The self-perception of the stepmother.

Ruth Pe'er-Lamo-Beichman Klagsbrun

University of Windsor

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THE SELF-PERCEPTION OF THE STEPMOTHER

by

Ruth Klagsbrun
Erella Pe'er-Lamo-Heicaman
Patricia Ann Banks-Iukes

A thesis
presented to the University of Windsor
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Social Work
in
School of Social Work
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Windsor, Ontario, 1983
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Dr. Lola Beth Buckley  Chairperson
Professor Mae Harman  Member
Dr. Miriam E. Bunt  Member
DEDICATION

In Loving Memory
To My Parents

Devorah and Meshoulam Pe'er-Lamo
Abstract

Divorce rates in North America have increased dramatically in the past half-century. Attitudes of society, however, continue to reflect outdated and unrealistic perceptions and expectations about divorce and remarried families. The stepmother, in particular seems to be a pivotal factor in the success or failure of these new style reconstituted families. The purpose of this study was to examine how stepmothers view themselves in relation to their roles in the stepfamily.

This study investigated:

1. How stepmothers perceive differences between stepmotherhood and the natural mother role in the family.

2. The differences between stepmothers' and natural mothers' levels of self-confidence, and

3. The differences between stepmothers' and natural mothers' feelings toward discipline and their ability to employ it with their stepchildren/children.

Participants in the study were 30 stepmothers and 30 natural mothers. The stepmothers' group included either:

* stepmothers whose current husband had one or more children from his previous marriage living in and/or visiting their home on a weekly basis.

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* stepmothers with biological children from her previous marriage also in the home with her current husband's children.

* stepmothers with her current husband's children and/or her biological children and/or children from the present marriage.

The natural mother's group included women whose households included one or more natural children. The participants in both groups were Caucasians, and from a middle class background. Ages of the stepmothers ranged from 24 to 49 years of age.

The instruments used to explore the stepmothers' and natural mothers' self perception of their roles were:

* Harrison Gough's Adjective Check List,

* Interview Schedule.

The data analysis from the Adjective Check List revealed that there were no significant differences between stepmothers' and natural mothers' levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. In contrast to these findings, there were significant differences between stepmothers and natural mothers in terms of their satisfaction and perceived success in their roles. Stepmothers experienced significantly greater mixed feelings and dissatisfaction in their roles than did natural mothers. The statistical analysis indicated that stepmothers felt significantly less successful in their roles than did natural mothers. In
addition stepmothers did not feel sure of themselves in their disciplinary role, as compared to natural mothers who did. The study also revealed that stepmothers did not share authority with their husbands regarding disciplining their stepchildren, in marked contrast to almost all natural mothers who did.

The major conclusion drawn from this study was that both the myth of the 'wicked' stepmother, and the lack of clear role definition are still evident in terms of the stepmother's confidence in her disciplinary role. The major recommendation to emerge from this study was if the stepmother is to succeed in her role, she needs society's recognition and the myth of the 'wicked' stepmother must be removed.
**Acknowledgements**

With the support, encouragement and assistance of several individuals, the completion of this study was possible. Specifically, we wish to thank our Committee Chairman, Dr. Lola Beth Buckley for her support and encouragement throughout the entire process.

We also wish to thank Committee Members, Professor Mae Harman and Dr. Miriam E. Bunt for their many helpful suggestions and contributions.

A debt of gratitude is owed to the stepmothers and natural mothers, for without their assistance this study would not have been possible.

Finally, we would like to make our personal acknowledgments. A special thanks is extended to Dr. Paula Jorne for her valuable suggestions, and to Gavin Shaw whose computer expertise proved invaluable. Special thanks are extended to Mrs. Jennie Kobelski for her unrasing sense of humour and assistance, during this very stressful time.

R.K. wishes to dedicate this thesis to her parents, Jules & Sylvia, and family for their continuing support and love which made the task bearable this year and throughout her educational career.
E.R. offers her sincere thanks and appreciation to her husband Benny and to her daughters Savit and Hila. Your continuing love, support and encouragement helped me down the paths which made all this possible.

P.T. would like to thank her family and friends, who gave her their support and encouragement during this very stressful time. She would also like to especially thank her daughter Shannon Lynne for her patience, understanding, and her acceptance of her non-traditional 'mother' role. This project could not have been undertaken without her support.
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Introduction

One of the oldest living institutions is the family. Many families today strive to maintain a traditional family structure with little success (Capaldi & McRae 1979, pg. 1). Mother and father experience problems in their relationship as husband and wife. This troubled relationship affects the children. Over time the family breaks up. A potential result of the breakdown of the original family is the eventual formation of the stepfamily. This family differs—a man or a woman assumes the responsibility for helping to raise another person's children. Caring for someone else's children—the step-relationship promotes uneasy, uncomfortable feelings for family members. (Capaldi & McRae 1979, pg. 2).

While living with other people's children no longer is a unique experience, those who are doing it perceive that it is not sanctioned by a great segment or society. Recognition of stepfamilies must be followed by a redefinition of roles (Berman 1980 pg. 7). Women in remarriages involving children commonly have unrealistic expectations of themselves—expectations often reinforced by their partners, by their relatives, and by society in general (Visher & Visher 1979 pg. 50). These unrealistic
expectations piqued our interest in how the stepmother perceives her role.

When a woman goes through a marriage ceremony and becomes a stepmother, she is automatically placed in a definite category which defines and characterizes her. We define her first and then make her fit the definition. We forget all that the psychologists and educators have taught us about individual differences; we make no realistic examination of the total personality concerned, but react to the generalized category even though it does not accord with actuality. This hangs a millstone about the neck of the stepmother and makes her role an exceedingly difficult one (Smith, 1953 pg. 86).

The role of the stepmother is an exceedingly difficult one, as the above quote indicates. Our main concern is to investigate the role of the stepmother as she perceives herself.

The Nature of the Problem

Divorce rates in North America have increased dramatically in the past half-century. Since 1960, statistics indicate that the divorce rate in the United States has doubled, and that in 1974 there were approximately 976,000 divorces with an average of 1.22 children per divorce (U.S. Census, 1974).

The National Center for Health Statistics reported that after levelling off for a year, the national divorce rate has started climbing again. The final statistics for 1978 show that there were 1,130,000 divorces for a national rate of 5.2 per 1000 people. There were 39,000 more divorces in
1978 than in 1977. Provisional data for 1979 indicates that there was another 40,000 divorces for that year. The report states that in 1978 the national divorce rate resumed the upward trend that had characterized its movement between 1963 and 1976. The rate of 5.2 in 1978 was up four percent over the rate of 5.2 recorded for both 1976 and 1977. (New York Times Aug. 17, 1980).

Canadian statistics indicate that in the early 1900's, divorce rates in Canada were among the lowest in the Western world (Wakil, 1976). Since the passing of a liberalized Divorce Act in 1968, the divorce rate in Canada has increased almost five times: from 54.8 (per 100,000) in 1968 to 278.0 (per 100,000) in 1981. Nationally this means that about one in every four Canadian marriages end in divorce (Statistics Canada, 1981).

Many of these divorced people remarry, as Schlesinger (1970) states: "remarriage appears to be an institutionalized way of reorganizing families which have been broken or disrupted by divorce" (pg. 101). United States statistics indicate that 80% of divorced people remarry and that 60% percent of these remarriages involve stepparenting (Visher & Visher, 1979). In 1977 18% of the yearly marriages in Canada were second marriages (Schlesinger, 1978), and approximately 17% of all Canadian families were stepfamilies (Carson, 1983).
As a result of the increase of remarriages many women become stepmothers. Historically the role of the stepmother has been considered the most difficult parental assignment in Western society. Probably the stepmother role is so difficult because children in our society are closer to their mother than to their father and this means that it is very unlikely that anybody can follow the mother without experiencing some problems (LeMaster, 1970, pg. 173). Many women enter this role without any prior parental experience (Visher & Visher, 1979). Research concerning stepmotherhood is scarce, therefore, it seems appropriate to examine the stepmother's perception of her role in terms of her self-confidence and the difficulties she encounters in the area of discipline.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate common problems that stepmothers experience, as indicated in the literature, and whether these common problems are also experienced by a sample of natural mothers. The researchers wanted to compare a group of stepmothers and natural mothers as to:

* perceived differences between stepmotherhood and the natural mother role in the family,
* differences between stepmothers and natural mothers in levels of self-confidence, as measured by the Adjective Check List,
differences between stepmothers and natural mothers' feelings toward discipline and their ability to use it.

Relevancy to Social Work

Marriage and parenting require skill and understanding to be successful. There are difficulties in all types of family structure, and the knowledge of these difficulties helps minimize the problems and maximize the satisfactions (Visher & Visher, 1979). It seems that only recently, with the rise of divorce rates, some attention has been given to the structural characteristics of stepfamilies. There are a limited number of studies on remarriage, and there are even fewer on stepparent, stepchild or stepsibling relationships. Most remarried partners find themselves entering this complex situation with little or no preparation (Visher & Visher, 1979).

Remarriage and the formation of a stepfamily are events that most likely will create difficulties for some people. A basic difficulty for stepfamilies arises from the question of what constitutes a family. In North America people grow up believing that a family consists of a father, a mother and one or more children who live together in one household. This is known as a nuclear family.

The structure of the stepfamily is more varied than that of a nuclear family, and role definitions for individuals in such families have not been clearly established in our
society. There are no societal guidelines or role models to help the members of the stepfamilies determine what is appropriate behavior, and what is expected of the stepparents.

This ambiguity, together with the negative connotation which still surrounds divorce and remarriage involving children, makes for considerable misunderstanding and lack of empathy from the general community as well as from the stepfamily community (Visher & Visher, 1979, pg. 31). Therefore, the researchers feel it is important for human services professionals to identify and understand the stresses that are related to the various members of the stepfamily.

Social workers and other human services professionals would do well not to seek a 'cure' for the stepfamily by using the model of the nuclear family as the normative pattern. One needs to understand the origins of the characteristics commonly seen in stepfamilies, rather than interpret them as being indicative of family pathology. Stresses and tensions in stepfamily relationships can have their origins in social conditions arising from economic change and culturally conditioned beliefs and expectations.

The researchers hope that the information obtained in this study about the stepmother's perception of her role in terms of her self confidence and the difficulties she experiences in the area of discipline will prove helpful to
professional social workers dealing with this client population, and will enhance the understanding of stepmothers' problems.
Review of the Literature

The review of the literature will be presented in the following sections: Trends in divorce and remarriage, literature on stepfamilies, the stepmother-myths and fairy tales, roles, self-concept, self-esteem, recent studies regarding stepmothers and finally discipline.

Trends in Divorce and Remarriage

As the divorce rate has been steadily rising in North America, so too has the rate of remarriage increased. In 1960, there were 28 divorced men for every 1000 men living with their wives. There were 42 divorced women for every 1000 married women (Duberman, 1975). According to Bernard (1956), the number of remarriages among divorced women increased from 106 to 139 per thousand between the years 1950 to 1960—an increase or approximately one-third. In addition, remarriage occurred sooner after divorce in the 1960's than in the 1950's (Bernard, 1956).

In the 1950's divorced men remarried in approximately five years, whereas in the 1960's remarriage occurred after two years. In the 1950's half of all divorced women remarried after five years. Bernard (1956) also noted that three-quarters of all divorced men and women remarry within five years.
### TABLE 1

**Trends in Divorces**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Divorces</th>
<th>Rate per 1,000</th>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>708,000</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>1,036,000</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>1,181,000</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1,182,000</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>1,219,000</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
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As indicated by the statistics in Table 1, the number of divorces obtained has been steadily climbing. (U.S. Bureau of Census 1982-1983).

In 1961 there were about seven million stepchildren in the United States living with a stepparent (Simon, 1964). Simon found that the exact number of stepchildren is not available. The United States Census Bureau does not count stepchildren. This may be due to the fact that many stepparents do not report their children as stepchildren. The Census Bureau does not make a distinction between biological children and children from a previous union.

Maddox (1975) estimates that close to one million American children are involved in divorce each year. She also states:

*If three-quarters of their mothers remarried that would make nearly 75,000 stepchildren a year created by divorce alone. But divorce is not the only cause of children acquiring a stepparent. In the United States each year upwards of 400,000 children lose a parent through death.* (pg. 8-9).
In 1975 Roosevelt and Lofas (1976) reported that there were 15 million children under 18 living in stepfamilies and that there was a minimum of 25 million husbands and wives who were stepfathers and stepmothers.

In the past, although remarriage was encouraged between widowed people, American culture rejected remarried couples if one or both of the partners had been divorced (Duberman, 1975). Today the views toward remarriage are changing in response to life in a highly mobile society. Such a society facilitates divorce, by denying the stability most marriages require. As a consequence, remarriage is rapidly becoming more prevalent.

Glick (1976) estimates that approximately ten percent of the 66 million children in the United States under 18 are living as stepchildren with a stepparent. His findings indicate that every year in the United States nearly one million children under the age of 18 see a parent remarry, and that half a million adults are in the stepparent role. One in every three marriages is a remarriage for one or both partners (pg. 321-333).

To summarize, the stepfamily has become an alternative to the nuclear family. The changing patterns in family life often require different marital partners. With the rising rate of divorce and remarriage, society must come to the realization that the nuclear family is not the only significant family form. The marked increase in the rate of
remarriages indicates that North Americans continue to have faith in the institution of marriage. About 1,300 stepfamilies with children under the age of 13 are forming everyday (Public Affairs Committee, 1982). It is apparent that many people are assuming the challenging role of becoming stepparents.

**Literature on Stepfamilies**

Although a second marriage is a marriage as the first one was, the second family it creates is different. Husband and wife are not equivalent parents to each other's children (Simon, 1964).

Stepparents are, in a fundamental sense, unwanted parents. Research shows that children do not easily accept substitute parents and that there is more friction and tension in stepfamilies than in natural families. Bowerman and Irish (1962) reported that the cultural ideal — that the stepparent be like a real parent to the stepchild — was not often achieved. Most stepchildren felt more rejected by the stepparent than they felt with biological parents. Stepchildren as compared to children living with two biological parents felt more distant from both parents, the biological parent as well as the stepparent. Bowerman and Irish concluded that homes involving step-relationships proved more likely to have stress, ambivalence and low cohesiveness than did natural homes (pg. 113-121).
Past and Cain (1966) examined fifty case records of stepchildren from both inpatients and outpatients at a child guidance clinic, and made a number of points which apply equally to stepmothers and stepfathers when they discussed the difficulties of stepparent roles:

* A number of role-learning opportunities available to natural parents are not available to stepparents.
* Stepparents have difficulty in developing stable patterns of feeling, thinking, and acting toward stepchildren. They do not know whether to act as a parent, stepparent or even a nonparent.
* Uncertainty about appropriate role and behavior of the stepparents may lead to "intrapsychic and interpersonal difficulties which often appeared to augment problems based on the stepparent's uncertainties about their appropriate roles as parents" (pg. 487).

Stepfamily relationships cannot be patterned after those of the traditional nuclear family. Past and Cain proposed that the stepfamily should be considered as a structurally different type of child-rearing unit. They also stated that the stepparent's success in assuming the parent role was largely dependent on mutual acceptance by the spouse and by the stepchild, and that efforts to reproduce the nuclear family in the stepfamily unit are doomed to failure.

However strong the stepparent's determination to be a substitute parent, however skilful his efforts, he cannot succeed totally (pg. 488).
They believe that organizational disturbance in stepfamilies is inevitable.

Smith (1964) concluded that relations between stepchildren and stepparents are considered less harmonious than those between children and their biological parents.

Podolsky (1955) found that the stepchild has special problems; he has lost a parent and he has gained another parent — either a stepmother or stepfather. The child finds it necessary to adjust to new conditions. How the child adjusts is dependent upon several factors, and among the most important of these is age. The younger a child is, the more helpless he is, and the more he craves affection and mothering. He cannot live happily without such attention as it is a necessary part of his growth and development. If he receives the affection he craves, he is willing to accept a substitute parent with fewer reservations than an older child. An older child has too many memories of his biological parent, and he will be more apt to consider the stepparent as an unwelcome intruder into the family union (pg. 49).

Podolsky (1955) considered the emotional problems of stepchildren and concluded that the stepparent's chances of success, particularly if the stepparent was a woman, were not good. The reason he cited for this were: Some stepmothers have had little experience in dealing with children. No matter how skillful and patient a stepmother
may be, she is already under a disadvantage, because she is a stepmother and as such all her actions are suspect. Every move she makes is regarded with suspicion by the stepchild, and the situation becomes very difficult. One of the most pressing problems a stepmother faces is that of finding satisfactory roles for the stepchildren. She must study the personalities of her stepchildren, their desires and inclinations, and assign to each a task that he or she would like to do (pg. 49-53).

