the content areas in the KSCS, it was found that there is a difference between the knowledge base of the content areas of the KSCS and the curriculum that trains school counselors. A counseling curriculum is partially based on state certification requirements for school counselors. In the Commonwealth of Virginia, certification requirements for school counselors do not mention any course requirement that pertains to changing family structures (i.e. stepfamily formation, adjustment or treatment), marriage and family counseling, or the area of loss and bereavement counseling. It is these three areas that formed the knowledge base on which the KSCS was developed. These areas can be viewed as separate dimensions that contributed to the lack of homogeneity among test items.

The lack of course work in preparation of school counselors in the area of changing family structures is addressed by comments of some of the Virginia middle school counselors who received the KSCS. One respondent commented, "I've completed nearly 25 hours of instruction at [--------] in middle and high school counseling courses and this semester is really the first time the professor has discussed stepfamilies (only 1/2 an evening)." A non-
respondent commenting on the reason she did not return the survey and test instrument states "I had no coursework in this and didn't know any of the answers. It took away my integrity to answer questions I didn't know." This suggests that the middle school counselors have not been exposed to the knowledge upon which the KSCS was developed. It seems that little or no formalized opportunity exists for school counselors to become informed about the counseling of stepchildren. A gap seems to exist between the knowledge that is important for school counselors to have when counseling stepchildren and the curriculum requirements for training school counselors.

The extent to which school counselors become involved with a student's family varies among school administrators. Perhaps if there was agreement as to the level of involvement a school counselor had in student's families, there would follow additional course requirements in family therapy theory and changing family structures for state certification as a school counselor.

The level of involvement with a student's family should not limit the knowledge of theory that would increase counselors understanding of the developmental stages and the unique dynamics that a student experiences in adjusting to a stepfamily. There does seem to be a national trend among counselor education programs (Meadow & Hetrick, 1982; Peltier & Vale, 1986; and Gladding, et al., 1987) to
increase the coursework offered on marriage/family counseling. However, there is no assurance that the coursework addresses changing family structures and that school counselors are encouraged or required to take such classes.

Conclusions Based on the Study of Middle School Counselors

The findings of this study resulted in the following conclusions.

1. The middle school counselors that participated in this study scored very low on the KSCS suggesting a low level of knowledge about counseling stepchildren.

2. In the area of training, if counselors attended a seminar or class that addressed the counseling of stepchildren, it did not improve the scores of the KSCS. It should be noted that the number that had any training was extremely low \( (n=7) \).

3. The majority of counselors who participated came from schools up to 1,500 enrollment and nearly one-third of their total caseload were stepchildren.

It was suggested earlier that the lack of training available on changing family structures contributes to the low scores of counselors who took the KSCS. The lack of institutional support for training, as exemplified by the state education department not requiring coursework on changing family structures, also contributes to the low scores. There is a possibility that respondents lack of
specific training contributed to test anxiety and frustration that resulted in respondents giving up and randomly assigning answers to questions. This hypothesis is based on the comments written on several tests regarding how frustrating and difficult they found the test. The low response rate (64%), the number of partially completed instruments, and the comments of non-respondents suggests that counselors are not knowledgeable about theory represented in the KSCS and may be uncomfortable confronting that lack of knowledge.

Middle school counselors with over 20 years experience tended not to score as high as counselors with less experience. There seems to be some indication on the KSCS that additional experience alone may not increase a counselor's knowledge about stepchildren. If this is the case, it suggests that the formalized training that was available 20 years ago did not address changing family structures. It also suggests that these counselors did not avail themselves of continuing education credits in this area.

The low scores and the large proportion of counselors' caseload being stepchildren point to counselors being inadequately informed and prepared to address the problems of a high percentage of their total caseload. Estimates on population trends suggests that the numbers of stepchildren will increase, "it seems reasonable to speculate that well
over one half of today's young persons in the United States may become stepsons or stepdaughters by the year 2000" (Glick, 1989, p. 26). Stepchildren will be increasing in counselors caseloads as will the need for specialized training in this area.

