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## A Comparison of Role Stress in Stepmothers with Residential Stepchildren and Stepmothers with Nonresidential Stepchildren

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**A COMPARISON OF ROLE STRESS IN STEPMOTHERS  
WITH RESIDENTIAL STEPCHILDREN AND  
STPMOTHERS WITH NONRESIDENTIAL  
STEPCHILDREN**

**Helena A. Marsh, BA**

**A Culminating Project Presented to the Faculty of The  
Graduate School of Lindenwood College In Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements For The  
Degree of Masters of Art  
1994**

## ABSTRACT

The goal of this research was to test a psychological attitude measure intended to compare the stress experienced by stepmothers whose stepchildren are residential with the stress experienced by stepmothers whose stepchildren are nonresidential and only visit. After a review of the literature a thirty-one item survey, the Role Strain Index for Stepparents (RSIS) was given to the stepmothers of sixty-three children enrolled in grades 6 through 12, at four schools in the St. Louis/St. Charles metropolitan area. A T-test of difference between means was performed and the hypothesis that there was a difference in stress between stepmothers with residential stepchildren and stepmothers with nonresidential stepchildren was not supported.

**COMMITTEE IN CHARGE OF CANDIDACY:**

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**Adjunct Professor Jesse B. Harris Jr., PhD.**

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stepchildren. The secondary purpose of the study was to understand more about the unique stresses of role development in raising stepchildren. This information could perhaps facilitate the development of healthy coping mechanisms. It was reported that the nuclear family is no longer the typical American family with divorce and remarriage rates on the rise, the stepfamily has become a common family form. Recent demographic reports estimate that 4.3 million stepfamilies in the United States have children younger than eighteen years of age, representing 17.4% of all households (Glick, 1989).

## CHAPTER II

### Review of Related Literature

#### Remarried Couples at Risk

The literature illustrates that remarried couples are at risk for dissolution of marriage. The remarriage divorce rate is approximately five percent higher than is the divorce rate in first marriages (Cherlin,1981) with the presence of stepchildren being implicated as probably contributing to the higher rate (White & Booth,1985; Crosbie-Burnett,1984). That stepfamily life is fraught with role strain and dissatisfaction has long been noted in the literature, from early investigations of Bowerman and Irish (1962), Fast and Cain (1966), to studies more recent by Nadler (1981), Papernow (1980), Crosbie-Burnett (1984), and Clingempeel, Brand, and Lovoli (1984). The higher divorce rate of remarried couples may reflect these tensions of stepfamily life. Although various aspects of role strain have been reported by Pasley & Ihinger-Tallman (1982)

and White & Booth (1985), the specific nature of role strain and which aspects are problematic for stepparents have not been examined empirically.

### Stepmother Role Stress

Role theory is an appropriate framework for the study of stress in the stepparent role is widely acknowledged (Pasley & Ihinger-Tallman,1982; White & Booth,1985). Role stress can be conceptually defined in terms of "the conflict and challenges people encounter as they perform their roles." (Perlin p.14, 1983). Many stepparents encounter daily conflicts that cumulatively heighten role stress. Components of these conflicts often include role change (gain or loss of roles), feelings of exclusion, lack of emotional support from their spouse, unclear family boundaries, ambiguous role expectations, role conflict, and lack of self-role congruence. Pearlman (1989) points out that the role sets in which people have identified themselves have high potential



for inducing stress because the roles people play are the highest source for self-definition. Thus, when roles become conflicted they are more likely to have a greater impact on the person because they are relatively enduring.

### Role Change

The status of stepparent is characterized by role loss and gain (Visher & Visher,1979). Stress may result because these changes occur simultaneously. An individual may lose both the nuclear family and expectations for the future. Ahrons and Rodgers (1987) stated that divorce often brings a redefinition of the parent role especially for the noncustodial parent. Should this parent then become a stepparent, one role is gained while other important aspects of self-concept may be lost. Role theory suggests that the degree of stress associated with role change is greater when the change is out of sequence with expected family development. Pearlin (1983) explains this phenomenon by saying that individuals prepare themselves for role gains through the process of "anticipatory

socialization." However, when the change is out of sequence, such as when an adult gains a spouse and family at the same time, he or she has no buffer against the impact of such an event. In addition, it has been suggested that role gain is more stressful than role loss (Goode, 1960.)

#### Role Inclusion and Exclusion

A stepmother's struggle with boundary ambiguity involves issues of inclusion of certain role dimensions. Strain resulting from that conflict may occur when stepmothers feel excluded from decision making and relationships in the family. For example, a stepmother may feel left out in many aspects of the relationship between her husband and his biological children. Or a wife may wish that her husband would reveal to her more of his feelings about his former spouse. Stress may be felt when stepmothers are included in family subsystems in which they feel uncomfortable. For example, a relative may share family information that the new spouse does not wish to hear (Messinger, Walker, 1976).

### Ambiguous Family Boundaries

The ambiguous nature of the boundary surrounding the stepmother has potential for increasing stepmother role strain. Research on family boundaries has noted the disruptive effects of ambiguous family status on family and individual functioning (Boss, 1987; Boss, Pearce-McCall, & Greenberg, 1987; Minuchin, 1974). However, the existence of ambiguous boundaries and their effects on the stepmother are unclear. Although clinical observers have long suggested that this phenomenon is an integral part of the stepfamily experience and a cause of marital disruption (Fast & Cain, 1966; Messinger & Walker, 1976) more recent empirical literature suggests that only certain types of stepfamilies report ambiguity and that it does not appear to affect marital adjustment (Pasley, 1987; Pasley & Ihinger-Tallman, 1989).