Duberman (1975) studied aspects of step-relationships among 88 stable stepfamilies in the Cleveland area. She taped interviews of the adults in the families, and gave each participant an opportunity to rate familial relationships and to evaluate the closeness of the family. She found that stepfathers achieved better relations with stepchildren than did stepmothers. The age or sex of the stepchild did not seem to influence stepfather relationships, but stepmothers had better relations with stepchildren under the age of 13 than with teenagers. Sixty-four percent of the families rated themselves as having excellent relationships, while eighteen percent rated themselves as having poor relationships.

Duberman's study attempted to identify social factors which might account for varying self-rating scores. The age of the stepfather was not a factor, but the age of the stepmother seemed to be correlated with the quality of her
relationships to stepchildren. Seventy percent of stepmothers who were 40 years old or less had excellent relations with their stepchildren, while only fifty-two percent of stepmothers over 40 had similarly good relationships.

There seems to be controversy among researchers on the issue of whether it is harder to be a stepparent after a death of the natural parent than after a divorce. Maddox (1976) points out that children whose mother or father had died resented their parent's new spouse more than did children who had been through a divorce. Some of the reasons she suggested were:

* The interval between a divorce and a remarriage is shorter than the interval between a death and a remarriage. The longer interval allows the child more time to adjust to a life alone with the single parent.

* The parent who died is more likely to be idealized. The remarriage of a widow or a widower is more likely to seem disloyal to the lost parent, than is the remarriage of a divorced person.

* Women, in general, divorce at a younger age than those who are widowed, and divorced women as compared to widows are twice as likely to remarry. Children involved in remarriage after divorce tend to be younger than those involved in remarriage after a death.
* There are usually fewer children involved when a parent divorces than when a parent dies. A parent who dies is more likely to be older and to have completed his family. The stepparent is more likely to enter an alliance of teenage children who will reject the intruder (pg. 73-74).

Duberman (1975) found, contrary to the experience of other researchers, that bereaved children adjust better to a stepparent than did children of divorce.

Stepfamilies are often fragmented because the stepchildren consciously or unconsciously wish to separate their parent from the stepparent, with the fantasy to reunite their biological parents. For some children this fantasy continues even after both biological parents have remarried, which creates jealousy around the issues of sharing a parent who was very available to them before the remarriage, and now cannot allow as much time alone with the child.

Related to the fantasy of reuniting the biological parents, is the children's guilt feeling that they have caused the divorce of their natural parents. Visher and Visher (1979) state that:

in second marriages some children carry an even greater load of guilt and worry that their behavior will cause a second divorce. Since it is often the relationship between adults and children in a remarriage that causes observable strain, the children's feelings of guilt may have a realistic base (pg. 175).
In the first marriage, the couple will ideally have an adequate period of time, prior to the birth of their first child, in which to achieve adjustment. The spouses have the advantages of first, being able to gradually adjust to the presence of children and second, living with the children whom they have personally reared. But a stepparent is suddenly faced with both a new mate and a ready-made family. The children in the stepfamily will, in many cases, have habits, expectations, outlooks, and patterns of thought and emotions which differ from those of the substitute parent. When remarriage involves children by an earlier union, children and parents come to one another with separate histories, and therefore, with different memories, and conceptions of themselves, role definitions and expectancies, as Simon (1964) states:

Stepparent and child alike are deprived of the years of intimate knowledge. They can never know each other as natural parents and children do, lean on the staunch support of a shared life, or reach for the reassurance of known assets to ease difficulties (pg. 135).

Stepparents start out as strangers to the children. How can they expect to be instant parents? Just as the myth of "instant love" brings unhappiness for the stepparent in a remarried family, the expectation that a child will instantly love a stepparent also brings unhappiness to the child.

When a stepfamily is newly formed, tension surrounds the names its members call one another. When a parent of the
same sex as the stepparent is alive and involved in the child's life, the child may be concerned that assigning a relationship term to the stepparent will be construed as a rejection to the natural parent. Simon (1964) states:

the child's usual preference is to call the stepparent by his first name - a noncommittal solution. From this impersonal position, the relationship is free to grow in any direction (pg. 136).

Another area of difficulty in dealing with stepparent stepchild relationship is authority. A child may ask: who do I listen to - my mother or my stepmother? What is a child supposed to do in situations with conflicting directions that may at times be more than two or as many different directions as there are parents, biological and step?

Jealousy may be defined as a feeling of displeasure which expresses itself either as fear of loss of the partner or as discomfort over a real or imagined experience the partner has with a third party (Clanton, 1977). Rosenaum (1977) states that as a new stepparent you should expect that the children will be jealous. You should assume that you will be dealing with children's envy on a daily basis. Expectations of stepparenting should be based on reality. The stepparent should expect that the children will relate to him or her as a single foreign unit. They will automatically exclude the stepparent for decisions that they have to work through and they will ask the natural
parent for food, money or favors as if the stepparent were nonexistent. Einstein (1982) says that research indicates that there are problems between stepmothers and stepdaughters. She goes on to state that without a blood tie a stepmother may view her stepdaughter as the other woman, competing for her husband's affection, and as the stepdaughter blossoms into adolescence her physical presence provides a daily reminder of the former wife. The more she looks like her mother, the more difficult it is to forget that this child is the product of another love relationship. She concludes by saying that competition increases between the young stepmother and adolescent stepdaughter because they are competing as peers.

Duberman (1975) stated that the most detrimental factors in the reciprocal role relationship of the stepparent, and the stepchild are hostility, competition and jealousy. These feelings arise from insecurity and role confusion on the part of both the stepparent and the stepchild.

Having an understanding and acceptance of the many negative as well as positive feelings of all members of the reconstituted and natural families can result in less disappointment and more stepfamily enjoyment.
The Stepmother

Myths and Fairy Tales

According to Schulman (1972), there are two basic kinds of myths that plague stepparents, and have been passed down from generation to generation. They are the myth of the "wicked stepparent" and the counter myth of "instant love". Schulman postulates:

There are two kinds of recurring myths in the reconstituted family that seem to be generic because they have occurred in different countries and cultures from time immemorial and have been handed down from generation to generation through fairy tales...they are the myth of the "bad stepmother" and the counter myth of "instant love" that is expected from the stepmother as well as the stepchild (pg. 135).

Maddox (1975) states that friends and neighbors delight in fostering the myth. Thomson (1967) writes that very often when schoolmates hear a friend is going to have a stepmother they regale the child with stories about stepmothers that are anything but reassuring.

Bowerman and Irish (1962), in their study of over two thousand stepchildren, found the role of the stepmother more difficult than was that of the stepfather. The two reasons suggested by them were: society was more likely to give assistance and social acceptance to the male stepparent, and men are more likely to find social acceptance in the role. Another reason is the myth in various cultures denigrates the stepmother, and she is regarded as the cruel stepmother.
Simon (1964) best describes the universal myth of the wicked stepmother:

Every small female would like to have her father to herself; the mother who makes this impossible seems cruel, jealous, wicked and punishing, and small girls wish her out of the way, wish her dead. It becomes evident that Cinderella—and all the company of folk tale stepchildren—must be father's child to make the point of mothers venality. It is this rational that makes wicked stepmothers happen in every corner of the world (pg. 27).

Related difficulties experienced by stepfamilies, as a result of the wicked stepmother myth, are problems arising from expectations that all members of the new reconstituted family love each other. Simon (1964); Schulman (1972); and Visher and Visher (1979) refer to this myth as the "instant love". In stepfamilies there is an expectation that the new stepparent will almost immediately love his or her stepchildren. This unreasonable expectation falls mainly on the stepmother, because she is still seen in our culture as the main provider of affection and nurturance as well as the person responsible for the overall interpersonal functioning of the stepfamily.

Stepparenting writers Schulman (1972) and Visher and Visher (1979), are not particularly in agreement about why the myth is perpetuated or why the myth of the cruel stepmother is more blatant than that of the cruel stepfather.

Maddox (1975) points out that the reverse comes closer to the truth, that is, the writers are in agreement that the myth exists. Maddox (1975) writes:
The cruel stepparent myth survives because there is truth in it. Yet the well-meaning stepparent has only natural parenthood to use as a model for the alternative to the myth and that does not suit either (pg. 152).

Fairy tales such as Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel and Snow White are seen as part of our culture. Bruno Bettelheim (1977) believes that these fairy tales give children a vehicle to use in dealing with their ambivalent feelings about their mothers. He describes the good mother and the bad mother. Now that the number of stepmothers is rapidly growing and becoming a reality in our society, continuation of such tales help to perpetuate the negativism that is associated with the stepfamily.

Bohannan (1970) writes that throughout the world, stepparents, especially stepmothers, have a reputation of being cruel. Even when they are good loving surrogate mothers, they suffer from this stigma because of the emotions that are culturally associated with a lack of biological connection.

To conclude, stepmothers have been denigrated in the myths and fairy tales. Whether or not stepmothers view themselves negatively or positively, the stepmother myth may have an effect on how stepmothers interact with extended family members.
Role

All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts, his acts being seven ages... (William Shakespeare. *As You Like it*, Act 1).

Social roles are elements of all social systems, and are generally assigned or achieved on the basis of the position within various social systems in which we all find ourselves. These expectations involve not only our overt behavior but what we are expected to be and feel like in interaction with what the other is expected to be, to act like, and to feel like (Pearlman, 1961).

The term role refers to the socially expected behavior prescribed for a person occupying a particular social status or position in a social system (Biddle & Thomas, 1966).

Social norms for the position provide guides for the attitudes, feelings and behavior that are permitted, expected, or prohibited for the individual filling that role. These norms vary in different cultures. All cultures have prescribed specific role behavior for a woman filling the role and status of mother within the family system. The role expectations may vary significantly depending upon the cultural environment of the particular family system (Compton & Galaway, 1979).

If a system is to enjoy some stability and integration, there must be some reciprocity of expectations between role partners. If husbands and wives are to create a family
system with stability, there must be an agreement between them as to how they will perform their varying roles. The patterns of expected role behavior grow from the need of the social system to have a steady state - to have the stability that comes from being able to predict within some reasonable limits the behavior of elements within the system (Compton & Galaway, 1979).

Roles must be assigned, perceived, performed and integrated with other role tasks. Every role carries with it a position in the interaction system that relates to status and prestige. In the well organized family the major roles have been identified, assigned, and performed with some degree of competence. If the roles are not clearly defined the family is said to be disorganized. Lemasters (1970) states that minor roles may be ignored or performed indifferently without producing too much difficulty. Major roles, such as care of young children, require contact and at least adequate role performance.

In the area of parental roles the Parsonian theory has probably been the most influential one. According to this theory, the parental roles are sex-differentiated, the father playing the adaptive-instrumental roles, and the mother the integrative and expressive roles (Parsons & Bales, 1955). In our society it is plausible that both parents play both roles, but in some social groups and in many cultures one parent may emphasize to a greater extent one role more than the other.
LeMasters (1970) writes that the contemporary American mother is overcommitted. Since the ending of World War 1, the American woman has expanded almost all of her roles. This expansion of roles include:

* the role of wife
* the role of mother
* expansion of the home management role
* expansion of the community role
* expansion of her breadwinner role (pg. 128-130).

An individual's role in the family is defined in terms of the behavior he is expected to perform in the family. The members of the family may differ in the expectation they have regarding the role performance of any given member including those which pertain to the self. These differences may result independently in the area of solidarity or sexuality, but more often they result in the division of responsibility, internal instrumentality, and external relations (Glasser & Glasser, 1970, pg. 159).

For the individual, both self-evaluation and other evaluation depend upon the satisfactory execution of a reciprocal role. The wife's self-evaluation depends upon her husband's performance of the role she expects of him, since most interpersonal roles require a reciprocal for completion. Her evaluation depends upon her performance of the role she expects of herself (Glasser & Glasser, 1970, pg. 159).
To summarize, each person throughout life occupies many roles. Some are concomitant; a female can be a daughter, a sister, a wife, a mother, and a worker at the same time. Some roles are sequential; a female is first an infant, then a schoolgirl, a college student, a mother, and a grandmother. Each role is related to at least one other role; one cannot be a daughter unless someone else occupies the reciprocal role of parent. Similarly, to be a sister, one must have a sibling (Duberman, 1975, pg. 23).

A role always has rights, obligations and a measure of prestige attached to it, and these factors constitute a social role. A role is a set of behavioral expectations related to a particular status. The person who occupies the role has the same expectations about his behavior that others hold. When a woman is in the role of mother, she and her society expect her to care for her children. Thus people act in ways that correspond to the normative expectations of others and themselves for people who occupy those roles (Duberman, 1975, pg. 23).

**Role of the Stepmother**

Stepfamilies have not been well established in our society. There are few societal guidelines or role models to help the members of the stepfamilies determine what is appropriate behavior, and what is expected of them as stepparents or stepchildren. This ambiguity, together with
the negative connotation which still surrounds divorce and remarriage involving children, makes for considerable misunderstanding and a lack of empathy from the general community, as well as from the stepfamily community (Visher & Visher, 1979).

Historically, the role of the stepmother has been considered the most difficult parental assignment in Western society (LeMasters, 1970, pg. 173). In reality, stepfamilies are culturally disadvantaged families. Down through the ages, in all societies the word stepmother was associated with the "bad witch" or the "wicked witch", as has been portrayed in our folklore, literature and media.

It is altogether appropriate and quite satisfying in this society to denigrate stepmothers, but not mothers. All human relationships are marked by ambivalence. One socially acceptable way to deal with ambivalent feelings toward mother is to split the feelings, that is we talk of the loving biological mother and the hating stepmother (Jacobson, 1979, pg. 203).

Fast and Cain (1966) believe the role definition of stepparent in this society is both poorly articulated and implies contradictory functions as "parent, stepparent and non-parent". They found that these three roles are interwoven. A central unsettled question they found was how much to parent, for example the assumption of the rights and responsibilities of discipline:

The stepparent's capacity to assume the role of parent did not depend only on his own willingness and ability, this reciprocal acceptance of himself in that role by spouse and child was essential (pg. 486).
Often times the child did not accept the stepparent, thus making the role very difficult. Thomson (1967) adds that:

In remarriage a stepmother does not start afresh as an equal partner. She begins with a highly complex set of interpersonal relations existing independently prior to the marriage. A stepmother actually fluctuates between being a stepparent and a non-parent (pg. 48).

Margaret Draughn (1975) sees the role of the stepmother as ambiguous and sometimes conflicting, over which role to assume— to be a primary mother to the stepchild, to become a substitute mother or to develop a friendship with the stepchild. In Draughn’s article (1975), she explains that stepmothers can assume any of these roles; assuming the 'primary' mother role if the stepchild's biological mother is deceased or has no contact with the child; she may assume the 'substitute' mother role, one which stepmothers often assume and which may cause conflict, especially if the biological mother is actively involved with the child. Finally, the stepmother may try to become the stepchild's friend, in which case the stepmother and stepchild both can have the freedom to either become close to each other or to maintain a superficial relationship.

Duberman (1975) found that there were great differences between being a stepmother and being a stepparent, although both roles are more difficult than being a biological parent. The role can be more complicated if the child sees the stepmother as having taken the father from the biological mother. All the resentment felt toward the father may be projected onto the stepmother.
The stepmother, being a newcomer to an already formed relationship, is seen as both a rescuer as well as an intruder into an already formed relationship between the father and child. Her role is seen to be the most complicated. She feels she has to make up for the child's past hurts inflicted by his/her biological mother, while at the same time the child projects onto her anger that really belongs to the biological mother (Schulman, 1972, pg. 131-139).

Visher and Visher (1979) state that if a woman is a stepmother only and not a mother as well, she does not have the advantage of having the positive self image of a 'mother' as well as the negative image of a 'stepmother'. If she is considered to be an inadequate stepmother or is rejected by her stepchildren, she has no basic mothering experience to lean on, or to feel adequate in her role. Thus, as a result her feelings of inadequacy and insecurity can be very profound (pg. 63).

Kenneth Walker (1977) believes that there is a general agreement in the literature that the stepmother's role is especially difficult, as she faces more disciplinary problems than the children's own mother but without the legitimation that natural parenthood provides.

Bohannan (1970) feels that our kinship terms are inadequate. Stepparent was a useful term when death was the precursor of remarriage, because the stepparent was a
replacement, but after a divorce a stepparent is an additional parent, not a replacement.

**Dimensions of the Self Concept**

William James (1890) is identified as the earliest "self" psychologist. He states that the total self (or person) is differentiated into two aspects - the self as the knower, the I, and the self as that which is known, or the agent of experience and the contents of experience, the Me.

Cooley (1902) was the next major figure to deal with the idea of self. He wrote from a more sociological perspective. Cooley is best known for his notion of the looking glass self, which postulates that an individual's conception of him or herself is determined by perception of other people's reaction to him or her. According to Cooley, a self-idea of this sort has three principal elements:

- The imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgement of that appearance and some sort of self-reeling (pg. 151-152).

A sense of self always involves a sense of other people, whether it is distinct and particular, or vague and general.