Five counselors reported offering a counseling program specifically for stepchildren. Three of the five offered time-limited small group counseling, one offered a structured, psycho-educational group called "Strengthening Stepfamilies" which is accompanied by a book and handouts for participants, and one respondent offered no description of the program offered. Two of the five people offering a program reported no course and no reading about stepchildren, two reported only reading and one reported taking a course and reading about stepchildren. This is such a small group it is difficult to make any generalizations from the data. However, it is troubling that there are counselors offering programs for stepchildren without training. Fifteen counselors reported offering a program for children from separated and divorced parents. Two of the fifteen had training and read about stepchildren, seven had done reading, five had done neither and one had no response. From the information on both of these groups, although the numbers are very small, it seems that reading may contribute to increased knowledge about counseling stepchildren. The fact that these counselors are offering
courses that specifically or indirectly address stepchildren's problems suggests that experience with this population, regardless of formalized training, may also contribute to increasing the knowledge base on stepchildren.

Recommendations

The conclusions of this study resulted in the following recommendations.

1. The diagnostic instrument, Knowledge and Skills for Counseling Stepchildren (KSCS) should be further refined and developed into two criterion tests for the purpose of future research. In the process of refinement, the test should be divided into a test of theoretical knowledge about stepfamily development and counseling of stepchildren and a test of application of counseling techniques specific to the counseling of stepchildren and their families. In addition, the test should be piloted on a large enough population so that a factor analysis could be run on the items.

2. The low response rate suggests a need for replication of the study to increase the response rate. The elementary and secondary counselors who are members of the Virginia School Counselors Association were not included in this study. These groups or counselors on a national level could be considered for future study using a revised KSCS to assess the need for training about stepchildren.

3. The revised version of the KSCS could be used by ministers and counselors doing premarital counseling as an
educational tool with couples prior to remarriage. It could prevent future problems in the newly formed stepfamily.

4. State Education Departments should add a required course on changing family structures, and the effects these changes have on stepchildren for school counselors on all levels.

5. Counselor education programs that are not offering coursework on changing family structures and the effects these changes have on stepchildren should expand their curriculum to include this coursework. Those programs that do offer this coursework should require it of their students who plan to be school counselors. The KSCS and the table of specifications from which it was developed could serve as the basis for the curriculum of such a course.

6. Extension or continuing education classes which focus on changing family structures with emphasis on counseling stepchildren should be sponsored by universities who have counselor education departments.

7. Additional articles in journals that address the issues of stepfamily development and the techniques of counseling stepchildren should be written specifically for the needs of school counselors.

8. Future research might include a national survey to determine how many counselor education programs offer coursework in changing family structures and if such coursework is required of their school counselors.
These recommendations should not only be seen in light of this study but from the review of the literature in Chapter 2. There were a total of six articles (Gardner, 1984; Herlihy, 1984; Kosinski, 1983; Poppen & White, 1984; Posen & Farmer, 1982; and Strother & Jacobs, 1984) in the past ten years written specifically for the school counselor about appropriate counseling interventions to be used with stepchildren. This study of middle school counselors in Virginia revealed only two counselors that reported any class time has been given within a counselor education curriculum addressing stepchildren as a population with special needs. Yet, this study shows that of those counselors participating, stepchildren are nearly one-third of the total counseling population. The counselors do not have a sufficient level of knowledge about the issues pertinent to the problems of stepchildren. Participants in this study acknowledged their ignorance on this topic. For some, it was their reason for not responding to the material at all. Obviously, past training did not deal with these issues. It is the responsibility of each individual counselor as a professional to aggressively seek information about areas of their practice that they are not knowledgeable about. Continuing education in the form of workshops and individual reading and research are critical to counselors keeping current with special population needs such as stepchildren.
Counselor education departments and other academic units that train counselors should also address past deficiencies by incorporating coursework on changing family structures as a unique, special population. It is important to listen to those school counselors who said, "that the most critical deficit in their training was 'changing family structures' (Olson, 1986)" (Crosbie-Burnett & Skyles, 1989, p. 60). This should be a challenge to many departments to update their curricula to include coursework that teaches about the developmental issues of stepfamilies and the techniques of counseling stepchildren. However, this is stated with the realization that other special populations also need curricular attention.

First, it is necessary that there be recognition at a state policy level that stepchildren are a unique population with special needs because counselor education departments base their curriculum on the certification requirements established by state departments of education. This study has shown that school counselors lack knowledge and specialized training about issues concerning stepchildren. The Virginia School Counselors Association and on a national level, the American Association of Counseling and Development could assert their influence on state departments of education in stressing the critical need for this coursework to be required for certification as a school counselor. Such coursework for counselor certification
would be a first step in preparing counselors to work with this unique special population.