Ambiguity may occur when it is unclear what members constitute the stepfamily at any given time. Although stepchildren and nonresidential parents are absent physically,

they may be psychologically present and influence the stepfamily household. Family power issues such as allocation of money, decision making, and legal rights and obligations are often negotiated with another parental household outside the remarried family unit. Such mutual influence over each other by two households defines the concept of a binuclear family system as described by Ahrons(1979). Boundaries surrounding the parental (remarried) subsystem are not always clear, and the remarried family may have to continually loosen or tighten its boundaries to maintain its integrity. Such a situation, requiring continual flexibility, may be stressful to stepparents especially the stepmother who usually takes on the role of communication with the extended family (Messinger & Walker,1976).

#### **Ambiguous Role Expectations**

Early research on roles demonstrated that well-defined role expectations result in higher levels of role performance (Bible & McComas,1963) and lower levels of

tension, dissatisfaction, and feelings of inadequacy (Mason & Gross, 1955; Kahn, 1964). Fast and Cain (1966) were perhaps the first to call attention to the ambiguity of stepparent role expectations. Despite the passage of time, confusion regarding parenting responsibilities exists not only between stepfamilies, but also among the members of a single parent household. In contrast, nuclear family roles are more clearly defined.

Whereas biological family members share normative definitions concerning role expectations, the stepparents and stepchildren continue to struggle with definitions of acceptable behavior with regard to one another (Giles-Sims, 1984), previous spouses (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987), and the community in general. Cherlin (1978) has argued that remarriage is "an incomplete institution" in our society in that it offers few recognized solutions for the many special problems the remarried family is asked to resolve. However, Cherlin's assumption that this confusion leads to greater marital unhappiness has been questioned (Halliday, 1980;

Furstenberg & Spanier, 1984).

**Role Conflict, Role Captivity**

Role conflict is "uncongeniality between elements of the several different roles in which people typically engage" (Pearlin, 1983,p.16). Interrole conflict results when contradictory expectations of two or more roles are occupied at the same time, whereas intrarole conflict refers to contradictory expectations held by different subgroups regarding the person's role. Both result in cognitive strain (Sarbin & Allen, 1968) and are often present in the stepmother role.

Intrarole conflict is present in stepfamilies because of the lack of consensus held by family members regarding role definition. A particular type of intrarole conflict called role captivity occurs when a person is "bound to one role while wishing to play another" (Pearlin, 1983,p.19). For example, although the remarriage may be desirable, the stepparent role may be unwanted. Thus, stepmothers may find

themselves instant mothers, feeling trapped and frustrated in unwanted roles. Or they may find themselves trapped in one role ("other mother") while wishing to fulfill another career person (Giles-Sims,J., 1984).

### Self-Role Congruence

The concept of self-role congruence refers to the degree to which qualities of the self-one's traits, values, and beliefs-fit comfortably with the demands of the role. Self-role incongruence has been implicated in lack of satisfaction and ineffectiveness in role performance (Smelser, 1961). This aspect of stepparent role stress has been identified in the literature as the myth of "instant love" (Schulman, 1972; Jacobson, 1979). Of all the fallacies surrounding stepmothers, this one has been associated with the greatest emotional pain because of the burden of guilt it carries. Stepmothers often expect themselves to have immediate positive feelings toward their new spouse's child/children simply on the basis of affiliation. Their self-image, pertaining to how they think

they should behave and feel, is incongruent with how they actually behave and feel (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987). For the stepmother, this situation is further compounded by the cultural mandate that women be the primary caretakers and nurturers of children. Hence, self-esteem may decline because of self-role incongruence (White & Booth, 1985).

**Statement of Purpose**

Jeannette Lofas and Dawn Sova (1985), noted that in American literature different dimensions of role strain are frequently associated with stress for stepparents and have been well documented. However, to date, the researcher could find no articles that compared the various aspects of role stress of stepmothers who have residential stepchildren to stepmothers who do not have residential stepchildren. The research notion of the current study was that the stress of having a residential stepchild in a family was unique. In other words, stepmothers experienced stress whether or not a stepchild was in residence. However the



stress experienced by stepmothers with residential stepchildren would be greater than stepmothers who do not have residential stepchildren.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **Methodology**

##### **Subjects**

The subjects for the study were stepmothers. The stepmothers were drawn from two counties in a major metropolitan area (St. Louis) between February 1994 and May, 1994. The original plan called for a random cluster sampling drawn from the St. Charles County. One hundred and five invitations to participate in the study were sent home with school children in randomly selected schools and classrooms throughout the county. It was the researcher's hope to secure a sample composed of multiracial, multiethnic respondents of varying socioeconomic backgrounds. However, because of an inadequate response rate that would not have only allowed for statistical analysis (only twenty-one questionnaires were returned), additional data was gathered through purposeful sampling.

In the revised sampling plan, respondents were solicited

through friends, counseling professionals, and classroom teachers. Four questionnaires were returned without data on sociodemographic characteristics and were destroyed.

Although the researcher was aware that this modified sampling plan may have introduced an additional self-selection bias, it was decided that an increase in sample size outweighed disadvantages.

Criteria for inclusion in the sample involved having a target stepchild five to eighteen years of age with whom the stepmother spent the equivalent of at least one weekend per month. One hundred and five stepmothers were sent a questionnaire upon indicating their willingness to participate in the study. Of the seventy-six stepmothers who returned the questionnaire, sixty-three met the criteria for inclusion.

Despite the researcher's effort to obtain ethnic and income diversity, this sample was composed of a majority of white (57.1%), middle to upper income respondents (81%). The mean income level was \$50,000-\$59,999 per annum. The

sample ranged from 25 to 53 years of age. The mean age for women was thirty-seven years of age. Over half of the stepmothers were thirty-nine or younger with the modal age being forty to forty-four years old. A little more than half of the sample (52.4%, N=33) were Protestant, with the second largest group being Catholic (28%, N=18). Education levels ranged from 15 through more than 16 years of education (76.2% N=33). More than half (62%) of the stepmothers were also biological parents. Although the stepmothers had been legally married and living together up to nine years, the majority (57%) were in the beginning state (the first four years) of stepfamily development (Papernow,1980).