Mead (1934) saw the self as a social phenomenon - a product of interactions in which the person experienced herself as reflected in the behavior of the other. In other words, a person will look at himself as he believes significant others will look at him. Mead wrote of the I
and Me of self which is similar to Freud's concept of the ego and superego. The difference being that Freud saw the id and superego doing battle in the area of the ego, while Mead saw the I and the Me in alliance.

In the self concept literature, self concept is sometimes equated with self esteem (e.g., Pitts, 1965 and Korman, 1961). A reason for this is "the person's evaluation or esteem of himself plays a key role in determining his behavior" (Gergen, 1971, pg. 8). Much of what a person chooses to do, and the manner in which he does it, is presumed to be dependent upon his self esteem.

**Self Esteem.**

Coopersmith (1967) describes self esteem as:

> the evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself; it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful and worthy (pg. 45).

He states four factors contributing to the development of self esteem.

* the amount of concern and amount of respect a person receives from significant others in his life.
* the status an individual holds in the world and the history of successes.
* to live up to the personally significant aspirations in our lives.
* the individual's manner of responding to evaluation (pg. 46).
Rosenberg (1965) defines self esteem as "a positive or negative attitude towards a particular object, namely the self" (pg. 30). Self esteem implies that the individual feels he is a person of worth, respecting himself for what he is and the extent to which he feels positively about himself.

According to Brisset (1972), self esteem encompasses two basic psychological processes:

* the process of self evaluation
* the process of self worth

He argues that both elements of self esteem are necessary to provide oneself and one's activities with a reference (as cited in R.B. Burns, pg. 55).

Ziller et al (1969) describe self esteem as "a component of the person's self esteem which acts as a mediator or buffer zone between the self and the real world outside the senses" (pg. 84). When the person's social environment changes, self esteem determines the resulting changes on self evaluation. Self esteem is linked to the concept of personality integration relative to the person's ability to react to a variety of incoming stimuli.

The importance of interpersonal relationships in the formation of one's personality was discussed by Horney (1945), Sullivan (1953) and Rogers (1961). The earliest interpersonal relationships involve the individual and members of his family. Combs and Snygg (1959) state:
No experience in the development of the child's concepts of self is quite so important or far-reaching as his earliest experiences in his family. It is the family which introduces a child to life, which provides him with his earliest and most permanent self definitions. Here it is that he first discovers those basic concepts of self which will guide his behavior for the rest of his life (pg. 134).

Combs and Snygg state the family provides a person with his earliest experiences of feelings of adequacy or inadequacy; feelings of acceptance or rejection; opportunities for identification; and expectancies concerning acceptable goals, values and behaviors (pg. 134). From family members and from significant others, the individual learns the values which are attached to perceptions of the self.

Consequently, how stepmothers' developmental history evolved may play an important part in their level of self confidence and self esteem. The principle reason for this focus is the importance of the value a person places on himself; that is, "the person's evaluation or esteem of himself which plays a key role in determining behavior" (Gergeren, 1971, pg. 22).

In summary, the dimensions of the self-concept can be related to Cooley's (1902) "Locking Glass Self", and Mead's (1934) social interaction theory with expectations projected to significant others. Fitts (1965) proposes that the self concept provides a "core set of data for predicting behavior" (pg. 16). Coopersmith (1967) believes self esteem
"is a personal judgement of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds toward himself" (pg. 47). Zillers (1969; theory involves "how the person ranks herself against some collection of specific others" (pg. 287).

**Discipline**

The literature states that discipline is a problem in natural families as well as stepfamilies. Discipline refers to rules and regulations that define what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior (Sulk, 1978). Discipline involves the problem of control of the child's behavior, which is one of the important tasks of parenthood. Each child must learn, usually inside the family, that there are social limits imposed on the behaviors that he is biologically capable of performing. Many behaviors are permitted within restrictions, and the child is required to learn the socially acceptable limits for expressing his individuality and meeting his needs (Espinoza, 1979).

Madsen (1972) views discipline as a process whereby certain relationships (associations) are established. Discipline is a way of behaving, which will lead to a certain result. Dodsen (1977) defines discipline as "a process of teaching that goes on all the time - teaching desirable behavior and teaching avoidance or undesirable behavior" (pg. 4).
Gordon (1975) writes that most parents see the whole problem of discipline in childrearing as a question of being either strict or lenient, tough or soft, authoritarian or permissive, because they see their relationship with their children as a power struggle. Scientifically, not a great deal is known about the effects of treating children at the firm extreme as compared to the lax extreme (Fisner, 1976).

Discipline is a controversial topic. There are a number of theories built around a single system, such as "active listening" or "behavior modification" or "the use of spanking to establish the authority of the parent", and others (Dodson, 1977). However, it is impossible to find conclusive evidence to prove that one method is superior to another. Little solid information is available on what is the most effective way to motivate children to do what the parent considers to be right or proper behavior. Gardner (1973) states that no one method of discipline will be equally useful for all children.

What may be considered a deprivation for one child may be a boon to another. What may work for one child, may not work for another (pg. 184).

The disciplinary measures, then, must be tailored to the needs of the child and judged by their efficacy for that particular child.

Butter (1975) states that effectiveness of discipline probably depends on many factors. Firm knowledge is not yet available on what they are, but they probably include
consistency either between parents or within one parent's mode of discipline; the timing of parental responses (both rewards and punishments are much more effective when given immediately); and the quality of the parent-child relationship (parental approval and disapproval will have much more impact when the parent is loved and respected). Dodson (1977) also postulates that establishing rapport between the parent and the child needs to go on continually for "rapport is the foundation of the house of discipline" (pg. 12).

Many parents today lack self-confidence regarding the best way to discipline their children. On the one hand, the popularization of psychology has taught parents the importance of effective parenting skills in raising children to become well adjusted adults. On the other hand, no one gives parents the training they need to help them raise their children wisely. Thus, parenting is a complex skill that needs to be learned (Dodson, 1977).

If parenthood is a complex and difficult skill, particularly without any training, instant parenthood is much harder. Although parents of a biological family usually have no training in parenting skills, as they grow up together with their children, emotional bonds are formed that help to smooth over the rough edges of the parents' deficiencies in parental skills. Whereas stepparents are catapulted into parenthood trying to manage suddenly in the role of parents to children of different ages and sexes (Dodson, 1977, pg. 216).
Discipline and authority are sources of crisis in many stepfamilies. These are the issues upon which childparent difficulties revolve (Noble, 1977). Capaldi and McRae (1979) state that discipline is a constant concern of parents in a step-relationship. Most stepparents want to be parents in more than name only; they want to play an active role in helping to raise the stepchildren.

Elizabeth Einstein (1982) states that adhering to a single childrearing system ensures that children get what all children need, i.e., consistency, concern, and boundaries. While consistency is important to all families it is doubly so in stepfamilies.

McClenahan (1979) found discipline ranked as the number one area of difficulty in stepfamilies. Bowerman and Irish (1962) found that stepchildren in their study felt uncertainty of feelings and insecurity of position to a greater degree than children in natural families. Stepparents were perceived to discriminate more often against the stepchild by using harsher discipline, and by showing favoritism for the biological siblings (Bowerman & Irish 1962, pg 113-121).

Stepparents are often afraid to discipline the stepchildren, because they fear the reaction of their mate, as stated by Capaldi and McRae (1979),

So they walk on eggshells, avoiding disciplining the other's child. They fear both the child's reaction to them as a wicked stepparent and their spouse's reaction (pg. 123).
These writers also note two factors contributing to this eggshell phenomenon. One, the stepparent has either had no prior experience with disciplining children or has no idea as how the children have been disciplined in the past. Two, the parent and stepparent have not discussed how to discipline the children and by whom (pg. 123).

Satir (1972) feels that the stepparent should go slowly in taking the role of disciplinarian. This is important, as the stepmother is a newcomer to an already formed relationship. Maddox (1975) and Thorson (1966) believe the natural parent and the stepparent should learn to share authority early in the relationship.

Schulman (1972) writes that stepmothers are often forced into the position of disciplinarian, because fathers take a passive role. The fathers by default, are then seen by the children as the nicer parents.

Susan Carson (1983) wrote that parents must compromise about rules and discipline. In time the children will accept the stepmother’s authority, if she has her husband’s support and permission to discipline his children. Problems arise if permission is withheld.

Steinzor (1969), and Maddox (1975) refer to the testing experiences stepparents must endure from their stepchildren before the children will accept a stepparent as an authority figure. These writers also warn that children will often try to play one parent against the other, however; this
problem is not unique to stepfamilies; it is also found in natural families (pg. 25).

Steinzor (1969) feels that stepchildren react with suspicion when a stepparent disciplines, because they think she is trying to take the absent parent's place. Rosenbaum (1977) also states that the child-discipline procedures are seen to be the most formidable problem between parents and stepparents. Some stepparents feel timid about punishing children, and leave everything to the natural parent. Some natural parents resent any interference by the stepparent.

If the natural parent refuses to share the role of disciplinarian, the stepparent is reduced to a child's position without power. The child, in such a lopsided arrangement, tends to disrespect the stepparent and to view him/her as just another child. Both parents must be authority figures (Rosenbaum, 1977, pg. 8d).

Phyllis Stern (1978, in her study of discipline in 30 stepfathers sees the first task of the new stepfamily as one of achieving integration. Crucial to effective integration is the process of the stepfather becoming a friend to the stepchild. This process takes at least one-and-a-half to two years to achieve. Thus if stepfathers attempted to discipline before establishing a bond or friendship with their stepchildren, the stepfathers might never be able to form close bonds with the family unit. Stern concluded that although stepmothers were not the focus of her study, it is
her impression that those who practice integrative discipline fare better than those who do not.

Einstein (1982), and Capaldi and McRae (1979) state that it is crucial to the success of the stepfamily to determine whether discipline is going to be a joint and equal venture between partners, or is the natural parent expecting to continue disciplining as in the past - including the new parent in the disciplining only when it is convenient to do so.

If it is going to be a joint venture (as it should be), the natural parent must clearly give the stepparent permission to join in disciplining the children, sharing their ideas on past experiences and how they view discipline in the stepfamily (Capaldi & McRae, 1979, pg. 124).

The question of discipline is faced by all families - natural families as well as stepfamilies. The merging of two sets of rules and different life styles is difficult. Typically members of a stepparent household engage in a struggle to determine which family is dominant. The stepfamily must not only work out its rules, but also its roles, e.g. who is the dominant partner, and who imposes punishment on whose children and in what manner? It is a difficult problem faced by stepmothers as well as natural mothers.
Recent Studies on Stepmothers

Zimmerman (1977) completed a study on the subject of how stepmothers view themselves in relation to their stepchildren and possible difficulties they may experience within the nuclear family system.

She compared 35 stepmothers (with and without their own children) and 35 natural mothers. There were no significant demographic or socio-economic differences between the two groups. Her findings indicated that stepmothers tended to be slightly more self-confident than natural mothers. Stepmothers also tended to be more ambivalent toward their children and stepchildren than were natural mothers, who tended to feel closer to their children. Stepmothers reported feeling more jealousy toward their children and stepchildren than do natural mothers.

Janice Horowitz Nadler (1976) completed a study on the psychological stress of the stepmother. She compared three groups, part-time, full-time stepmothers, and natural mothers. Her findings indicated that part-time and full-time stepmothers experienced more intrapersonal conflict than do natural mothers; and had more feelings of anxiety, depression and anger regarding family relations; and had more interpersonal conflict within the stepfamily than natural mothers. Stepmothers also tended to have more negative involvement in their family relations, more conflict over family life, more conflict regarding their
role, more conflict regarding finances, relatives and the community. Reasons for the stepmother's psychological stress were hypothesized to be in her failure to find support within the stepfamily or within society for all the effective enactment of her role, for the satisfaction of major personal needs and for the affirmation of a favourable self-image (as cited in Visher & Visher 1979, pg. 44).

Summary

The review of the literature was organized in such a way as to enhance the problem formation concerning stepfamilies. From the review of the literature it was apparent that family life is changing in North America. A statistical overview indicated that there was a soaring divorce rate in the last half century, which has led to an increase in the number of remarriages and to the formation of more stepfamilies. With the changing status of marriage in our society, problems in relationships have occurred. One of these problems is the role of the stepparent. In this chapter we reviewed the literature on stepfamilies in general. The difficulties that stepmothers face in relation to their role were also examined, more specifically the areas of discipline and self-confidence. We also looked at how myths and fairy tales affect the role of the stepmother, and two recent studies on stepmothers were also reviewed in this chapter.
Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, the researchers will present the research questions, the operational definitions used in the study, the particular research design, the data collection instruments, the population selection and sampling procedure, the data analysis, and the limitations of the study.

The researchers feel that the role of the stepmother is ambiguous, because there are few guidelines regarding role expectations. In our literature review the views of various authors were presented regarding the role of the stepmother and some of the problems she encounters. Rosenbaum (1977) states that discipline procedures are seen to be the most formidable problems between natural parents and stepparents. Zimmerman (1977) found that stepmothers felt unsure of themselves in terms of disciplining their stepchildren, as compared to natural mothers who felt sure of themselves. The researchers wanted to respond to this area.

In addition to the area of discipline, the researchers were also interested in the levels of self-confidence of both groups. The researchers found in the literature that the effect of the stepmother myth, whether the stepmother
views herself positively or negatively, will undoubtedly affect her interaction and relationships with the rest of her new family.

In view of the research on self concept and self esteem, we feel it would be useful to explore now stepmothers view themselves, specifically in terms of their self-confidence, and their role as stepmothers. The concepts of disciplining and self-confidence were compared in both groups, the natural mother group and the stepmother group. This focus led to the following research questions.

**Research Questions and Hypothesis**

* The levels of self-confidence of the stepmothers will be significantly lower than those of the natural mothers.

**Hypothesis** On the Adjective Check List scale of self-confidence, the scores attained by the stepmothers will be signigicantly lower than those of the natural mothers. The null hypothesis is that the scores obtained by the stepmothers will not be significantly lower than those obtained by the natural mothers on the Adjective Check List scale of self-confidence. We predict that there will be no significant differences between the two groups.

* Are there any reported differences between stepmothers' and natural mothers' perception of their role?
* Stepmothers will report more often they do not have permission to discipline their step/children than do natural mothers.

* Are there reported differences between steppmothers' and natural mothers' methods of disciplining?

* Stepmothers will report more spouse involvement in disciplining their step/children than will natural mothers.

* Does the former wife interfere in the life of the stepmother?

* Stepmothers will report less satisfaction in their relationships with their spouses than will natural mothers.

 Operational Definitions

The following operational definitions were used in the research design of this study.

 Stepmother: Female head of household who has married a man with child(ren). She will have at least one stepchild residing in the home, or visiting on a weekly basis. She may, or may not, have been married before, and she may or may not, have biological children of her own from a previous marriage, and she may, or may not have children from the present union.

 Stepchild: Daughter or son of one's husband by a former marriage, or union. Smith (1953) defines stepchild as: "a child of one's wife or husband by a former marriage".
Natural Mother: A woman who has given birth to a child.

Role: Thomas (1967) defines role in terms of role expectation. He defines role expectation as,

an idea held by a relevant individual concerning how the occupant of a position should perform the rights and duties of that position (pg. 20).

Role is defined as the set of role expectations held by relevant others concerning how the rights and duties of a position should be carried out.

Discipline: Discipline refers to rules and regulations that define what is acceptable or unacceptable behavior.

Classification of the Research Design

Tripodi (1969) classified research studies into three major designs - experimental, quantitative-descriptive, and exploratory. The researchers classified their study as quantitative-descriptive, using the criteria described by Tripodi (1969). The major characteristics of this type of study are:

* it is not experimental in nature;
* it uses contrast groups in sampling rather than experimental and control groups;
* it requires variables to be operationally defined and systematically measured;
* it tests hypothesis, and describes relationships among variables.

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The researchers determined that their study was an hypothesis-testing sub-type of quantitative-descriptive. The researchers constructed contrast groups of stepmothers and natural mothers, matched on a number of criteria to control for extraneous variables and subjected these two groups to a variety of research procedures, in order to test the hypothesis. This research fulfilled all of Tripodi's criteria for classification.

**Data Collection.**

It is the purpose of this section to describe the instruments used in this study for data collection and analysis, and to state the limitations of the study in terms of both design and results.

**Data Collection Instruments.**

The instruments used in this study were the Adjective Check List (Appendix D) and an Interview Schedule (Appendix F&G) constructed by the researchers to gather certain demographic and personal data relevant to the hypothesis and research questions.

**Adjective Check List.**

This instrument (Appendix D) was developed by Gough and Heilbrun (1965) to measure individual self-concepts in terms of fifteen traits of personality. It consisted of a list of 300 adjectives (see Appendix D), from which the respondent chooses those she feels are characteristic of herself. Scoring for each trait is obtained by adding the number of
adjectives considered indicative of a particular trait and subtracting the number of adjectives that are contra-indicative. This computation yields a numerical score which is converted to a standard score according to the sex of the respondent and the total number of adjectives checked in the test.