Issues, 5, 7-26.


University of Chicago Press.


families: Overcoming the Cinderella myth. *Youth Children, 39, 64-74.*


Wallerstein, J.S. & Kelly, J.B. (1975). The effects of


Wyman, P.A., Cowen, E.L., Hightower, D., & Pedro-Carroll,
Appendix A

Letter to the Reader

The survey and test, *Knowledge and Skills for Counseling Stepchildren: A Self Assessment* is being withheld from this document. The instrument will be available to you upon receipt of your written request identifying the reasons and purposes for utilizing the instrument. Send your request to:

Dr. Monica Megivern
Arlington, VA 22206

or

Dr. Charles Humes
Northern Virginia Graduate Center
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Falls Church, VA 22042

or

Dr. Jim Fortune
College of Education
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Blacksburg, VA 24061
Appendix B

Letter of Endorsement from Virginia School Counselor Association
Dear Virginia School Counselors:

I am writing to you as President of the Virginia School Counselor Association to encourage you to participate in a study on school counselors and stepchildren. You will receive a request in a few days from your colleague, Monica Megivern. This request is for you to complete a survey questionnaire and multiple-choice questions.

I realize you have great pressures on your time but this represents an opportunity for you to participate in an effort that can benefit our profession and I urge your cooperation.

I am asking Monica to give us some feedback in a future newsletter. School counselors need to be involved in and support research that supports our efforts in working with Virginia's school children.

Sincerely,

Frances E. Russo
Immediate Past President, VSCA

Loretta Kreps
President, VSCA
Appendix C

Survey Packet Cover Letter
Dear School Counselor:

Do you ever receive referrals of students who are having problems adjusting to living in a stepfamily? Do you realize that specialized information and training exist to help you counsel stepchildren? The enclosed questionnaire represents an opportunity for you to assess your knowledge concerning counseling stepchildren.

By now you should have received a letter from Presidents Runzo and Kreps of the Virginia School Counselors Association regarding this study on stepchildren and school counselors. Your name was selected from a current list of members of the Virginia School Counselors Association.

You have the opportunity to contribute to an assessment of the need for knowledge about the counseling of stepchildren by school counselors. Everything you need is enclosed -- one survey questionnaire and a set of multiple-choice questions.

Please have a cup of tea and take time out to respond. Please complete the survey questionnaire first. It will take a short time to finish. We urge you to return your completed packet in the enclosed envelope.

We assure you complete confidentiality. Your name will never be placed on the materials, and only group scores will be reported.

If you desire your individual score, please put your name and address on the enclosed sheet of paper and enclose it. Your response is needed for the success of this study. We will be glad to answer any questions you may have; please write or call . Please mail your completed materials as soon as possible. All materials must be received by October 11, 1989.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Monica Megivern
Licensed Professional Counselor

Charles W. Humes
Professor
Counselor Education
Appendix D

Excerpt from the Certification Regulations for Teachers
Commonwealth of Virginia (July 1, 1982 -- revised July 1, 1986)

Guidance Counselors (Elementary, Middle, and Secondary)

2. Endorsement Requirements:

a. the applicant shall hold a master's degree in guidance and counseling;

b. the applicant shall have a minimum of two successful academic years of full-time experience in teaching, one year of which could be satisfied by full-time work experience in a non-school setting;

c. the applicant shall have completed graduate-level work which includes the following:

   (1) philosophy and principles underlying guidance and other pupil personnel services;

   (2) the theory and practice of counseling, including work with exceptional and culturally diverse students;

   (3) educational and psychological measurement;

   (4) career development theory including career planning and decision-making techniques and the use of occupational and educational information;

   (5) understanding the individual--the nature and range of human characteristics;

   (6) group counseling and group guidance processes;

   (7) research and evaluation;

   (8) elementary, middle, or secondary school guidance (course must be congruent with chosen area of certification);

   (9) supervised practicum experience discharging the duties of a counselor with a minimum of 180 clock hours at the level at which the candidate seeks endorsement. To be supervised at another level requires additional supervised experience of 120 clock hours.
The vita has been removed from the scanned document