#### Procedures

Stepmothers were sent questionnaires from February 1994 through March 1994. The instrument used was The Role Strain Index for Stepparents developed by Doni Whitsett and Helen Land in 1992. The Role Strain Index appeared to have content and face validity with thirty-one

items drawn from the theoretical/empirical literature (Sager et al. 1983; Wald, 1981, Papernow, 1980).

**Instrumentation**

The stepmothers were asked to answer each question on a five point likert scale with a range of strongly agree, moderately agree, neither agree nor disagree, moderately disagree, and strongly disagree. The concept of role stress is highly specific to the population and context in which it exists. The researcher found in reviewing the literature that stepmother role stress was composed of several dimensions not found in the nuclear family. The important work of Sager, Brown, Crohn, Engel, Rodstein, and Walker (1983) comparing the nuclear family with the remarried family on seven dimensions highlights these differences and calls attention to the points at which stress is likely to occur. However, a review of the literature yielded no adequate instrument for measuring role stress of stepmothers. The researcher did find a role strain

test for remarried in the unpublished work of Doni Whitsett and Helen Land. The researcher was given permission to use this model by the authors (personal communication, 17 December, 1993) to serve as the instrument to be used to look at stepmother role stress.(See Table 2 Survey in Appendix).

Two judges with expertise in stepfamily research had been asked by the authors to evaluate the appropriateness of item content (Whitsett and Land, 1992). The Role Strain Index appeared to have content and face validity in that the thirty-one items were drawn from theoretical/empirical literature (Sager et al.,1983; Wald, 1981; Papernow, 1980).

The instrument consists of eight factors, representing the following dimensions of role strain: role captivity, role ambiguity, role conflict, self-role incongruence, emotional spouse support, boundary ambiguity, feelings of exclusion/inclusion, and resources (money/time).

**Role Captivity**

The first three statements on the survey dealt with the stepmother's feelings with demands, personal needs, and feelings of anger. (See Table 2 Survey in Appendix).

**Role Ambiguity**

The section addressing role ambiguity issues had five statements. These statements pertained to the stepmother's clear expectations of her stepchild's discipline, school/homework, chores, nurturance, and time together. (See Table 2 Survey in Appendix).

**Role Conflict**

The category of role conflict had three statements dealing with the role of wife, career person, and parent. (See Table 2 Survey in Appendix).

**Self-Role Incongruence**

The section covering self-role incongruence issues had five statements. Three of the statements dealt with statements that the stepmother wishes she felt the way "I think I should

feel about loving my stepchild, spending more time with my stepchildren, and sharing my things with my stepchildren."

One of the statements addressed wanting to feel more positive about her stepchildren than she actually felt. The last statement dealt with wanting to give more of her emotional self to her stepchildren than she actually did. (See Table 2 Survey in Appendix).

#### **Emotional Spouse Support**

The section covering emotional spouse support had three statements. The statements pertained to the stepmother's feelings about the quality of support from her spouse. (See Table 2 Survey in Appendix).

#### **Boundary Ambiguity**

The section addressing boundary ambiguity contained five statements. Three statements dealt with the boundary of former spouse and relationship with current spouse. Two statements dealt with stepchildren and former spouse. (See Table 2 Survey in Appendix).



**Inclusion/Exclusion**

The first and third questions in this section deal with the relationship concerning the spouse and his relationship with his children; and the spouse dealing with his feelings of his former spouse. The other question, question B, addresses the issue of the stepmother wanting to be included in more decision making in the home. (See Table 2 Survey in Appendix).

**Resources**

This section addresses living arrangements and financial expenses not being adequate in the current home to prior family obligations. The final statement pertains to the visiting schedule of the stepchildren and the stepmother not being able to adapt to other people's needs. (See Table 2 Survey in Appendix). The data was analyzed and supported the null hypothesis that for this survey there was no statistically significant difference between stepmothers with residential and nonresidential stepchildren.

## CHAPTER IV

### Results

The results of the sixty-three surveys returned compared the difference of the mean between stepmothers with residential and nonresidential stepchildren. First, the total survey mean scores were compared. Then the mean scores for the subcategories were compared and analyzed. The null hypothesis for this survey was there was no statistically significant difference between stepmothers with residential and nonresidential stepchildren.

#### Total Scores

All eight subscores were calculated on a given measured tract for stepmothers with residential and nonresidential stepchildren (See Table 3 and 4 in Appendix). Using a t-test for the difference between means was the test the researcher chose. The total mean score for stepmothers with residential stepchildren was 1.9232. Stepmothers with nonresidential stepchildren had a mean score of 1.7431.

The null hypothesis was retained at the .05 level of significance because a  $t$  of -1.6553 is greater than the critical value of -1.96 (See Table 6 in Appendix).

#### Subcategories Analyzed

Each of the subcategories were also tested using a  $t$ -test for the difference in mean scores. The null hypothesis was that there was no significant difference in the role stress of the stepmothers with residential stepchildren and stepmothers without residential stepchildren. (See Table 6 in Appendix).

#### Role Captivity

There was no significant difference between the stepmothers with residential stepchildren and nonresidential stepchildren. The mean score for the stepmothers with residential stepchildren was 1.6437 (See Table 3 and 4 in Appendix). The mean score for stepmothers without residential stepchildren was 2.098 (See Table 4 in Appendix). At the .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was

retained because the t score was -1.396 and the critical value was -1.96 (See Table 5 in the Appendix).