The researchers chose the Adjective Check List, (hereafter ACL), as their test instrument for the following reasons:

* the test is self administered and requires only ten to fifteen minutes to complete;
* the terms used in this test are common everyday language, so the test is easy to understand;
* a large amount of data can be collected in a short period of time;
* the test measures many personality traits;
* it has been validated by previous use. The various scales of the ACL were subjected to tests of their construct validity (Gough and Heilbrun, 1965), and were found to be accurate measures of what they purported to measure.

The ACL was administered to compare 30 stepmothers and 30 natural mothers especially for the Scale #22 of Self-Confidence. The researchers were also interested in three additional scales: #5 Achievement, #6 Dominance, and #7 Endurance. For a detailed description of scales see Appendix E.
Interview Schedule.

A large part of the Interview Schedule (Appendix F & G) was developed by the researchers over a period of months. A portion of it was adapted from Irene Zimmerman's study (1977) with her permission (Appendix H). The Interview Schedule was pretested on several stepmothers and natural mothers who were friends or acquaintances of the researchers, who otherwise would have been suitable for the study. Pretesting allowed an opportunity to gain practical experience in interviewing before beginning data collection.

The Interview Schedule (Appendix F & G) consisted of 52 questions, the majority of which were closed questions with a Likert type scale of four alternatives.

The researchers had two main purposes for using this instrument:

* to gather basic demographic information on variables such as age, marital status, socio-economic status, educational level, length of years married, religion, and occupation. In addition, the information was used to match the subsample and to control for extraneous influences.

* to obtain relevant information to support or reject the hypothesis.

The Mother Interview Schedule (Appendix G) is identical to the Stepmother Interview Schedule (Appendix F), except for the substitution of the word "mother" for "stepmother".
Population Selection and Sampling Procedure

The focus of this study was the role and self perception of the stepmother. The stepmothers' group included:

* stepmothers whose current husband had one or more children from his previous marriage living in and/or visiting their home on a weekly basis.
* stepmothers with biological children from her previous marriage also in the home with her current husband's children.
* stepmothers with her current husband's children and/or her biological children and/or children from the present marriage.

The researchers recruited twenty stepmothers from The Stepfamily Association of Oakland County, Michigan. The procedure for recruiting these stepmothers was:

* The researchers attended several open forum meetings of The Stepfamily Association of Oakland County;
* presenting the research proposal to those in attendance;
* distributing to stepmothers attending each meeting (a letter Appendix C) requesting their voluntary participation in the study. The latter part of the letter contained a detachable form, requesting the stepmothers to complete. The form contained demographic information such as: name, address, phone number, age, number of stepchildren and number of years...
married. This information was required to secure our population;
* collecting the forms from the interested participants at the end of the meetings;
* Advising the prospective participants that one of the researchers would contact them to arrange a convenient time for completion of a test and an individual interview.

The remaining ten stepmothers were obtained by asking the stepmothers at the end of the interview if they knew of other stepmothers who would be willing to partake in this study.

The natural mothers (n=30) in this study were recruited in the following manner. The mothers were contacted from a Student Directory which was distributed to all students attending an elementary school in Oakland County Michigan. The directory was given to the daughter or one of the researchers. The directory contained a listing of all students by class, address, telephone number and names of parents.

The natural mothers were informed of our study and asked if they were willing to participate. A convenient time was arranged for completion of the Adjective Check List (ACL) and the Interview Schedule. When the Interview Schedule and the ACL were completed the participants were asked whether they wanted any additional information regarding the study.
The researchers then explained the importance of comparing the natural mothers experience to that of stepmothers. Each mother was thanked for her participation in the study.

**Data Collection Procedure**

Each subject completed a pencil and paper test of personality ACL (Appendix D), and participated in an interview consisting of both multiple choice and open ended questions. The researchers chose to interview the subjects rather than use a mail out questionnaire, because they were aware of the statistics for return rate of mail out questionnaires—usually 10 to 50 percent (Seltiz et al., 1976, pg. 297)—and felt that their sample was not large enough to afford such a loss in response rate.

**Plan for Analysis of Data**

In order to analyze the data obtained from the two groups, the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) was used. The researchers used a number of SAS procedures programs in the analysis. They were: frequencies, crosstabs, chi-square, and analysis of variance.

The frequencies provided statistics on absolute and percentages frequencies of the value of each variable under consideration, along with several measures of central tendency (mean, median, and mode) and variation (skewness, kurtosis, standard deviation, standard error and range).
Chi-square analysis and the analysis of variance were used to test the differences between the comparison groups.

Limitations of the Study

The researchers recognized that there were a number of limitations to their study. The study involved two groups, stepmothers and natural mothers who were Caucasians and from a middle class background. Thus the participants in both groups did not represent the entire population in terms of race, age, education and socio-economic factors.

Since the majority of the stepmothers were drawn from the Stepfamily Association, we realized that we were working with a highly motivated group of people who would not necessarily be representative of the entire population of stepmothers.

Due to the fact that the data was collected in the United States, the results would not necessarily be representative of a Canadian population of stepmothers and natural mothers.

The Interview Schedule constructed by the researchers lacked extensive validation or reliability testing. Additional limitations were placed on the study due to time, financial resources and a small sample size, which made generalizations to a large population of stepmothers and natural mothers impossible. Despite these problems, the researchers felt that their sample was adequate for the purpose of the study.
Summary

The researchers outlined in this chapter the research questions, the operational definitions used in the study, the research design, the population selection and sampling procedures, data analysis and the limitations of the study.
Data Analysis

The following chapter will report data obtained from interviews of 30 stepmothers with live-in stepchildren and visiting stepchildren and 30 natural mothers. Within the stepmother group there were 15 stepmothers who had stepchildren living in the home on a daily basis, and 15 stepmothers whose stepchildren visited weekly. The first section will describe the demographic data which will consist of the following variables: age of stepmothers/mothers, age of spouses, ages of stepchildren/children, religion, educational level, marital status, income level, occupation, years presently married. The second section will relate to the findings of the research questions and hypothesis.

Demographic Data

The research sample consisted of 60 mothers living in Macomb, Oakland or Wayne County of Michigan. The sample was composed of 60 mothers. One subsample consisted of 30 stepmothers, the other subsample consisted of 30 natural mothers. Participants of both groups were Caucasians.
**Age.**

The age breakdown of stepmothers/mothers in this sample is shown in Table 2. The average (mean) age of the 60 stepmothers/mothers was 35.5 and they ranged in age from 24 to 49.

**TABLE 2**

Age of StepMothers and Natural Mothers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Stepmothers (N=30)</th>
<th>Natural Mothers (N=30)</th>
<th>Total (N=60)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24-28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 30 30 60

Mean 36.3 34.7 35.5

Chi-square: 9.71, 3 df, p = .05

Table 2 indicates that the age of the stepmothers group is slightly older than the age of the natural mothers group.

The age breakdown of the husbands of both groups in this sample is shown in Table 3. The average (mean) age of the 60 husbands was 39 and they ranged in age from 28 to 54.

Table 3 indicates that the mean age of the spouses of the stepmothers was higher.
### TABLE 3

**Age of Husbands of Stepmothers/Natural Mothers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Husbands of Stepmothers (N=30)</th>
<th>Husbands of Natural Mothers (N=30)</th>
<th>Total (N=60)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24-28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-34</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>39.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square: 15.4, 5 df, p = .01

The age breakdown of stepchildren/children is shown in Table 4. The average (mean) age of all stepchildren was 16. They ranged in ages from 5 to 36. The average mean age of the natural children was 8, and they ranged in age from 1 to 17.
TABLE 4

Ages of Stepchildren / Natural Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Stepchildren (N=29)</th>
<th>Stepchildren Visiting (N=38)</th>
<th>Natural Children (N=69)</th>
<th>Total (N=136)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 &amp; over</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square: 55.24, 6 df, p=.05

Religion.

Table 5 compares the religion of all stepmothers and natural mothers. No significant differences were found (p=.05).

However, 47% of the natural mothers' group reported Catholic as their religion, in contrast to 17% of the stepmothers' group. There was a very small difference between the two groups in the Protestant category, 57% of the stepmothers and 43% of the natural mothers reported Protestant as their religion.

In summary, there was no significant difference in Table 5. More natural mothers reported Catholic as their
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Stepmothers</th>
<th>Natural Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Affil</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square: 8.0, 4 df, p=0.09

Religion. Fifty percent of both groups reported Protestant as their religion.

Educational Level.

Table 6 compares Educational Level of all stepmothers and natural mothers. The overall findings show no significance at the .05 level.

However, the natural mothers have a slightly higher percentage of those who have a university background (57%) in comparison to the stepmothers (50%). Stepmothers showed a slightly higher percentage in the secondary level (30%) in comparison to the natural mothers (27%).

In summary, stepmothers and natural mothers are closely related in terms of their educational level, with natural mothers indicating a slightly higher percentage in the
### TABLE 6

**Educational Level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Stepmothers N</th>
<th>Stepmothers %</th>
<th>Natural Mothers N</th>
<th>Natural Mothers %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square: 2.3, 3 df, p=.51

University level. Stepmothers though indicated a slightly higher percentage in the secondary level, in comparison to the natural mothers group who have a lower percentage in this category.

**Income Level.**

Table 7 compares Income Level for both groups of stepmothers/natural mothers. There was no overall significance between the two groups.

The stepmothers showed a slightly higher percentage of income (47% in the over $40,000) in contrast to the natural mothers who have 30%. The two groups are the same in the $15,001-$20,000 category (3% for both). There is a slightly higher number of natural mothers in the $30,001-$40,000 category (37%) as compared to 30% of stepmothers.
TABLE 7

Family Income Level of Step/Mothers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Stepmothers N</th>
<th>Stepmothers %</th>
<th>Natural Mothers N</th>
<th>Natural Mothers %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under $10,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,001-$15,000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,001-$20,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,001-$30,000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,001-$40,000</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $40,000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square: 3.4, 5 df, p = .64

In summary, when comparing the income level of stepmothers and natural mothers there were no significant differences. However, as indicated in Table 7 there were more stepmothers in the over $40,000 category (14 stepmothers) as compared to 9 natural mothers in the same category.

Occupational Level

Participants of the research sample came from a variety of occupational backgrounds. There were six occupational levels. Level one consisted of professionals which included the following: psychologists, social workers, accountants, teachers, and nurses. Level two included one skilled technician. Level three was classified as semi-skilled workers. Included in this classification were teachers aids, medical record technicians. Level four included
medical secretaries, insurance agents and service representatives. Maintenance workers were classified as unskilled labour which comprised Level five. Level six was comprised of one volunteer. Table 8 summarizes the composition of each group in terms of their occupational levels.

**TABLE 8**

**Occupations of Stepmothers/Natural Mothers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupations</th>
<th>Stepmothers N</th>
<th>Natural Mothers N</th>
<th>N%</th>
<th>N%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-skilled</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical &amp; Sales</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No occupation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square: 10.7, 6 df, p = .10

There were no significant differences round when comparing the occupational levels of stepmothers and natural mothers. However, Table 8 reveals some interesting differences in the types of jobs held by stepmothers and natural mothers. The stepmothers' subsample (33%) were employed in the fields of clerical and sales, whereas this occupational level accounted for only 10% of the natural
mothers' subsample. The natural mothers' group contained 23% of semi skilled workers, while seven percent represented stepmothers.

**Years Presently Married.**

Table 9 compares the number of years presently married between the two groups, stepmother/natural mothers. There were significant differences at the .0001 level.

**TABLE 9**

_Years Presently Married_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Stepmothers</th>
<th>Natural Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 &amp; over</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square:</td>
<td>44.3, 5 df, p=.0001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 reveals that the length of time married for natural mothers is twice as long as those in the stepmothers group. Twenty-seven natural mothers' marriages ranged in years from 9 to 15, whereas twenty-six stepmothers were married from 1 to 8 years.
Summary: Demographic Data.

To summarize, the following variables did not show significant differences at the .05 level among the two groups:

* Religion
* Educational Level
* Income
* Occupation

The four variables that were significant were:

* age of stepmothers/natural mothers
* age of husbands of stepmothers/natural mothers
* age of stepchildren/children
* years presently married for stepmother/natural mother

Research Question 1.

The levels of self-confidence of the stepmothers will be significantly lower than those of natural mothers.

Table 10 presents the mean and standard deviation scores of two groups, stepmothers and natural mothers, on the ACL scale #5 Self-Confidence. As indicated in Table 11 a one-way analysis of variance for stepmothers and natural mothers is shown for the ACL variable #5, Self-Confidence. The analysis of variance comparing the two groups indicated that no significant difference was found.

The self-confidence scores rating of the 30 stepmothers (53) and 30 natural mothers (54) were approximately the same which can be noted in Table 10. According to Gough, the
higher scorer is more assertive, outgoing as well as self-confident, determined and forceful.

TABLE 10
ACL Scale #5 (Self-Confidence)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural Mothers</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>52.57</td>
<td>8.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepmothers</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>53.50</td>
<td>7.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 11
Analysis of Variance ACL Scale (Self Confidence)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F Ratio</th>
<th>F Prob</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13.0666</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.6497</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 2-
Are there any reported differences between stepmothers' and natural mothers' perception of their role?

Table 12 describes comparisons between the stepmothers and natural mothers with relation to the question: 'How satisfying do you find being in the role of a stepmother/mother?' As is evident in Table 12 there is significance at the .0001 level. The data in Table 12

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indicates that almost all the participants in the natural mothers' group reported that they are very satisfied and/or satisfied in their role as mothers (97%), in contrast to only 37% of the stepmothers who said the same. Less than one-half (47%) of the stepmothers said they have mixed feelings about their role, whereas only three percent of the natural mothers reported mixed feelings. Seventeen percent of the stepmothers expressed dissatisfaction from their role. In the natural mother group no one expressed dissatisfaction from their role.

| TABLE 12 |
| Satisfation in Scale |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stepmothers</th>
<th>Natural Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Sat.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dis.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square: 28.7, 3 df, \( p = 0.0001 \)

Table 13 presents comparisons between the two groups, stepmothers and natural mothers in regard to the question:

'As a stepparent/parent, how successful do you feel in your role?' As may be noted, there is significance well beyond
the .05 level. Over three-quarters of the natural mothers' group reported they feel successful in the role, in contrast to one-half of the stepmothers who feel the same way. Further, almost one-third of the stepmothers said they feel hardly and/or not successful in their role, whereas no one from the natural mothers' group reported these feelings.

## TABLE 13

### Success in Role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stepmothers</th>
<th>Natural Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Succ.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Succ.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square: 10.8, 3 df, p = .01

In answer to the question in the Interview Schedule, 'Do you ever feel like a 'wicked' stepmother/mother, as sometimes cut of the Cinderella fairy tales?' results from the two groups were not statistically significant. However, it is interesting to note that 40% of the stepmothers and 60% of the natural mothers reported they sometimes felt like a 'wicked' stepmother/mother.

In the Interview Schedule, one of the stepmothers with three stepchildren living in the home expressed:
I dislike the stereotype 'wicked stepmother'. You don't hear of the 'wicked stepfather' as you do of the wicked stepmother.

The following ACL scales: #5 Achievement, #6 Dominance, and #7 Endurance were examined by the researchers to see whether there were any reported differences between stepmothers' and natural mothers' perception of their role. No significant differences were found in the statistical data.

**Research Question 3.**

Stepmothers will report they do not have permission to discipline their stepchildren more often than do the natural mothers.

In the Interview Schedule stepmothers and natural mothers were asked, 'Do you feel you have permission to discipline your stepchildren/children?' Table 14 describes comparisons between stepmothers' and natural mothers' permission to discipline their stepchildren/children. There is significance at the .01 level. More than one-half of the stepmothers (67%) reported they always have permission to discipline their stepchildren whereas, 97% of the natural mothers in our study reported they always have permission to discipline their children. One-third of the stepmothers reported they sometimes have permission to discipline their stepchildren, as compared to only three percent of natural mothers. A small percentage (3%) of the stepmothers felt they never have permission to discipline their stepchildren.
TABLE 14
Permission to Discipline Stepchildren/children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stepmothers</th>
<th>Natural Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square: 9.05, 2 df, p = .01

In the Interview Schedule, the question was asked to both groups, 'Do you hesitate to discipline the stepchildren/children?' Table 15 describes the comparison between stepmothers' and natural mothers' hesitation to discipline their stepchildren/children. There is significance well beyond the .05 level (p = .0023). Three-quarters of the stepmothers reported they always and/or sometimes hesitate to discipline their stepchildren in contrast to one-third of the natural mothers, as evident in Table 15. Approximately three times as many natural mothers reported they rarely and/or never hesitate to discipline their children.