**Role Ambiguity**

The null hypothesis was retained because at the .05 level of significance the t score was -1.054, which is less than the critical value of 1.96 (See Table 5 in the Appendix). The mean score for stepmothers with residential stepchildren was 1.9655 (See Table 3 in the Appendix). Stepmothers without residential stepchildren had a mean score of 2.3235 (See Table 4 in the Appendix).

**Role Conflict**

This subcategory was the only subcategory to reject the null hypothesis. The t score was -0.471 which is less than the critical value of -1.96 at the .05 level of significance (See Table 5 in the Appendix). The mean score for stepmothers with residential stepchildren was 1.3793 (See Table 3 in the Appendix). Stepmothers without residential stepchildren had a mean score of 1.5294 (See Table 4 in the Appendix).

**Self-Role Incongruence**

Stepmothers with residential stepchildren had a mean score of 2.0414 (See Table 3 in the Appendix). The mean score for stepmothers without residential stepchildren was 1.3529 (See Table 4 in the Appendix). The null hypothesis was retained at the .05 level of significance with a t score of 2.175, which is greater than the critical value of -1.96 (See Table 5 in the Appendix).

**Emotional Spouse Support**

The null hypothesis was also retained in this subcategory. The t score at the .05 level of significance was 1.521, which is greater than the critical value of -1.96 (See Table 5 in the Appendix). Stepmothers with residential stepchildren had a mean score of 2.1379 (See Table 3 in the Appendix). The mean score for stepmothers without residential stepchildren was 1.6471 (See Table 4 in the Appendix).

**Boundary Ambiguity**

The mean score for stepmothers with residential stepchildren was 2.1034 (See Table 3 in the Appendix). Stepmothers with nonresidential stepchildren had a mean score of 1.9647(See Table 4 in the Appendix). The t score at the .05 level of significance was 0.428. Thus, the null hypothesis was retained because the t score was less than the critical value of 1.96 (See Table 5 in the Appendix).

**Inclusion/Exclusion**

The t score was 1.651 and therefore the null hypothesis was retained. Since the t score was greater than the critical value of -1.96 at the .05 level of significance (See Table 5 in the Appendix). The mean score for stepmothers with residential stepchildren was 2.1609 (See Table 3 in the Appendix). Stepmothers without residential stepchildren had a mean score of 1.6176 (See Table 4 in the Appendix).

**Resources**

The null hypothesis is also retained in this subcategory. Since the critical value of -1.96 was less than the t score of 1.596 (See Table 5 in the Appendix). Stepmothers with residential stepchildren had a mean score of 1.954 (See Table 3 in the Appendix). The mean score for stepmothers without residential stepchildren was 1.4118 (See Table 4 in the Appendix).

## CHAPTER V

### Interpretation of Data and Conclusion

The review of literature illustrated many problems in step and blended families; however, there was little research, to date, that measured the stress of the stepmother. Researchers have taken a broad look at the problems of stepfamilies (Visher and Visher, 1979).

Therefore, it became clear to the researcher that there was a need for further understanding of the realities of living with stepchildren and having stepchildren visiting a remarried's home. The ultimate goal was to look at specific markers of vulnerability among stepmothers. Stepmothers reported overall conflict with role. Stepmothers reported significantly greater role strain in general than did stepfathers, confirming the literature of Waldren, 1986. One explanation for these findings is that despite tremendous shifts in traditional sex roles during the past two decades, woman are still expected to fill the primary nurturer and



caretaker roles within the family. Even when such expectations are not overtly verbalized, societal forces, coupled with the woman's expectations of herself, may contrast significantly with discrepant feelings and behaviors toward the stepchildren, resulting in a stress of role conflict (Clingempeel, 1984).

It was the researcher's notion, that in today's American society the additional responsibilities of attending to the physical and emotional needs of children from ones spouse's former marriage would be stressful, especially when the stepchildren were in the stepmother's resident fulltime. Apparently, that was not the case in this particular study.

#### Limitations and Recommendations

Certain limitations of the study need to be acknowledged. Because the sampling plan resulted in a lack of heterogeneity in socioeconomic status and ethnic representation, generalizability beyond the population parameters is uncertain. This limitation appears to be typical of stepfamily

research. Another limitation is that although sample size meets criteria for analysis (Kerlinger, 1964), replication with larger samples is needed. Further, too few items represent subscales, and the researcher questioned whether all dimensions of stress are adequately measured. Nevertheless, the researcher felt that these preliminary findings, are worthy of recording.

The researcher also found the letter method of seeking respondents was probably too impersonal to access low-income and minority stepmothers. However, scarce resources kept other avenues from being explored. Further research needs to be planned with particular attention to its applicability to diverse populations.

#### Implications for Practice

The researcher found several implications for practice. Because results suggests a particular vulnerability in role conflict for stepmothers, clinicians may be effective in reducing vulnerability by validating the feelings of stress and

placing them in a normative context. Additionally, biological fathers may benefit from an educative model regarding normative stepfamily processes and documented vulnerability in the stepmother role.

The lack of clarity in role expectations indicates a need for increased spousal communication regarding the stepmother's role both before and after remarriage. It has been noted by Sager et al.(1983) that marital partners, particularly remarried partners, enter marriage with nonverbalized expectations that become sources of disappointment and conflict. By bringing these out into the open, the couple can negotiate points of disagreement in order to achieve as much as is possible.

Feelings of exclusion also need to be aired in order to keep resentment from building up (Spanier, 1982). The clinician might consider structuring special time for the "former family" to be together as well as times in which to include the stepparent. Stepmothers and stepchildren could also

spend time apart from the biological father to strengthen the boundaries around the new parent-child unit. Papernow (1980) has highlighted the middle phase of stepfamily development as the most appropriate time for such restructuring interventions. However, the researcher believes that whatever feelings of exclusion are verbalized such interventions are called for. The findings of role-conflict point to the importance of role stress in informing clinicians knowledge of and service to stepfamilies.

TABLE 1

Sociodemographics of The Sample

| Age        | N         | Relative Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|------------|-----------|------------------|--------------------|
| 25-29      | 8         | 12.70%           | 12.70%             |
| 30-34      | 12        | 19.05%           | 31.75%             |
| 35-39      | 14        | 22.22%           | 53.97%             |
| 40-44      | 19        | 30.16%           | 84.13%             |
| 45-49      | 9         | 14.29%           | 98.41%             |
| 50+        | 1         | 1.59%            | 100.00%            |
| <b>SUM</b> | <b>63</b> | <b>100.00%</b>   |                    |

| Religion   | N         | Relative Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|------------|-----------|------------------|--------------------|
| Protestant | 33        | 52.38%           | 52.38%             |
| Catholic   | 18        | 28.57%           | 80.95%             |
| Jewish     | 6         | 9.52%            | 90.48%             |
| Other      | 2         | 3.17%            | 93.65%             |
| None       | 4         | 6.35%            | 100.00%            |
| <b>SUM</b> | <b>63</b> | <b>100.00%</b>   |                    |

| Years in School | N  | Relative Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-----------------|----|------------------|--------------------|
| <12             | 1  | 1.59%            | 1.59%              |
| 12              | 11 | 17.46%           | 19.05%             |
| 13              | 3  | 4.76%            | 23.81%             |
| 14              | 15 | 23.81%           | 47.62%             |
| 15              | 7  | 11.11%           | 58.73%             |
| 16              | 8  | 12.70%           | 71.43%             |
| >16             | 18 | 28.57%           | 100.00%            |

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Sociodemographics of The Sample

| Income (\$)   | N         | Relative Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------------|-----------|------------------|--------------------|
| 10,000-29,999 | 5         | 7.94%            | 7.94%              |
| 30,000-39,999 | 7         | 11.11%           | 19.05%             |
| 40,000-49,999 | 15        | 23.81%           | 42.86%             |
| 50,000-59,999 | 18        | 28.57%           | 71.43%             |
| 60,000-69,999 | 11        | 17.46%           | 88.89%             |
| 70,000+       | 7         | 11.11%           | 100.00%            |
| <b>SUM</b>    | <b>63</b> | <b>100.00%</b>   |                    |

| Ethnecity  | N         | Relative Percent |
|------------|-----------|------------------|
| White      | 36        | 57.14%           |
| Black      | 18        | 28.57%           |
| Hispanic   | 4         | 6.35%            |
| Oriental   | 3         | 4.76%            |
| Other      | 2         | 3.17%            |
| <b>SUM</b> | <b>63</b> | <b>100.00%</b>   |

Table 2

Sociodemographics

Please check the one line that best describes you.

| <u>Age</u>                     | <u>Religion</u>                     | <u>Years in School</u>                |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25-29 | <input type="checkbox"/> Protestant | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 30-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> Catholic   | <input type="checkbox"/> 12           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 35-39 | <input type="checkbox"/> Jewish     | <input type="checkbox"/> 13           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 40-44 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other      | <input type="checkbox"/> 14           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 45-49 | <input type="checkbox"/> None       | <input type="checkbox"/> 15           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 50+   |                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> 16           |
|                                |                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 16 |

| <u>Income</u>                            | <u>Ethnicity</u>                  |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000-29,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> White    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 30,000-39,999   | <input type="checkbox"/> Black    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 40,000-49,999   | <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 50,000-59,999   | <input type="checkbox"/> Oriental |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 60,000-69,999   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 70,000 +        |                                   |

Table 2 (Continued)

Remarried Role-Strain Scale

These questions pertain to your feelings about your experiences with your role as a stepmother. For each question, please indicate whether you **Strongly Agree (0)**, **Moderately Agree (1)**, **Neither Agree or Disagree (2)**, **Strongly Disagree (3)**, **Moderately Disagree (4)**. Please return the questionnaire in the stamped-addressed envelope. Thank You for your help.

**Role Captivity**

(A) Sometimes I wish I could escape from all the demands I am asked to meet.

0 1 2 3 4

(B) At times I feel that my own needs get lost trying to meet

everyone else's. 0 1 2 3 4

(C) Feeling angry overall. 0 1 2 3 4

**Role Ambiguity**

(A) Clear expectations of discipline with my stepchildren.

0 1 2 3 4

(B) Clear expectations of school or homework with my stepchildren.

0 1 2 3 4



Table 2 (Continued)

(C) Clear expectations of chores with my stepchildren.

0 1 2 3 4

(D) Clear expectations of nurturance with my stepchildren.

0 1 2 3 4

(E) Clear expectations of time together with my stepchildren.

0 1 2 3 4

#### Role Conflict

(A) My career demands sometimes interfere with my role as a wife.

0 1 2 3 4

(B) Sometimes my time away at work conflicts with family time.

0 1 2 3 4

(C) I feel that I am constantly juggling my different roles (e.g. spouse, job, parent) to meet all the different demands of those roles.

0 1 2 3 4

#### Self-role Incongruence

(A) I wish I felt the way I think I should feel about loving my stepchildren.

0 1 2 3 4

(B) I wish I felt the way I think I should feel about spending more time with my stepchild(ren).

0 1 2 3 4

Table 2 (Continued)

(C) I wish I felt the way I think I should feel about sharing my things with my stepchild(ren).

0 1 2 3 4

(D) I want to feel more positive about my stepchild(ren) than I actually feel.

0 1 2 3 4

(E) I wish I could give more of myself emotionally to my stepchild(ren) than I do.

0 1 2 3 4

#### Emotional Spouse Support

(A) I feel that stepparenting would be easier if my spouse helped out more.

0 1 2 3 4

(B) I feel that stepparenting would be easier if my spouse supported how I discipline his child(ren).