In the questionnaire, stepmothers and natural mothers were asked: 'Do you avoid disciplining the stepchildren/children because you fear your husband's reaction?' Table 16 describes comparisons between stepmothers' and natural mothers' avoidance to discipline the stepchildren/children.
TABLE 15

Hesitation to Discipline Stepchildren/Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stepmothers</th>
<th>Natural Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barely</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square: 14.48, 3 df, p = .002

because they fear their husbands' reaction. There is a significant difference at the point .001 level. The data in this table indicates that almost one-half of the stepmothers (43%) stated that they avoid disciplining the stepchildren because they always and/or sometimes fear their husband's reaction. Eighty-seven percent of the natural mothers indicated they do not avoid disciplining their children because they fear their husband's reaction.

Table 17 presents comparisons between the two groups, stepmothers and natural mothers, with relation to the question: 'Do you avoid disciplining the stepchildren/children because you fear their reactions?' As evident, there is significance at the .01 level. Approximately one-half of the stepmothers (47%) reported that they avoided disciplining always and/or sometimes because they feared their stepchildren's reaction, as compared to only 10% of natural mothers.
TABLE 16
Avoidance to Discipline/Husband's Reaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stepmothers</th>
<th>Natural Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square: 17.2, 3 df, p = .001

TABLE 17
Avoidance to Discipline/Fear of Reaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stepmothers</th>
<th>Natural Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square: 12.5, 3 df, p = .006

Table 18 describes stepmothers'/mothers' parental authority with their stepchildren/children. 'Do you as a stepmother/mother assume parental authority with your stepchildren/children?' was asked of both groups. All of the natural mothers indicated they always and/or sometimes assume parental authority with their children, whereas 76%
of the stepmothers reported the same. A small percentage (23%) of the stepmothers reported they rarely and/or never assume parental authority with their stepchildren.

TABLE 18
Assume Parental Authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stepmothers</th>
<th>Natural Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square: 10.3, 3 df, \( p = .02 \)

One of the questions that was asked in the Interview Schedule of both groups was: 'What has been your most difficult problem as a stepmother/ mother?' Both stepmothers and natural mothers stated that discipline was one of the most difficult problems. One stepmother with three stepchildren who visited weekly expressed:

Although I would like to take an active role in disciplining them, I cannot discipline the stepchildren because of the image of the cruel stepmother.

Another stepmother with two stepchildren living in the home stated:

Discipline is sometimes difficult as there are two sets of rules. One set of rules for the biological mother and another for the stepmother.
One stepmother who has one stepchild living in the home, and another stepchild who visits weekly said:

I find difficulties adhering to the rules I set down, because one stepchild lives at home and another lives with his biological mother.

One stepmother with a stepdaughter who visited weekly stated:

I cannot discipline my stepdaughter at all, my husband feels that I know nothing about raising kids, because I have not had any children of my own. Because of this he will not allow me to discipline her.

Approximately one-half of the natural mothers stated that discipline is one of the most difficult problems a parent faces, the natural mothers though unlike the stepmothers did not elaborate on any specific issues.

**Research Question 4**

Are there any reported differences between stepmothers and natural mothers methods of disciplining?

In both stepmother and natural mother questionnaire, the following questions were asked (Appendix F&G):

* Do you discipline your stepchildren/children by spanking?
* Do you discipline your stepchildren/children by reasoning, explaining, and talking with them?
* Do you discipline your stepchildren/children by raising your voice or shouting?
* Do you discipline your stepchildren/children by taking away privileges?
* Do you discipline your stepchildren/children by isolating, confining to a chair, room, etc.?

The following Tables 19-21 present comparisons between two groups, stepmothers and natural mothers with relation to the above questions.

Table 19 describes comparisons between the two groups regarding spanking as a method of discipline. As is noted there is significance well beyond the .05 level. Twenty percent of the natural mothers reported they sometimes use spanking as a method of discipline, in contrast to 3% of the stepmothers.

**TABLE 19**

**Discipline by Spanking**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stepmothers</th>
<th>Natural Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barely</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square: 17.9, 2 df, p=<.001

Table 20 describes comparisons between stepmothers and natural mothers regarding using reasoning as a method of discipline. As evident, there is significance at the .0062 level. All the natural mothers (100%) said that they always
and/or sometimes use reasoning as a method of discipline as compared to 90% of the stepmothers.

**TABLE 20**

Discipline by Reasoning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stepmothers</th>
<th>Natural Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square:</td>
<td>12.4, 3 df, p=.0062</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21 below presents comparisons between the two groups regarding shouting as a method of discipline. Over 90% of the natural mothers said they always and/or sometimes discipline their children by shouting, in contrast to only 63% of the stepmothers. More than one-tenth (37%) of stepmothers reported that they rarely and/or never discipline their stepchildren by shouting as compared to only seven percent of the natural mothers who said the same about their children.

There were no significant differences found regarding the usage of taking privileges as a method of disciplining. Over two-thirds of both groups stepmothers/natural mothers, reported that they always and/or sometimes use taking away
Table 21 describes comparisons between the stepmothers and natural mothers using isolation as a method of discipline. It may be noted that there is significance well beyond the .05 level. About three-quarters of the natural mothers (73%) reported that they always and/or sometimes discipline their children by using isolation, in contrast to 43% of stepmothers. Furthermore, over one-half of the stepmothers (57%) said that they rarely and/or never use isolation as a method of discipline, as compared to 27% of the natural mothers who rarely and/or never isolate their children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stepmothers</th>
<th>Natural Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi-square:</strong></td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

privileges as a means of disciplining, whereas less than one-third of both groups said that they rarely and/or never take away privileges.
TABLE 22
Discipline by Isclating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stepmothers</th>
<th>Natural Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square:</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>3 df, p=.007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 5-

Stepmothers will report more spouse involvement in disciplining their step/children than do natural mothers.

Table 23 presents comparison between the two groups, stepmothers and natural mothers with relation to the question: 'Did you and your husband share authority in regard to the stepchildren/children early in your relationship?' As is evident in Table 23, there is significance at the .0003 level. Forty percent of the stepmothers reported they rarely and/or never shared authority with their spouse in regard to their stepchildren early in their relationship, as compared to only 3% of the natural mothers, who rarely and/or never shared authority with their spouse. Almost all of the natural mothers reported they always and/or sometimes shared authority with their spouses in regards to their children early in their relationship in contrast to 60% of stepmothers.
Table 2.3 describes comparison between the natural mothers' and stepmothers' groups regarding the issue of who usually disciplines the children/stepchildren. There is a significant difference at the .002 level. Approximately three quarters of the natural mothers (73%) reported that both partners usually discipline the children as compared to less than one-half of the stepmothers (43%). None of the natural mothers in the study reported that their spouses alone discipline the children in contrast to 33% of the stepmothers who reported that their spouses usually discipline the stepchildren.
Who usually disciplines the Step/Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stepmothers</th>
<th>Natural Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square: 12.4, 2 df, p=.002

Research Question 6.
Does the former wife interfere in the life of the stepmother?
In the stepmother's questionnaire the question was asked: 'Does the former wife interfere in your relationship with your husband?' Seventeen percent of the stepmothers reported that the former wife does interfere in their relationships with their husbands.

In the natural mother's questionnaire the question was asked: 'Is there any outside member of the family who interferes in your relationship with your husband?' Although this question was asked the researchers realized that no comparison could be made between the two groups, stepmothers and natural mothers, regarding the interference of the former wife/outside family member. Therefore only the stepmothers' responses are reported.
The stepmothers who reported an outside interference were asked: 'If the former wife was not involved would your family life be happier for you?' Table 25 presents the results obtained from the stepmothers regarding their happiness in their family life. More than one-half of the stepmothers (53%) reported that their lives would be happier if the former wife was not involved.

### Table 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stepmothers</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 26 presents the results of the stepmothers in relation to the question: 'Does the natural mother interfere in your relationship with your stepchildren?' Less than one-half of the stepmothers (41%) reported that the biological mother interfered in their relationship with their stepchildren.

One stepmother with one stepson and 2 biological children stated that:

Interference of natural mother in her family life was one of her most difficult problems as a stepmother and one of her most painful experiences as a stepmother.
TABLE 26
Outside Interference in Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stepmothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another stepmother who has one stepson living outside the home and 2 biological children stated:

Dealing with the ex-wife was a very difficult problem. At times I find it difficult to keep my mouth shut regarding her stepson's mother.

Research Question 7.

Stepmothers will report less satisfaction in their relationships with their spouses than will natural mothers.

In the Interview Schedule, stepmothers and natural mothers were asked: 'How would you describe your relationship with your husband?' Results from the two groups were not significant. Over 90% of the natural mothers described their relationships with their spouses as very and/or satisfied as compared to 80% of the stepmothers.

Table 28 presents comparison between the stepmothers and the natural mothers with relation to the question: 'If the stepchildren/children were not living in the home, would your relationship with your husband be better?' As is
evident in Table 28, there is significance at the .0323 level. Over one-half of the stepmothers reported that always and/or sometimes their relationship with their husbands would be better if the stepchildren were not living in the home, in contrast to over one-quarter of the natural mothers.

**TABLE 28**

Better Relationship with Husband

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stepmothers</th>
<th>Natural Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 30 100.0 30 100.0

Chi-square: 8.8, 3 df, p=.0323

In the Interview Schedule, stepmothers and natural mothers were asked: 'Have you had afterthoughts about your marriage because of the stepchildren/children?' as evident in Table 29, there is significance well beyond the .05 level. Almost one-half of the stepmothers (47%) reported that sometimes and/or always they had afterthoughts of their marriage because of the stepchildren, in contrast to only 7% of the natural mothers.
TABLE 29

Afterthoughts of Marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stepmothers</th>
<th>Natural Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barely</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-square: 18.3, 3 df, $P=0.0004$

Related Findings.

Almost one-quarter (23%) of the stepchildren refer to their stepmothers as 'mom', in contrast to all (100%) of the natural children. This finding may suggest a distinct emotional dissonance associated between acquiring children by remarriage and biological children.

Crosstabulations were done on all the variables in the Interview Schedule for the stepmothers' group and natural mothers' group. The results of chi-square analysis on two-way tables indicated no statistically significant associations between any of the variables.
**Discussion of Findings**

Divorce rates in North America have been steadily rising in the past half-century, more and more women have either remarried, or married for the first time and become stepmothers in reconstituted families. Many women enter this role without any prior parental experience, and thus face many difficulties adjusting to this new role. The purpose of this study was to examine how stepmothers view themselves in relation to their role in the blended family. Particular emphasis was given to their roles in terms of their self-confidence and the difficulties they encounter in the area of discipline. This chapter will discuss the results of the study.

The participants in this study were 30 stepmothers and 30 natural mothers, who were recruited from Macomb, Oakland and Wayne of Michigan. The stepmother's group included three types:

- stepmothers whose current husband had one or more children from his previous marriage living in the home and/or visiting on a weekly basis,
- *stepmothers with biological children from her previous marriage also in the home with her current husband's children.*
* stepmothers with her current husband's children and/or her biological children and/or children from the present marriage.

The natural mother's group included women whose household included one or more natural children. The participants from both groups were Caucasians.

Demographic Data

The mean age of the stepmothers was 36 years of age, while the mean age of the natural mothers was 35. The age of the stepmothers and natural mothers ranged from 24 to 49 years of age. The mean age (42) of the spouses of the stepmothers was slightly higher than the mean age (37) of the natural mothers' spouses. The ages of the spouses from both groups ranged from 28 to 54 years. The overall mean age of the spouses of both groups was 40. In the natural mothers' group the length of marriage was 9 to 15 years as compared to those in the stepmothers' group 1 to 3 years.

The mean age of all stepchildren in our study was 16 years, whereas the mean age of all the natural children was 8 years. The ages of all stepchildren/children ranged from 1 to 36 years.

Regarding the educational level, both groups were generally well educated. Approximately one-half of the stepmothers and natural mothers were university graduates. The majority of both groups, stepmothers and natural mothers were over the $20,000 a year family income level.
The occupations of approximately two-thirds of the participants in both groups ranged from the clerical and sales category to the professionals.

Fifty percent of the stepmothers and natural mothers reported Protestant as their religion.

In summary, both groups, stepmothers and natural mothers, were similar in religion, education, income and occupation. Differences were found in the following four variables: age of the stepmother/mother, age of husbands of stepmothers/mothers, age of stepchildren/children, and years presently married for stepmothers/mothers.

**Research Question 1.**

The levels of self-confidence of the stepmothers will be significantly lower than those of the natural mother.

Our results indicated that there were no significant differences between the stepmothers and natural mothers scores on the ACL scale of Self-Confidence, although the average score of the natural mothers was slightly higher. According to Gough, the higher scorer is more assertive, outgoing, as well as self-confident, determined and forceful. But no conclusive statements can be drawn from this regarding the levels of self-confidence comparing stepmothers to natural mothers.

**Hypothesis:** The hypothesis stated that on the ACL scale of Self-Confidence, the scores attained by the stepmothers will be significantly lower than those of the natural
mothers. The data indicated that there were no significant differences in the scores attained between these two groups. Therefore the hypothesis must be rejected, and the null hypothesis accepted. The null hypothesis was that the scores attained by the stepmothers would not be significantly lower than those obtained by the natural mothers on the Adjective Check List scale of Self-Confidence. We predicted that there would be no significant differences between the two groups.

Our findings were in contrast to Irene Zimmerman's study (1977). Her results indicated significant differences between stepmothers' and natural mothers' levels of self-confidence, as measured by Gough's Self-Confidence Scale (ACL). The scores of the stepmothers were slightly higher than the natural mothers. Thus the results of her study revealed that stepmothers appeared to possess more self-confidence in comparison to natural mothers.

Further research questions sought to clarify whether differences exist between these two groups with respect to discipline, perception of role, outside interference in the relationships with their spouses and step/children and satisfaction in their relationships with their spouses.

**Research Question 2.**

Are there any reported differences between stepmothers and natural mothers perception of their role?
The following three ACL scales of #5 Achievement, #6 Dominance, and #7 Endurance, were thought to have significant differences between the two groups in their levels of self-esteem.

The Achievement scale, according to Gough, denotes the participants' self-perception of their level of achievement. The high scorers are seen as intelligent and hard working. The high scorer on the ACL Dominance scale is seen as strong willed, ambitious, determined and forceful, while the low scorer is perceived to lack confidence. The high scorers on the Endurance scale are usually seen as having self-control and a sense of responsibility.

However, the results indicated that there were no significant differences between the two groups on the previous mentioned scales. Both stepmothers and natural mothers had high scores on each of these three scales. This may be due to the personalities found in the sample population.

There were marked differences between the stepmothers and natural mothers in terms of their satisfaction in their role as indicated on the Interview Schedule. About one-third (36%) of the stepmothers reported that they were very and/or satisfied in their role, less than one-half (47%) said they had mixed feelings and 17% expressed dissatisfaction in their role. This was in contrast to almost all of the natural mothers (97%) who reported they were very and/or satisfied in their role.
In terms of the success in the role, one-half of the stepmothers reported that they felt successful in their role, and one-third of them reported that they hardly and/or never felt successful in their role. This was in contrast to all of the natural mothers (100%) who reported that they always felt successful in their role. The researchers concluded that the reasons for the marked differences between the two groups may possibly be the fact that the natural mother's role is clearly defined, and culturally accepted in terms of being loving, nurturing, caring and supporting and all accepting, both of their children and of their role as mothers. Stepmothers, on the other hand, may not have clearly defined roles (Visher & Visher, 1979).

Fast and Cain (1966) in their study stated that the role definition of the stepparent in our society is both poorly articulated and implies contradictory functions as 'parent, stepparent and non-parent.' They found that no matter how much effort and skill stepparents put forth in assuming the role of real parents, they cannot totally succeed, because social norms make it inappropriate for this to occur.

There are few societal guidelines or role models to assist stepmothers to determine appropriate behavior and expectations of them as stepparents. One participant, a stepmother with a biological daughter and a stepdaughter stated:

when I became a stepmother I had to change my role as a mother. I had to learn to become more accepting of differences in my step and biological daughters and to become more flexible.
Stepmothers may experience conflict over which role to assume: to be a 'primary' mother, a 'substitute' mother or to be a friend to the stepchild. Draughon (1975) explains in her article that any of these roles can be assumed by the stepmother. The stepmother can assume the role of the 'primary mother if the child's biological mother is deceased or if she has no contact with the child. She may assume the role of the 'substitute' mother, one which many stepmothers often assume, and which can cause conflict if the biological mother is actively involved with the child. Lastly the stepmother may become the stepchild's friend.

Throughout the world, stepmothers have the reputation of being cruel. Even when they are good loving surrogate mothers, they suffer from this stigma because of the emotions that are culturally associated with a lack of biological connection. We found no significant difference in regards to the question about feeling like a 'wicked' stepmother/mother. These results may be due to the fact that the stepmothers do not allow themselves the freedom to say that they feel like a 'wicked' stepmother, because of the negative connotation (Eohannon, 1970). Also, due to the confusions and expectations of their roles as stepmothers, they may possibly not allow themselves as wide a range of behaviors as natural mothers, or as much spontaneity in their behavior as their biological counterparts. It is interesting to note that 0% of the
natural mothers allowed themselves the freedom to say that they sometimes felt like a 'wicked' mother.