0 1 2 3 4

(C) I wish I could lean on my spouse more.

0 1 2 3 4

#### Boundary Ambiguity

(A) I am not sure how to act in regard to my spouse's former wife.

0 1 2 3 4

(B) I feel that my spouse's former wife interferes with my relationship with him.

0 1 2 3 4

Table 2 (Continued)

39

(C) I resent having to share my spouse's time with his child(ren).

0 1 2 3 4

(D) I believe my stepchild(ren) feels a conflict of loyalties between me and his or her natural mother.

0 1 2 3 4

(E) I feel that my spouse's former wife interferes with my relationship with my stepchild(ren).

0 1 2 3 4

#### **Inclusion/Exclusion**

(A) At times I feel left out of the relationship between my spouse and his child(ren).

0 1 2 3 4

(B) I would like to be included more in decision making.

0 1 2 3 4

(C) I would like my spouse to talk to me more about his feelings about his former spouse.

0 1 2 3 4

#### **Resources**

(A) Living arrangements are inadequate to meet the needs of our family.

0 1 2 3 4

(B) No matter how hard we work, there never seems to be enough money to meet all our expenses.

0 1 2 3 4

(C) The visiting schedule is hard for me in terms of having to adapt to other people's needs.

0 1 2 3 4

TABLE 3

## Results of Residential Stepchildren Survey

|                |   | Strongly Agree<br>0 | Moderately Agree<br>1 | Neither Agree or Disagree<br>2 | Moderately Disagree<br>3 | Strongly Disagree<br>4 | Total |  |
|----------------|---|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------|--|
| Role           | A | 5                   | 16                    | 2                              | 6                        | 0                      | 29    |  |
| Captivity      | B | 11                  | 6                     | 4                              | 8                        | 0                      | 29    |  |
|                | C | 2                   | 7                     | 1                              | 18                       | 1                      | 29    |  |
|                |   | 18                  | 29                    | 7                              | 32                       | 1                      | 87    |  |
| Weighted Mean: |   | 1.643678            |                       |                                |                          |                        |       |  |
|                |   | Strongly Agree<br>0 | Moderately Agree<br>1 | Neither Agree or Disagree<br>2 | Moderately Disagree<br>3 | Strongly Disagree<br>4 | Total |  |
| Role           | A | 1                   | 3                     | 6                              | 12                       | 7                      | 29    |  |
| Ambiguity      | B | 6                   | 10                    | 10                             | 2                        | 1                      | 29    |  |
|                | C | 3                   | 12                    | 3                              | 8                        | 3                      | 29    |  |
|                | D | 7                   | 14                    | 0                              | 6                        | 2                      | 29    |  |
|                | E | 2                   | 9                     | 1                              | 7                        | 10                     | 29    |  |
|                |   | 19                  | 48                    | 20                             | 35                       | 23                     | 145   |  |
| Weighted Mean: |   | 1.965517            |                       |                                |                          |                        |       |  |
|                |   | Strongly Agree<br>0 | Moderately Agree<br>1 | Neither Agree or Disagree<br>2 | Moderately Disagree<br>3 | Strongly Disagree<br>4 | Total |  |
| Role           | A | 5                   | 10                    | 2                              | 11                       | 1                      | 29    |  |
| Conflict       | B | 9                   | 12                    | 2                              | 4                        | 2                      | 29    |  |
|                | C | 14                  | 8                     | 1                              | 7                        | 1                      | 29    |  |
|                |   | 28                  | 28                    | 5                              | 22                       | 4                      | 87    |  |
| Weighted Mean: |   | 1.37931             |                       |                                |                          |                        |       |  |
|                |   | Strongly Agree<br>0 | Moderately Agree<br>1 | Neither Agree or Disagree<br>2 | Moderately Disagree<br>3 | Strongly Disagree<br>4 | Total |  |
| Self-Role      | A | 3                   | 6                     | 9                              | 3                        | 8                      | 29    |  |
| Incongruence   | B | 6                   | 6                     | 4                              | 11                       | 2                      | 29    |  |
|                | C | 2                   | 4                     | 11                             | 9                        | 3                      | 29    |  |
|                | D | 5                   | 9                     | 2                              | 12                       | 1                      | 29    |  |
|                | E | 3                   | 5                     | 14                             | 3                        | 4                      | 29    |  |
|                |   | 19                  | 30                    | 40                             | 38                       | 18                     | 145   |  |
| Weighted Mean: |   | 2.041378            |                       |                                |                          |                        |       |  |
|                |   | Strongly Agree<br>0 | Moderately Agree<br>1 | Neither Agree or Disagree<br>2 | Moderately Disagree<br>3 | Strongly Disagree<br>4 | Total |  |
| Emotional      | A | 2                   | 11                    | 6                              | 9                        | 1                      | 29    |  |
| Spouse         | B | 2                   | 4                     | 5                              | 12                       | 6                      | 29    |  |
| Support        | C | 6                   | 5                     | 7                              | 5                        | 6                      | 29    |  |
|                |   | 10                  | 20                    | 18                             | 26                       | 13                     | 87    |  |
| Weighted Mean: |   | 2.137931            |                       |                                |                          |                        |       |  |
|                |   | Strongly Agree<br>0 | Moderately Agree<br>1 | Neither Agree or Disagree<br>2 | Moderately Disagree<br>3 | Strongly Disagree<br>4 | Total |  |
| Boundary       | A | 1                   | 7                     | 4                              | 14                       | 3                      | 29    |  |
| Ambiguity      | B | 2                   | 6                     | 5                              | 14                       | 2                      | 29    |  |
|                | C | 4                   | 9                     | 1                              | 11                       | 4                      | 29    |  |
|                | D | 4                   | 11                    | 1                              | 11                       | 2                      | 29    |  |
|                | E | 6                   | 7                     | 2                              | 11                       | 3                      | 29    |  |
|                |   | 17                  | 40                    | 13                             | 61                       | 14                     | 145   |  |
| Weighted Mean: |   | 2.103448            |                       |                                |                          |                        |       |  |
|                |   | Strongly Agree<br>0 | Moderately Agree<br>1 | Neither Agree or Disagree<br>2 | Moderately Disagree<br>3 | Strongly Disagree<br>4 | Total |  |
| Inclusion/     | A | 3                   | 7                     | 4                              | 13                       | 2                      | 29    |  |
| Exclusion      | B | 2                   | 7                     | 3                              | 11                       | 6                      | 29    |  |
|                | C | 4                   | 8                     | 5                              | 10                       | 2                      | 29    |  |
|                |   | 9                   | 22                    | 12                             | 34                       | 10                     | 87    |  |
| Weighted Mean: |   | 2.16092             |                       |                                |                          |                        |       |  |
|                |   | Strongly Agree<br>0 | Moderately Agree<br>1 | Neither Agree or Disagree<br>2 | Moderately Disagree<br>3 | Strongly Disagree<br>4 | Total |  |
| Resources      | A | 7                   | 11                    | 3                              | 5                        | 3                      | 29    |  |
|                | B | 6                   | 10                    | 1                              | 8                        | 4                      | 29    |  |
|                | C | 2                   | 4                     | 5                              | 12                       | 6                      | 29    |  |
|                |   | 15                  | 25                    | 9                              | 25                       | 13                     | 87    |  |
| Weighted Mean: |   | 1.954023            |                       |                                |                          |                        |       |  |

TABLE 4

## Results of Non Residential Stepchildren Survey

|                |   | Strongly Agree<br>0 | Moderately Agree<br>1 | Neither Agree or Disagree<br>2 | Moderately Disagree<br>3 | Strongly Disagree<br>4 | Total |  |
|----------------|---|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------|--|
| Role           | A | 3                   | 16                    | 2                              | 8                        | 5                      | 34    |  |
| Captivity      | B | 6                   | 11                    | 1                              | 13                       | 3                      | 34    |  |
|                | C | 3                   | 5                     | 6                              | 11                       | 9                      | 34    |  |
|                |   | 12                  | 32                    | 9                              | 32                       | 17                     | 102   |  |
| Weighted Mean: |   | 2.096039            |                       |                                |                          |                        |       |  |
|                |   | Strongly Agree<br>0 | Moderately Agree<br>1 | Neither Agree or Disagree<br>2 | Moderately Disagree<br>3 | Strongly Disagree<br>4 | Total |  |
| Role           | A | 2                   | 4                     | 7                              | 14                       | 7                      | 34    |  |
| Ambiguity      | B | 7                   | 8                     | 2                              | 12                       | 5                      | 34    |  |
|                | C | 4                   | 5                     | 4                              | 10                       | 11                     | 34    |  |
|                | D | 5                   | 8                     | 4                              | 9                        | 8                      | 34    |  |
|                | E | 3                   | 8                     | 7                              | 9                        | 7                      | 34    |  |
|                |   | 21                  | 33                    | 24                             | 54                       | 38                     | 170   |  |
| Weighted Mean: |   | 2.323529            |                       |                                |                          |                        |       |  |
|                |   | Strongly Agree<br>0 | Moderately Agree<br>1 | Neither Agree or Disagree<br>2 | Moderately Disagree<br>3 | Strongly Disagree<br>4 | Total |  |
| Role           | A | 7                   | 12                    | 8                              | 4                        | 3                      | 34    |  |
| Conflict       | B | 9                   | 10                    | 7                              | 6                        | 2                      | 34    |  |
|                | C | 6                   | 14                    | 4                              | 8                        | 2                      | 34    |  |
|                |   | 22                  | 36                    | 19                             | 18                       | 7                      | 102   |  |
| Weighted Mean: |   | 1.529412            |                       |                                |                          |                        |       |  |
|                |   | Strongly Agree<br>0 | Moderately Agree<br>1 | Neither Agree or Disagree<br>2 | Moderately Disagree<br>3 | Strongly Disagree<br>4 | Total |  |
| Self-Role      | A | 16                  | 11                    | 4                              | 3                        | 0                      | 34    |  |
| incongruence   | B | 15                  | 17                    | 0                              | 2                        | 0                      | 34    |  |
|                | C | 9                   | 14                    | 3                              | 7                        | 1                      | 34    |  |
|                | D | 3                   | 4                     | 6                              | 14                       | 7                      | 34    |  |
|                | E | 9                   | 12                    | 5                              | 8                        | 2                      | 34    |  |
|                |   | 52                  | 58                    | 18                             | 32                       | 10                     | 170   |  |
| Weighted Mean: |   | 1.352941            |                       |                                |                          |                        |       |  |
|                |   | Strongly Agree<br>0 | Moderately Agree<br>1 | Neither Agree or Disagree<br>2 | Moderately Disagree<br>3 | Strongly Disagree<br>4 | Total |  |
| Emotional      | A | 9                   | 11                    | 2                              | 8                        | 4                      | 34    |  |
| Spouse         | B | 8                   | 15                    | 5                              | 7                        | 1                      | 34    |  |
|                | C | 5                   | 12                    | 3                              | 11                       | 3                      | 34    |  |
|                |   | 20                  | 38                    | 10                             | 26                       | 8                      | 102   |  |
| Weighted Mean: |   | 1.647059            |                       |                                |                          |                        |       |  |
|                |   | Strongly Agree<br>0 | Moderately Agree<br>1 | Neither Agree or Disagree<br>2 | Moderately Disagree<br>3 | Strongly Disagree<br>4 | Total |  |
| Boundary       | A | 4                   | 7                     | 7                              | 12                       | 4                      | 34    |  |
| Ambiguity      | B | 3                   | 5                     | 3                              | 17                       | 6                      | 34    |  |
|                | C | 9                   | 14                    | 2                              | 8                        | 1                      | 34    |  |
|                | D | 2                   | 3                     | 6                              | 16                       | 5                      | 34    |  |
|                | E | 10                  | 15                    | 1                              | 7                        | 1                      | 34    |  |
|                |   | 28                  | 44                    | 21                             | 60                       | 17                     | 170   |  |
| Weighted Mean: |   | 1.964706            |                       |                                |                          |                        |       |  |
|                |   | Strongly Agree<br>0 | Moderately Agree<br>1 | Neither Agree or Disagree<br>2 | Moderately Disagree<br>3 | Strongly Disagree<br>4 | Total |  |
| Inclusion/     | A | 12                  | 17                    | 1                              | 2                        | 2                      | 34    |  |
| Exclusion      | B | 8                   | 9                     | 5                              | 9                        | 3                      | 34    |  |
|                | C | 8                   | 5                     | 4                              | 15                       | 4                      | 34    |  |
|                |   | 26                  | 31                    | 10                             | 26                       | 9                      | 102   |  |
| Weighted Mean: |   | 1.617847            |                       |                                |                          |                        |       |  |
|                |   | Strongly Agree<br>0 | Moderately Agree<br>1 | Neither Agree or Disagree<br>2 | Moderately Disagree<br>3 | Strongly Disagree<br>4 | Total |  |
| Resources      | A | 8                   | 12                    | 6                              | 5                        | 3                      | 34    |  |
|                | B | 10                  | 9                     | 3                              | 10                       | 2                      | 34    |  |
|                | C | 12                  | 14                    | 1                              | 4                        | 3                      | 34    |  |
|                |   | 30                  | 36                    | 10                             | 19                       | 8                      | 102   |  |
| Weighted Mean: |   | 1.411785            |                       |                                |                          |                        |       |  |