To summarize, one-half (50%) of the stepmothers in our study, had mixed feelings about their role, which may possibly be due to the fact that there may be no role definitions for stepmotherhood in our society.

**Research Question 3.**

Stepmothers will report they do not have permission to discipline their stepchildren more often than do natural mothers.

Approximately two-thirds of the stepmothers (67%) reported they always have permission to discipline their stepchildren, in contrast to almost all natural mothers (97%) who reported they always have permission to discipline their children. Almost one-third of the stepmothers (30%) reported they sometimes have permission to discipline their stepchildren, compared to only three percent of the natural mothers who said the same. Three percent of the stepmothers reported they never have permission to discipline their stepchildren.

Stepmothers are seen by society as alienated parents, they have no rights concerning their stepchildren, unless they have adopted them. Essentially they are not regarded as parents in full standing (Visher & Visner, 1979). Thus their permission to discipline their stepchildren may possibly be questioned by their mates, the biological mothers of the stepchildren, the stepchildren, and others who are related to the stepchildren.
As mentioned earlier, almost all natural mothers reported they have their husbands' permission to discipline their children. The reason for this finding may possibly be the fact that in society's eyes natural mothers have the right to discipline their children (Capaldi & McRae, 1979).

There are complex issues which stepmothers are faced with when disciplining their stepchildren. Initially when stepmothers enter the stepfamily they want the child to instantly love them. They don't want to be seen as the wicked stepmother out of the Cinderella fairy tale. Thus, during this time they hesitate to discipline their stepchildren, as one stepmother stated: 'I cannot discipline my stepchildren because of the image of the cruel stepmom.'

Three-quarters of the stepmothers reported they always and/or sometimes hesitate to discipline their stepchildren, in contrast to only one-third of the natural mothers.

Stepparents are often afraid to discipline their stepchildren, because they fear the reaction of their mate as best stated by Capaldi and McRae (1979):

So they walk on eggshells, avoiding disciplining the other's child. They fear both the child's reaction to them as a wicked stepparent and their spouse's reaction (p. 123).

In our study approximately one-half of the stepmothers indicated they avoided disciplining their stepchildren because they fear their husband's reaction. Almost all of the natural mothers indicated they never fear their husband's reaction when disciplining their children.
Approximately one-half (47%) of the stepmothers in our study reported they always and/or sometimes avoid disciplining their stepchildren because they fear their stepchildren's reactions, in contrast to 10% of the natural mothers.

To summarize, more than one-half of the stepmothers reported that they always have permission to discipline their stepchildren; one-third stated they never have permission to discipline their stepchildren. Approximately all natural mothers reported they have permission to discipline their children.

**Research Question 4.**

Are there any reported differences between stepmothers and natural mothers methods of discipline?

The statistical data revealed that there were statistically significant differences in the methods of discipline used by stepmothers and natural mothers. Twenty percent of the natural mothers reported they sometimes used spanking as a method of discipline, in contrast to three percent of the stepmothers. All of the natural mothers reported they always and/or sometimes use reasoning as a method of discipline, compared to 90% of the stepmothers who reported the same.

Regarding the use of reasoning as a method of discipline, slightly more than three-fourths of the stepmothers reported they always use reasoning, as compared to less than one-half of the natural mothers. Whereas ten percent of the
stepmothers' group rarely and/or never used reasoning as a method of discipline, in contrast to no mother from the natural mothers' group.

Almost all (93%) of the natural mothers indicated they always and/or sometimes use shouting as a method of discipline, as compared to 63% of the stepmothers. Approximately three-quarters (73%) of the natural mothers reported that they always and/or sometimes discipline their children by using isolation, in contrast to 43% of all the stepmothers.

As indicated earlier, natural mothers used spanking as a method of discipline more often than stepmothers. One reason which may account for this difference is due to the fact that the mean age of the stepchild is 16 years, and it seems inappropriate to spank a sixteen-year-old.

Scientifically, not a great deal is known about the effects of treating children at the firm extreme as compared to the lax extreme (Fisher, 1976). Gordon (1975) writes that most parents see the whole problem of discipline in childrearing as a question of being either strict or lenient, tough or soft, authoritarian or permissive, because they see their relationship with their children as a power struggle.

Discipline is a controversial topic. There are a lot of theories built around a single system, such as 'active listening' or 'behavior modification' or 'the use of
spanking to establish the authority of the parent and others (Dodson, 1977). However, it is impossible to find conclusive evidence to prove that one method is superior to another. Little solid information is available on what is the most effective way to motivate children to do what the parents consider to be right or proper behavior. Gardner (1973) states that no one method or discipline will be equally useful for all children.

What may be considered a deprivation for one child may be a boon to another. What may work for one child, may not work for another. (pg. 134).

The disciplinary measures, then, must be tailored to the needs of the child and judged by their efficacy for that particular child.

Discipline is a problem in all families. Many parents today lack self-confidence on which is the best way to discipline their children. On the one hand, the popularization of psychology has taught parents the importance of effective parenting skills in raising children to become well adjusted adults. On the other hand, no one gives parents the training they need to help them raise their children wisely. Thus, parenting is a complex skill that needs to be learned (Dodson, 1977).

If parenthood is a complex and difficult skill, particularly without any training, instant parenthood is much harder. Natural mothers have an opportunity to learn gradually how to discipline their children as they go
through their children's developmental stages. Stepmothers do not have this opportunity, since the stepchildren enter their lives at an older age.

The differences between stepmothers and natural mothers in uses of methods of discipline, may be due to the fact that stepmothers are reluctant to discipline their stepchildren, because they do not want to be portrayed as the 'wicked' stepmother. In sum, there are statistically significant differences in the methods of discipline used by stepmothers and natural mothers.

**Research Question 5.**

Stepmothers will report more spouse involvement in disciplining their stepchildren than do natural mothers.

Slightly more than one-half (60%) of the stepmothers reported that they always and/or sometimes shared authority with their husbands in regard to their stepchildren early in the relationship. This was in marked contrast to almost all (97%) of natural mothers who reported that they always shared authority in regard to their children.

Maddox, (1975) and Thomson (1966) believe the biological parent and the stepparent should learn to share authority early in the relationship, but some stepparents feel timid about punishing stepchildren, and leave everything to the biological parent. If the biological parent refuses to share the role of disciplinarian the stepparent is reduced to a child's position without power. Thus it is crucial to
the success of the stepfamily to determine whether discipline is going to be a joint and equal venture between partners. Is the biological parent expecting to continue disciplining as in the past—including the stepparent only when it is convenient to do so? The stepchildren will, in time accept the stepmother’s authority, if she has her husband’s support and permission to discipline his children (Capaldi & McRae, 1979).

Approximately three-quarters (73%) of the natural mothers reported that both partners take part in disciplining their children, in contrast to 43% of the stepmothers’ group. No one in the natural mother’s group reported that her husband alone disciplines the children, as compared to one-third of the stepmothers who reported that their husbands alone usually discipline the children.

To summarize, slightly more than one-half of the stepmothers reported that they always and/or sometimes shared authority with their husbands regarding disciplining their stepchildren early in their relationships, in marked contrast to almost all the natural mothers who reported they always shared authority with their husbands regarding disciplining their children. Approximately three-quarters of the natural mothers reported that both partners take part in disciplining their children in contrast to 43% of the stepmothers group.

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**Research Question 6.**

Does the former wife interfere in the lives of the stepmothers?

Less than one-half of the stepmothers (47%) reported that the former wife interferes in their relationship with their stepchildren. Very few stepmothers (17%) reported interference from the former wife in their relationship with their husbands.

More than one-half of the stepmothers (53%) reported that their lives would be happier if the former wife was not involved. One reason that the former wife interferes between the stepmother and stepchild may possibly be due to the fact that the ex-wife has unresolved feelings about the divorce. Another reason may be that the former wife has guilt feelings about giving up custody of her child.

To summarize, stepmothers reported little interference from the former wife in their relationship with their husbands. However, almost one-half of the stepmothers reported interference in their relationship with their stepchildren.

**Research Question 7.**

Stepmothers will report less satisfaction in their relationship with their spouses than will natural mothers.

According to results obtained from the statistical data of our study, almost all the participants in both groups described their relationships with their spouses as being very and/or satisfied. However, regarding the question:
If the stepchildren/children were not living in the home, would your relationship with your husband be better?

Over one-half of the stepmothers (53%) reported that their relationship with their husbands would be better if the stepchildren were not living in the home, in contrast to over one-quarter of the natural mothers. Almost one-half (47%) of the stepmothers reported they had afterthoughts of their marriages because of the stepchildren, in contrast to only seven percent of the natural mothers.

The previous mentioned results may be attributable to the possibility that the stepchildren may be constant living reminders of a previous relationship in which the stepmother was not a part. The stepchildren can become targets for displaced negative feelings if the stepmother and her husband do not have a good relationship (Einstein, 1982).

It was important to learn whether stepmothers/mothers are included in family decision making and if the husbands back them up in decisions they make about the stepchildren/children. The results indicated that there were significant differences between the two groups. Almost all of the natural mothers (90%) reported that they are always included in family decisions, in contrast to 63% of the stepmothers. The vast majority (80%) of the natural mothers stated that their husbands back them up in decisions they make in regards to their children as compared to one-half (50%) of the stepmothers.
It was interesting to note that most of the stepmothers reported they were satisfied in their relationship with their husbands, but almost one-half of them had afterthoughts of their marriage because of the stepchildren. One reason that might account for these findings is that stepmothers are afraid to admit to dissatisfying relationships because this might be seen as another failure by them and in society's eyes. One stepmother commented:

Had I known all the difficulties before I remarried, I would not have done it (married), again, and I would not recommend it to anyone.

To summarize, almost all stepmothers and natural mothers reported satisfaction in their relationships with their spouses. However, over one-half of the stepmothers reported that their relationships with their spouses would be better if the stepchildren were not in the home. Sixty-three percent of the stepmothers indicated that they were included in family decisions, and fifty percent stated that their husbands back them up in decisions they make about the stepchildren. Table 30 presents the significant findings of our study.
TABLE 30
Summary of Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stepmothers</th>
<th>Natural Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfaction in Role</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very/Satisfied</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Feelings</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Success in Role</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very/Successful</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardly/Not Succ.</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Permission to Discipline</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hesitation to Discipline</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always/Sometimes</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely/Never</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Avoidance to Discipline</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear Husband's Reaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always/Sometimes</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely/Never</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Avoidance to Discipline</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear Step/Children's Reaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always/Sometimes</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely/Never</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assume Parental Authority</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always/Sometimes</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely/Never</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discipline by Spanking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always/Sometimes</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely/Never</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stepmothers</th>
<th>Natural Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discipline by Reasoning</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always/Sometimes</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely/Never</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discipline by Shouting</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always/Sometimes</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely/Never</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discipline by Isolating</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always/Sometimes</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely/Never</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shared Authority Early in Relationship</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always/Sometimes</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely/Never</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who Disciplines the Step/children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step/mother</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Better Relationship with Husband</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always/Sometimes</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely/Never</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Afterthoughts of Marriage</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always/Sometimes</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely/Never</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter the researchers provide a summary of the findings and conclusions.

Introduction.

As the divorce rate has been steadily rising in North America, so too has the rate of remarriage increased. As a result of the increase of remarriage, many women become stepmothers. With the increased divorce rate and remarriage, stepmothers have the important responsibility of influencing future members of our society. Therefore the role of the stepmother is an important one. Despite the contemporary views concerning divorce, remarriage, and the stepfamily, there are still today negative connotations surrounding stepmothers. Fairy tales, such as Cinderella, Snow White, and Hansel and Gretel are seen as part of our culture; and stepmothers in these classic fairy tales are depicted as being wicked and cruel.

Bohannan (1970) writes that throughout the world, stepparents, especially stepmothers, have a reputation of being cruel. Even when they are good loving surrogate mothers, they suffer from this stigma because of the emotions that are culturally associated with a lack of biological connection.
Stepmothers being newcomers to already formed relationships are seen as both rescuers as well as intruders into the father-child dyad. This along with the fact that stepmothers have been denigrated in myths and fairy tales, may have an effect on how stepmothers interact with extended family members.

Therefore the purpose of this study was to investigate available literature on the stepfamily. Particular attention was given to common problems that stepmothers experience, as indicated in the literature and whether these common problems are also experienced by a sample of natural mothers. The researchers wanted to compare a group of stepmothers and natural mothers as to:

Their perceived parenting role

* Perceived differences between stepmotherhood and the natural mother role in the family,
* Differences between stepmothers and natural mothers in levels of self-confidence, as measured by the Adjective Check List,
* Differences between stepmothers' and natural mothers' feelings toward discipline and their ability to use it.

Participants

The participants in this study were 30 stepmothers and 30 natural mothers who were recruited from Macomb, Oakland and Wayne Counties of Michigan. The stepmothers' group included three types:
* stepmothers whose current husband had one or more children from his previous marriage living in and/or visiting their home on a weekly basis.

* stepmothers with biological children from her previous marriage also in the home with her current husband's children.

* stepmothers with her current husband's children and/or her biological children and/or children from the present marriage.

The natural mothers' group included women whose household included one or more natural children.

**Instruments.**

*Adjective Check List.* The ACL was chosen as it is a well known standardized test selected to obtain a self-portrait of the participants. The various scales of the ACL were found to be accurate measures of what they purported to measure (Gough & Heilbrun, 1965). It was administered to the participants especially for the scale of Self-Confidence. In addition the three additional scales of Achievement, Dominance, and Endurance were also administered.

*Interview Schedule.* A large portion of the Interview Schedule was developed by the researchers, based on the literature review and concepts which seemed important. A portion of it was adapted from Irene Zimmerman's study (1977) with her permission (Appendix B). The Interview
Schedule consisted of 52 questions, the majority of which were closed questions with a Likert type scale of four alternatives.

**Results.**

Demographic Information. Stepmothers and natural mothers were generally similar in the following areas: Fifty percent of the stepmothers and natural mothers specified Protestant as their religion; both groups were generally well educated, approximately one-half of the stepmothers and natural mothers were university graduates; the majority of both groups were over the $20,000 a year family income level. The occupations of two-thirds of all participants ranged from the clerical and sales category to the professionals. Differences were found in the following four variables: age of the stepmother/mother, age of husbands of stepmothers/mothers, age of stepchildren/children, and years presently married for stepmothers/mothers. The mean age for the stepmothers' group was 36 years of age, while the mean age for natural mothers was 35. The mean age for the husbands of the stepmothers' group was slightly higher (42 years), as compared to (37 years) for the husbands of the natural mother group. The mean age for all stepchildren was 16 years, whereas mean age for the natural children was 8 years. In the natural mothers' group, the length of marriage was twice as long as the stepmothers' group.
**Research Questions and Hypothesis.**

The specific purpose of this study was to examine seven research questions and to test one hypothesis to explore common problems that stepmothers experience, and whether these problems are also experienced by a sample of natural mothers. These were stated as follows:

**Research Question 1.**

The levels of self-confidence of the stepmothers will be significantly lower than those of the natural mothers.

Our results indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the stepmothers and natural mothers levels of self-confidence. Although the mean score of the natural mothers was slightly higher.

**Hypothesis:** It is hypothesized that on the ACL scale of Self-Confidence, the scores attained by the stepmothers will be significantly lower than those of the natural mothers. This hypothesis was not supported since there were no statistically significant differences between the scores of the two groups. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

**Research Question 2.**

Are there any reported differences between stepmothers and natural mothers perception of their role?

Although, no statistically significant differences were found on the scales of Achievement, Dominance and Endurance, findings on the questions that were related to satisfaction
and success in their role were significant. About one-third of the stepmothers (37%) reported satisfaction in their role. Slightly less than one-half (47%) of them had mixed feelings regarding their role. In contrast, almost all of the participants in the natural mothers' group reported they were satisfied in their role.

**Research Question 3.**

Stepmothers will report they do not have permission to discipline their stepchildren more often than do the natural mothers.

More than one-half of the stepmothers reported they always have permission to discipline their stepchildren and one-third reported they sometimes have permission to discipline. In the natural mother group almost all reported they always have permission to discipline their children, while only three percent said they sometimes have permission to discipline.

These findings may possibly be due to the fact that stepmothers are not regarded in our society as parents in full standing (Visher & Visher, 1979). Therefore their permission to discipline is often questioned by their spouses, the biological mothers, and other relatives of the stepchildren (Capaldi & McRae, 1979).