TABLE 5

Table 5 t Scores By Group

| Group                    | t Scores |
|--------------------------|----------|
| Role Captivity           | -1.3960  |
| Role Ambigiuty           | -1.0540  |
| Role Conflict            | -0.4710  |
| Self-Role Incongruence   | 2.1750   |
| Emotional Spouse Support | 1.5210   |
| Boundary Ambiguity       | 0.4280   |
| Inclusion/Exclusion      | 1.6510   |
| Resources                | 1.5960   |

**TABLE 6**  
**Results of Weighted Means Comparisons By Groups**

| Group                    | Residential Stepchildren<br>Weighted Mean | Non-Residential Stepchildren<br>Weighted Mean: | t Scores |
|--------------------------|---|--|----------|
| Role Captivity           | 1.6437                                    | 2.0980   | -1.3960  |
| Role Ambiguity           | 1.9655                                    | 2.3235   | -1.0540  |
| Role Conflict            | 1.3793                                    | 1.5294   | -0.4710  |
| Self-Role Incongruence   | 2.0414                                    | 1.3529   | 2.1750   |
| Emotional Spouse Support | 2.1379                                    | 1.6471   | 1.5210   |
| Boundary Ambiguity       | 2.1034                                    | 1.9647   | 0.4280   |
| Inclusion/Exclusion      | 2.1609                                    | 1.6176   | 1.6510   |
| Resources                | 1.9540                                    | 1.4118   | 1.5960   |
| TOTAL MEAN SCORE         | 1.9232                                    | 1.7431   |          |

Critical Value = 1.96

Standard Deviation = 0.0500

TABLE 7

## Results of Weighted Means Comparisons By Questions

|                                | Question | Residential<br>Stepchildren<br>Mean | Non-Residential<br>Stepchildren<br>Mean |
|--------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Role<br>Captivey               | A        | 1.3103                              | 2.2069                                  |
|                                | B        | 1.3103                              | 2.2069                                  |
|                                | C        | 2.3103                              | 2.9655                                  |
| Role<br>Ambiguity              | A        | 2.7241                              | 3.0345                                  |
|                                | B        | 1.3793                              | 2.3448                                  |
|                                | C        | 1.8621                              | 3.0000                                  |
|                                | D        | 1.3793                              | 2.5862                                  |
|                                | E        | 2.4828                              | 2.6552                                  |
| Role<br>Conflict               | A        | 1.7586                              | 1.7931                                  |
|                                | B        | 1.2414                              | 1.7241                                  |
|                                | C        | 1.1379                              | 1.8621                                  |
| Self-Role<br>Incongruence      | A        | 2.2414                              | 0.9655                                  |
|                                | B        | 1.8966                              | 0.7931                                  |
|                                | C        | 2.2414                              | 1.5517                                  |
|                                | D        | 1.8276                              | 2.9655                                  |
|                                | E        | 2.0000                              | 1.6552                                  |
| Emotional<br>Spouse<br>Support | A        | 1.8621                              | 1.8966                                  |
|                                | B        | 2.5517                              | 1.7241                                  |
|                                | C        | 2.0000                              | 2.1724                                  |
| Boundary<br>Ambiguity          | A        | 2.3793                              | 2.5172                                  |
|                                | B        | 2.2759                              | 2.9655                                  |
|                                | C        | 2.0690                              | 1.5862                                  |
|                                | D        | 1.8621                              | 3.0000                                  |
|                                | E        | 1.9310                              | 1.4483                                  |
| Inclusion/<br>Exclusion        | A        | 2.1379                              | 1.1379                                  |
|                                | B        | 2.4138                              | 2.0000                                  |
|                                | C        | 1.9310                              | 2.5517                                  |
| Resources                      | A        | 1.5172                              | 1.7586                                  |
|                                | B        | 1.7931                              | 1.8276                                  |
|                                | C        | 2.5517                              | 1.3793                                  |



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