**Research Question 4.**

Are there any reported differences between stepmothers and natural mothers methods of discipline?
There were reported to be significant differences in the methods of discipline used by stepmothers and natural mothers. Almost all (97%) of the natural mothers and (80%) of the stepmothers rarely and/or never use spanking as a method of discipline. Although, twenty percent of the natural mother group reported they sometimes used spanking, compared to only three percent of the stepmothers.

More than three-quarters of the stepmothers reported they always use reasoning as a method of discipline, compared to less than one-half of the natural mothers. Whereas ten percent of the stepmothers reported they rarely and/or never use reasoning as a method of discipline, in contrast to none of natural mothers.

Almost all (93%) of the natural mothers indicated they always and/or sometimes use shouting as a method of discipline, as compared to 63% of the stepmothers. Approximately three-quarters of the natural mothers reported they always and/or sometimes discipline their children by using isolation, in contrast to less than one-half of all the stepmothers.

We found no conclusive evidence to prove that one method of discipline was reported to be superior to another. The differences between stepmothers and natural mothers use of discipline methods, may be accounted for the fact that stepmothers may feel reluctant to discipline their stepchildren, because of the image of the 'wicked' stepmother.
**Research Question 5.**

Stepmothers will report more spouse involvement in disciplining their stepchildren than do natural mothers.

Slightly more than one-half of the stepmothers reported they always and/or sometimes shared authority with their husbands in regard to their stepchildren early in their relationship, in marked contract to almost all natural mothers who reported their husbands shared authority in regards to their children.

Approximately three-quarters of the natural mothers reported that both partners take part in disciplining their children in contrast to less than one-half of the stepmothers who reported both partners taking part in disciplining their children.

**Research Question 6.**

Does the former wife interfere in the lives of the stepmothers?

Stepmothers reported little interference from the former wife in their relationship with their husbands. Almost one-half of the stepmothers reported interference from the former wife in their relationship with their stepchildren.

**Research Question 7.**

Stepmothers will report less satisfaction in their relationships with their spouses than will natural mothers.
Almost all the participants in the stepmothers' group and the natural mothers' group reported satisfaction in their relationships with their spouses. However, over one-half of the stepmothers stated their relationships with their spouses would be better if the stepchildren were not living in the home.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The following conclusions and recommendations are based on the findings obtained from the Adjective Check List (Appendix D) and the Interview Schedule (Appendix F&G) of 30 stepmothers and 30 natural mothers from Macomb, Oakland and Wayne Counties.

Conclusions.

The findings of the study revealed that there were marked differences between stepmothers and natural mothers in terms of their satisfaction and success in their roles. Stepmothers experienced significantly greater mixed feelings and dissatisfaction in their roles than did natural mothers. The statistical analysis indicated that stepmothers felt significantly less successful in their roles than did natural mothers. These findings are supported by the literature, which indicates that the role of the stepmother is both poorly articulated, and implies contradictory functions as parent, stepparent, and non-parent. Thus, no matter how much effort and skill stepmothers put forth in assuming their roles, they cannot totally succeed.
In addition to success and satisfaction of stepmothers in their roles, the role of the stepmother itself was explored, particularly with regard to discipline. These findings seem to be clearly related to the literature that states that both the myth of the 'wicked' stepmother, and the lack of clear role definitions are still evident in terms of the stepmother's confidence in her disciplinary role. Stepmothers are often reluctant to discipline their stepchildren, because they do not want to be portrayed as 'wicked' stepmothers, and their permission to discipline is often questioned by others who are related to the stepchildren.

The data analysis from the Adjective Check List suggests that stepmothers and natural mothers have similar and positive levels of self-confidence. Similarly, stepmothers and natural mothers have similar and positive levels of self-esteem, based on the fact that there were no significant differences between the two groups in the test scores of the Adjective Check List's scales of Achievement, Dominance and Endurance. Since stepmothers show no significant differences from natural mothers in levels of self-confidence and self-esteem, one conclusion might be that this is due to the personalities found in the sample population. These findings were in contrast to Zimmerman's (1977) study. She found that stepmothers appeared to have more self-confidence in comparison to natural mothers.
Generally stepmothers are still seen by our society as alienated parents, as well as not being regarded as parents in full standing. One of the reasons for these views is that there are few societal guidelines and role models to help stepmothers determine what is appropriate behavior and what is expected of them as stepmothers. If the stepmother is to succeed in her role, she needs society's recognition and the myth of the 'wicked' stepmother must be dispelled.

**Recommendations.**

Earlier in this study mention was made of the scarcity of research concerning stepmotherhood. Only recently, with the rise of divorce rates, some attention has been given to the structural characteristics of stepfamilies (Visher & Visher, 1979). There are few studies on remarriage, and there are even fewer on stepparent-stepchild relationships. Most remarried partners find themselves entering this complex stepparent role with little or no preparation. In light of this, the researchers would like to present a number of recommendations for future study.

First they would like to see their study replicated using a larger sample. The researchers recognized that their results have limited generalizability, because of their small sample, and replication would help establish the reliability of their findings.

Second, the research sample used in this study was predominantly Caucasians and from a middle-class background.
It is therefore recommended that research be conducted to compare stepmothers from different ethnic backgrounds and socio-economic levels.

Third, an indepth comparison study, using a larger sample of stepmothers whose stepchildren live in their homes versus stepmothers whose stepchildren visit their homes on a weekly basis. Fourth, a study designed to determine the differences in the stepmother's perception of her role with stepchildren of different ages. Fifth, a study should be undertaken to compare stepmothers' and stepfathers' perceptions of their role in reconstituted families.

In addition to recommendations for future studies, the researchers would like to see an improved understanding of the difficulties of being a stepparent and a stepchild. Stepfamily members lack societal guidelines for determining what is appropriate behavior and what is expected of them as stepfamily participants. Further, there are still negative connotations surrounding divorce and remarriage involving children which need to be explored and dispelled. Furthermore the stepfamily population seems to be greatly neglected in the Social Work Literature. Therefore, the researchers feel it is important for social workers and other human service professionals, as well as for the general community, to identify and to understand the stress and difficulties that are related to stepmothers and to various members of the stepfamily.
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Appendix A

Seeking Permission
February 4, 1983

Ms. Irene Sardanis-Zimmerman
3961 Waterhouse Road
Oakland, CA 94602

Dear Ms. Zimmerman:

As three students in the candidate year of the Master of Social Work Program at the University of Windsor, we are attempting to complete a research project dealing with stepmothers. More specifically how stepmothers view their roles.

During our literature review we came across your dissertation, and found there a questionnaire which we would like to use. We are asking your permission to use your questionnaire or some parts of it.

We would appreciate your replay as soon as possible, and would welcome any comments or suggestions you might have regarding this project. We have enclosed a self-addressed envelope for your convenience.

We will be happy to share with you our results.

We thank you.

Sincerely,

Ruth Kalagesbrun
Pat Tukes
Erella Reichman
Appendix E

Zimmerman's Permission
Ms. Ruth Kalegesbrun  
Ms. Pat Tukes  
Ms. Erella Reichman  
2510 Windsnere  
Birmingham, Michigan, 48008  

Dear Ruth, Pat and Erella:  

Please pardon my informaility by addressing you by your first names; you have my permission to do the same.  

It is deeply flattering to learn of your research project dealing with stepmothers. I wish we were closer geographically so that we could consult together. For me, the stepmother support group was a wonderful way to invite stepmothers in the community to attend and share with me their own concerns. As a stepmother, I had many biases that I had to overcome and put aside in order to listen to what the concerns they were expressing. You may want to set up your own pre and post questionnaire prior to and after the group experience to see if there is any difference in how these stepmothers view their role.  

Formally, I am most pleased to grant permission to use my questionnaire or any parts of it. I would be delighted to receive a copy of your results when you are complete. Although I am busy in a full time position as a Clinical Psychologist and part-time private practice, I would be happy to hear from you if I can assist in any way. The role of the stepmother is an increasingly important one as she will be raising or at least influential in raising other people’s children. She needs all the positive support we can give her to achieve that important goal.  

All my best wishes to all of you on your successful endeavor.  

Sincerely,  

Irene Sardanis, Ph.D.
Appendix C

Recruitment Letter for Stemotheres
March 21, 1983

Dear Stepmother:

We are three Master of Social Work students from the University of Windsor conducting a research project which deals with stepmothers. The goal of this project is to gain a greater understanding of how stepmothers view themselves.

Your participation in this study will contribute a great deal to our understanding of how stepmothers view their role. The identities of all volunteers who wish to participate will be kept confidential.

The study will involve a questionnaire which should not take more than a half hour to complete.

Kindly complete the attached form so that one of us can contact you to arrange a personal interview at your convenience.

Thoughtful consideration of this request will therefore be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Ruth Klagsbrun
Erella Reichman
Patricia Tukes

Name: ___________________ Address: ___________________
Phone Number: _______________ Age: ___________________
Number of Years Married: _____ Number of Stepchildren: _____
Appendix D

Adjective Check List

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The Adjective Check List

by

HARRISON G. GOUGH, Ph.D.

University of California (Berkeley)

Name ......................................................... Age .......... Sex ...........
Date ................................... Other ...........................................

DIRECTIONS: This booklet contains a list of adjectives. Please read them quickly and put an X in the box beside each one you would consider to be self-descriptive. Do not worry about duplications, contradictions, and so forth. Work quickly and do not spend too much time on any one adjective. Try to be frank, and check those adjectives which describe you as you really are, not as you would like to be.

CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGISTS PRESS

577 College Ave., Palo Alto, Calif.

Copyright 1952 by Harrison G. Gough
<p>| absent-minded | 1 | cheerful | 51 | dependent | 61 |
| active | 2 | civilized | 39 | despondent | 62 |
| adaptable | 3 | clear-thinking | 33 | determined | 83 |
| adventurous | 4 | clever | 34 | dignified | 94 |
| affected | 5 | coarse | 35 | discreet | 85 |
| affectionate | 6 | cold | 36 | disorderly | 86 |
| aggressive | 7 | commonplace | 37 | dissatisfied | 87 |
| alert | 8 | complaining | 38 | distractible | 88 |
| aloof | 9 | complicated | 39 | distrustful | 89 |
| ambitious | 10 | concealed | 40 | dominant | 90 |
| anxious | 11 | confident | 41 | dreamy | 91 |
| apathetic | 12 | confused | 42 | dull | 92 |
| appreciative | 13 | conscientious | 43 | easy-going | 93 |
| argumentative | 14 | conservative | 44 | effeminate | 94 |
| arrogant | 15 | considerate | 45 | efficient | 95 |
| artistic | 16 | contented | 46 | egotistical | 96 |
| assertive | 17 | conventional | 47 | emotional | 97 |
| attractive | 18 | cool | 48 | energetic | 98 |
| autocratic | 19 | cooperative | 49 | enterprising | 99 |
| awkward | 20 | courageous | 50 | enthusiastic | 100 |
| bitter | 21 | cowardly | 51 | evasive | 101 |
| blustering | 22 | cruel | 52 | excitable | 102 |
| boastful | 23 | curious | 53 | fair-minded | 103 |
| bossy | 24 | cynical | 54 | fault-finding | 104 |
| calm | 25 | daring | 55 | fearful | 105 |
| capable | 26 | deceitful | 56 | feminine | 106 |
| careless | 27 | defensive | 57 | fickle | 107 |
| cautious | 28 | deliberate | 58 | flirtatious | 108 |
| changeable | 29 | demanding | 59 | foolish | 109 |
| charming | 30 | dependable | 60 | forceful | 110 |
| cheerful | 51 | civilized | 39 | dependent | 61 |
| civilizing | 42 | despondent | 62 | determined | 83 |
| determined | 83 | dignified | 94 | discreet | 85 |
| discreet | 85 | disorderly | 86 | dissatisfied | 87 |
| dissatisfied | 87 | distrustful | 88 | distrustful | 89 |
| distrustful | 89 | dominant | 70 | dreamy | 71 |
| dreamy | 71 | dull | 72 | easy-going | 73 |
| easy-going | 73 | effeminate | 74 | efficient | 75 |
| efficient | 75 | egotistical | 76 | emotional | 77 |
| emotional | 77 | energetic | 78 | enterprising | 79 |
| enterprising | 79 | enthusiastic | 80 | evasive | 81 |
| evasive | 81 | excitable | 82 | fair-minded | 83 |
| fair-minded | 83 | fault-finding | 84 | fearful | 85 |
| fearful | 85 | feminine | 86 | fickle | 87 |
| fickle | 87 | flirtatious | 88 | foolish | 89 |
| foolish | 89 | forceful | 90 | foresighted | 91 |
| foresighted | 91 | forgetful | 92 | forgiving | 93 |
| forgiving | 93 | formal | 94 | frank | 95 |
| frank | 95 | friendly | 96 | frivolous | 97 |
| frivolous | 97 | fussy | 98 | generous | 99 |
| generous | 99 | gentle | 100 | gloomy | 101 |
| gloomy | 101 | good-looking | 102 | good-natured | 103 |
| good-natured | 103 | greedy | 104 | handsome | 105 |
| handsome | 105 | hard-headed | 106 | hard-hearted | 107 |
| hard-hearted | 107 | hurry | 108 | headstrong | 109 |
| headstrong | 109 | healthy | 110 | helpful | 111 |
| helpful | 111 | high-strung | 112 | honest | 113 |
| honest | 113 | hostile | 114 | humorous | 115 |
| humorous | 115 | hurried | 116 | idealistic | 117 |
| idealistic | 117 | imaginative | 118 | immature | 119 |
| immature | 119 | impatient | 120 | impulsive | 121 |
| impulsive | 121 | independent | 122 | indifferent | 123 |
| indifferent | 123 | individualistic | 124 | industrious | 125 |
| infantile | 126 | informal | 127 | ingenuous | 128 |
| inhibited | 129 | initiative | 130 | insightful | 131 |
| insightful | 131 | intelligent | 132 | interests narrow | 133 |
| interests wide | 133 | intolerant | 134 | inventive | 135 |
| irresponsible | 137 | irritable | 138 | jolly | 139 |
| jolly | 139 | kind | 140 | lazy | 141 |
| lazy | 141 | leisurely | 142 | logical | 143 |
| logical | 143 | loud | 144 | loyal | 145 |
| loyal | 145 | mannerly | 146 | masculine | 147 |
| mannerly | 146 | mature | 147 | meek | 148 |
| meek | 148 | methodical | 149 | methodical | 150 |</p>
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Appendix E

Description of Scales
DESCRIPTION OF THE SCALES

5. Achievement: Ach

Definition: To strive to be outstanding in pursuits of socially recognized significance.

In its original version Ach had 38 items; 25 items scored +1 for endorsement and 13 scored −1. The scale was left unchanged for the present edition of the ACL.

In IPA R assessments, the Q-sort items having largest positive correlations with Ach for both sexes were “Is a talkative individual,” “Is fastidious,” “Is productive; gets things done,” “Behaves in an assertive fashion,” “Has a high aspiration level for self,” “Is power oriented; values power in self or others,” and “Tends to proffer advice.” The coefficients for the item on aspiration level were .14 for females and .30 for males.

Negatively correlating Q-sort items included “Aroused nurturant feelings in others,” “Reluctant to commit self to any definite course of action; tends to delay or avoid action,” “Engages in personal fantasy or daydreams, fictional speculations,” “Is self-defeating,” and “Tends to ruminate and have persistent, preoccupying thoughts.”

Among the adjectival descriptions with significant (p < .05) positive correlations were assertive, bossy, confident, hard-headed, self-confident, energetic, ambitious, and enterprising. Among those with significant negative correlations were awkward, considerate, gentle, mild, modest, peaceable, pleasant, quiet, sensitive, shy, silent, simple, slow, unambitious, unassuming, and soft-hearted.

The high-scorer on Ach is a hard-working, goal-directed individual, who is determined to do well and usually does. The motivation to succeed seems to lie less in competitive drives than in an insistent need to live up to high and socially commendable criteria of performance. Others acknowledge the energy and enterprise displayed by the high-scorer, but also see elements of coercion, impatience, and self-aggrandizement. The low-scorer is less effective, less venturesome, and less persistent, but at the same time an easier and more congenial companion whose difference has a certain charm.

6. Dominance: Dom

Definition: To seek and maintain a role as leader in groups, or to be influential and controlling in individual relationships.

The Dominance scale in the original version of the ACL contained 55 items. In the present version, 15 of these were dropped; 19 of the remaining items are scored +1 for endorsement and 21 are scored −1. The shortened scale correlated .93 with the original scale in a sample of 591 males and .94 in a sample of 588 females. (The same samples were used to determine the correlations of the other revised scales with their original versions.)

The Q-sort descriptions correlating most highly with Dom were “Is a talkative individual,” “Behaves in an assertive fashion,” “Emphasizes being with others; gregarious,” “Characteristically pushes and tries to stretch limits; sees what he can get away with,” “Has a high aspiration level for self,” “Is subjectively unaware of self-concern; feels satisfied with self,” “Is power-oriented; values power in self or others,” “Has social poise and presence; appears socially at ease,” and “Tends to proffer advice.” Q-sort items with largest negative correlations included “Is thin-skinned; sensitive to anything that can be construed as criticism or an interpersonal slight,” “Genuinely submissive; accepts domination comfortably,” “Feels a lack of personal meaning in life,” “Gives up and withdraws where possible in the face of frustration and adversity,” “Reluctant to commit self to any definite course of action; tends to delay or avoid action,” “Keeps people at a distance; avoids close interpersonal relationships,” and “Tends to ruminate and have persistent, preoccupying thoughts.”

Adjectival descriptions with largest positive correlations included aggressive, ambitious, argumentative, assertive, bossy, confident, demanding, determined, dominant, forceful, headstrong, initiate, loud, opinionated, opportunistic, outspoken, self-confident, stubborn, shrewd, and talkative. Largest negative correlations were found for cautious, gentle, meek, mild, modest, quiet, reserved, retiring, shy, silent, submissive, timid, unassuming, and withdrawn. Coefficients for the adjective dominant were .36 for females and .22 for males, for assertive .37 and .27, and for determined .34 and .25.

The high-scorer on Dominance is a strong-willed, ambitious, determined, and forceful individual, free of self-doubt in the pursuit of goals, and little if at all inhibited by the disapproval or opposition of others. The high-scorer is affiliative and adroit in directing the group’s actions toward the attainment of socially worthy objectives. The low-scorer lacks confidence, prefers to be on the periphery of group enterprise, and shuns situations calling for competition or the assertion of self.
7. Endurance: End

Definition: To persist in any task undertaken.

The initial version of the Endurance scale had 47 items. In the present version one item was eliminated, leaving 24 scored +1 if checked and 22 scored -1. Correlations between standard scores on the original and shortened scales were .96 for males and .95 for females.

Q-sort descriptions most highly correlated with End were "Is fastidious," "Favors conservative values in a variety of areas," "Is productive; gets things done," "Is moralistic," "Has a high aspiration level for self," and "Tends to proffer advice." Largest negative correlations were found for the descriptions "Initiates humor," "Engages in personal fantasy and daydreams, fictional speculations," "Is unpredictable and changeable in behavior and attitudes," "Various needs tend toward relatively direct and uncontrolled expression; unable to delay gratification," and "Responds to humor."

Adjectival descriptions that had the largest positive correlations with End included conservative, painstaking, conscientious, and ambitious. Noteworthy negative correlations included adventurous, changeable, curious, disorderly, distractible, easy going, frivolous, generous, informal, leisurely, pleasure-seeking, relaxed, sensitive, sentimental, unambitious, and understanding.

High-scorers on End have a strong sense of duty, work conscientiously, and eschew frivolity and the nonessental. Conservation of the tried and true is deemed more important than the discovery of the new and different. Low-scorers are changeable, easily distracted or redirected, leisurely, and informal individuals who take pleasure in new experiences and the endless variety of everyday life.

22. Self-Confidence: S-Cfd

The scale for Self-Confidence contained 40 items in its original version. In the present version of the ACL this was reduced to 34 items, 20 of which are scored +1 if checked and 14 scored -1. Correlations between standard scores on the new and old scales were .77 and .75 for males and females, respectively.

Q-sort descriptions correlating most positively with S-Cfd scores for both sexes included "Is a talkative individual," "Behaves in an assertive fashion," "Emphasizes being with others; gregarious," "Has a high aspiration level for self," "Is subjectively unaware of self-concern; feels satisfied with self," "Has social poise and presence; appears socially at ease," and "Tends to proffer advice."

Largest negative correlations were found for the items "Feels a lack of personal meaning in life," "Gives up and withdraws where possible in the face of frustration and adversity," "Is vulnerable to real or fancied threat, generally fearful," "Reluctant to commit self to any definite course of action; tends to delay or avoid action," "Has a brittle ego-defense system; has a small reserve of integration; would be disorganized or maladaptive when under stress or trauma," "Keeps people at a distance; avoids close interpersonal relationships," "Is self-defeating," and "Tends to ruminate and have persistent, preoccupying thoughts."

Largest positive adjectival correlations were found for confident, determined, ambitious, assertive, energetic, enterprising, initiative, outgoing, outspoken, self-confident, and talkative. Largest negative correlations were found for apathetic, awkward, cautious, fearful, inhibited, meek, mild, modest, quiet, reserved, retiring, self-denying, shy, silent, slow, timid, unambitious, and withdrawn.

The high-scorers on S-Cfd are initiators, confident of their ability to achieve goals. They are not above cutting a few corners to create a good impression, and observers do see them as assertive, enterprising, and self-confident. The low-scorers have difficulty in mobilizing their resources and taking action; others view them as shy, inhibited, and withdrawn.
Appendix F

Stepmother Interview Schedule
Discipline

1) Do you and your husband mutually agree on how to discipline the stepchild(ren)?
   Always _____ Sometimes _____ Rarely _____ Never _____

2) Do you as a stepmother insist upon certain rules for the stepchild(ren) to follow?
   Always _____ Sometimes _____ Rarely _____ Never _____

3) Did you and your husband discuss how to discipline the stepchild(ren) before you were married?
   Yes _____ No _____

4) Do you discipline your stepchild(ren) by spanking?
   Always _____ Sometimes _____ Rarely _____ Never _____

5) Do you discipline your stepchild(ren) by reasoning, explaining, and talking with them?
   Always _____ Sometimes _____ Rarely _____ Never _____

6) Do you discipline your stepchild(ren) by raising your voice or shouting?
   Always _____ Sometimes _____ Rarely _____ Never _____

7) Do you discipline your stepchild(ren) by taking away privileges, e.g. allowance, movies, etc.?
   Always _____ Sometimes _____ Rarely _____ Never _____

8) Do you discipline your stepchild(ren) by isolating, confining to a chair, room, bed, etc.?
   Always _____ Sometimes _____ Rarely _____ Never _____
9) Do you feel you have permission to discipline your stepchild(ren)?

Always____ Sometimes_____ Rarely_____ Never_____ 

10) Do you hesitate to discipline the stepchild(ren)?

Always____ Sometimes_____ Rarely_____ Never_____ 

11) Do you avoid disciplining the stepchild(ren) because you fear your husband's reaction?

Always____ Sometimes_____ Rarely_____ Never_____ 

12) Do you avoid disciplining the stepchild(ren) because you fear their reaction?

Always____ Sometimes_____ Rarely_____ Never_____ 

13) Who usually disciplines the stepchild(ren) in your home?

Me_____ My husband_____ Both of us_____ No one_____ 

14) Do you and your husband compromise about rules and discipline in regard to your stepchild(ren)?

Always_____ Sometimes_____ Rarely_____ Never_____ 

15) Do you as a stepmother assume parental authority with your stepchild(ren)?

Always_____ Sometimes_____ Rarely_____ Never_____ 

16) Did you and your husband share authority in regard to the stepchild(ren) early in your relationship?

Always_____ Sometimes_____ Rarely_____ Never_____ 

17) Did you have any prior experience with disciplining child(ren)?

Yes_____ No_____ 

18) Did you know how the stepchild(ren) had been disciplined in the past?

Yes_____ No_____ 

19) In dealing with your stepchild(ren) do you find you tend to be:

Strict____ Permissive____ Overindulgent____ Ignore them____
Relationship

20) When you are troubled with problems regarding the stepchild(ren) with whom do you talk?

Husband___ Friend___ My parents___ No one___ Other___

21) Do you feel that your stepchild(ren) interferes with your relationship with your husband?

Always____ Sometimes____ Rarely____ Never____

22) Are you included when family decisions are made?

Always____ Sometimes____ Rarely____ Never____

23) Does your husband back you up in decisions you make about the stepchild(ren)?

Always____ Sometimes____ Rarely____ Never____

24) If the stepchild(ren) were not living in the home, would your relationship with your husband be better?

Yes____ Maybe____ No____ Stay the same____

25) Does the natural mother interfere in your relationship with your stepchild(ren)?

Yes____ No____

26) Does the former wife interfere in your relationship with your husband?

Yes____ No____

27) If the former wife was not involved, would your family life be happier for you?

Yes____ No____

28) How would you describe your relationship with your husband?

Very satisfied____ Satisfied____ Mixed feelings____ Disatisfied____
Role

29) How satisfying do you find being in the role of a stepmother?
Very satisfied Satisfied Mixed feelings Disatisfied

30) As a stepparent, how successful do you feel in your role?
Very successful Successful Hardly successful Not Successful

31) Do you ever feel like a 'wicked' stepmother, as something out of the Cinderella fairy tale?
Always Sometimes Rarely Never

32) Have you had afterthoughts about your marriage because of the stepchild(ren)?
Always Sometimes Rarely Never

33) What do your stepchild(ren) call you?

34) What has been your most difficult problems as a stepmother?
(1) ______________________________________________________
(2) ______________________________________________________
(3) ______________________________________________________

35) What has been the most painful experience for you as a stepmother?

36) What has been the most rewarding experience for you as a stepmother?

37) What major changes do you feel you made as a result of you becoming a stepmother?
Demographic Information

38) Age_____  
39) Religion_______

40) Education (last grade completed)  
   (a) Elementary school ________  
   (b) Secondary school ________  
   (c) Community college ________  
   (d) Trade school ________  
   (e) University ________  
   (f) Other ________

41) Were you married before? Yes______ No______

42) If yes, how many times prior to this marriage?______

42a) How did your previous marriage end?  
   Death______ Divorce______

43) How long have you been in your current relationship?  

44) Length of time between marriages:  
   1st-2nd M ________  
   2nd-3rd M ________  
   3rd-4th M ________

45) Age of your current spouse? _____

46) What is your family income annually?  
   (a) Under $10,000 ________  
   (b) $10,001 - $15,000 ________  
   (c) $15,001 - $20,000 ________  
   (d) $20,001 - $30,000 ________  
   (e) $30,001 - $40,000 ________  
   (f) Over $40,000 ________
47) Do you work outside the home? Yes _______ No______

48) If yes, what is your occupation outside the home?

______________________________
Part time _______ Full time __________

49) How many stepchild(ren) are living with you?________

______________________________
Age and Sex of each child:
Male(s) _______ _______ _______ _______ _______
Female(s) _______ _______ _______ _______ _______

50) How many of your husband's child(ren) are living outside the home? ______

Age and Sex of each child:
Male(s) _______ _______ _______ _______ _______
Female(s) _______ _______ _______ _______ _______

51) How many of your biological child(ren) are living with you? ______

Age and Sex of each child:
Male(s) _______ _______ _______ _______ _______
Female(s) _______ _______ _______ _______ _______

52) How many of your biological child(ren) are living outside the home? ______

Age and Sex of each child:
Male(s) _______ _______ _______ _______ _______
Female(s) _______ _______ _______ _______ _______

Comments:

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

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Appendix G

Mother Interview Schedule
MOTHER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Discipline

1) Do you and your husband mutually agree on how to discipline the child(ren)?
Always_____ Sometimes_____ Rarely_____ Never_____

2) Do you as a mother insist upon certain rules for the child(ren) to follow?
Always_____ Sometimes_____ Rarely_____ Never_____

3) Did you and your husband discuss how to discipline the child(ren) before you were married?
Yes_____ No_____

4) Do you discipline your child(ren) by spanking?
Always_____ Sometimes_____ Rarely_____ Never_____

5) Do you discipline your child(ren) by reasoning, explaining, and talking with them?
Always_____ Sometimes_____ Rarely_____ Never_____

6) Do you discipline your child(ren) by raising your voice or shouting?
Always_____ Sometimes_____ Rarely_____ Never_____

7) Do you discipline your child(ren) by taking away privileges, e.g. allowance, movies, etc.?
Always_____ Sometimes_____ Rarely_____ Never_____

8) Do you discipline your child(ren) by isolating, confining to a chair, room, bed, etc.?
Always_____ Sometimes_____ Rarely_____ Never_____
9) Do you feel you have permission to discipline your child(ren)?

Always____ Sometimes____ Rarely____ Never____

10) Do you hesitate to discipline the child(ren)?

Always____ Sometimes____ Rarely____ Never____

11) Do you avoid disciplining the child(ren) because you fear of your husband's reaction?

Always____ Sometimes____ Rarely____ Never____

12) Do you avoid disciplining the child(ren) because you fear of their reaction?

Always____ Sometimes____ Rarely____ Never____

13) Who usually disciplines the child(ren) in your home?

Me____ My husband____ Both of us____ No one____

14) Do you and your husband compromise about rules and discipline in regard to your child(ren)?

Always____ Sometimes____ Rarely____ Never____

15) Do you as a mother assume parental authority with your child(ren)?

Always____ Sometimes____ Rarely____ Never____

16) Did you and your husband share authority in regard to the child(ren) early in your relationship?

Always____ Sometimes____ Rarely____ Never____

17) Did you have any prior experience with disciplining child(ren)?

Yes____ No____

18) Did you have any prior knowledge in disciplining child(ren)?

Yes____ No____

19) In dealing with your child(ren) do you find you tend to be:

Strict____ Permissive____ Overindulgent____ Ignore them____.
20) When you are troubled with problems regarding the child(ren) with whom do you talk?

Husband___  Friend___  My parents___  No one___  Other___

21) Do you feel that your child(ren) interferes with your relationship with your husband?

Always____  Sometimes____  Rarely____  Never____

22) Are you included when family decisions are made?

Always____  Sometimes____  Rarely____  Never____

23) Does your husband back you up in decisions you make about the child(ren)?

Always____  Sometimes____  Rarely____  Never____

24) If the child(ren) were not living in the home, would your relationship with your husband be better?

Yes____  Maybe____  No____  Stay the same____

25) Is there any outside member of the family who interferes in your relationship with your child(ren)?

Yes____  No____

If yes who: __________________________

26) Is there any outside member of the family who interferes in your relationship with your husband?

Yes____  No____

If yes who: __________________________

27) If this outside relative was not involved, would your family life be happier for you?

Yes____  No____

28) How would you describe your relationship with your husband?

Very satisfied____  Satisfied____  Mixed feelings____  Disatisfied____
Role

29) How satisfying do you find being in the role of a mother?
   Very satisfied___ Satisfied___ Mixed feelings___ Disatisfied___

30) As a parent, how successful do you feel in your role?
   Very successful____ Successful________
   Hardly successful____ Not Successful____

31) Do you ever feel like a 'wicked' mother, as something out of the Cinderella fairy tale?
   Always____ Sometimes____ Rarely____ Never____

32) Have you had afterthoughts about your marriage because of the child(ren)?
   Always____ Sometimes____ Rarely____ Never____

33) What do your child(ren) call you?

34) What has been your most difficult problems as a mother?
   (1) _____________________________________________
   (2) _____________________________________________
   (3) _____________________________________________

35) What has been the most painful experience for you as a mother?

36) What has been the most rewarding experience for you as a mother?

37) What major changes do you feel you made as a result of you becoming a mother?

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Demographic Information

38) Age

39) Religion

40) Education (last grade completed)
   (a) Elementary school
   (b) Secondary school
   (c) Community college
   (d) Trade school
   (e) University
   (f) Other

41) Were you married before? Yes  No

42) If yes, how many times prior to this marriage?

42a) How did your previous marriage end?
    Death  Divorce

43) How long have you been in your current relationship?

44) Length of time between marriages:
    1st-2nd M
    2nd-3rd M
    3rd-4th M

45) Age of your current spouse?

46) What is your family income annually?
   (a) Under $10,000
   (b) $10,001 - $15,000
   (c) $15,001 - $20,000
   (d) $20,001 - $30,000
   (e) $30,001 - $40,000
   (f) Over $40,000
47) Do you work outside the home?       Yes____   No____

48) If yes, what is your occupation outside the home?

________________________________________________________________________
Part time _______     Full time _______________________

49) How many child(ren) are living with you?______________

________________________________________________________________________
Age and Sex of each child:

Male(s) _______ _______ _______ _______
Female(s) _______ _______ _______ ______

50) How many of your child(ren) are living outside the home? ______

Age and Sex of each child:

Male(s) _______ _______ _______ _______
Female(s) _______ _______ _______ ______

Comments:

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

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Vitae Auctoris

Ruth Nickey Penny Klagsbrun was born on November 14, 1957 in Toronto, Ontario. Both primary and secondary education were completed in Toronto: Associated Hebrew Day School and Sir Sandford Fleming Secondary School.

She enrolled at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, Toronto, Ontario in 1978. There she completed her Bachelor of Social Work Degree and graduated in 1982. For the summer of 1982 Ms. Klagsbrun was employed by Toronto Metro Social Services.

In September 1982, she was admitted to the Master of Social Work Program at the University of Windsor. Throughout the academic year, her field placement experience was at the Wayne County Children's Center in Detroit Michigan. As well, she worked as a Graduate Assistant for the University of Windsor. The expected date of graduation is May 1984.
Vitae Auctoris

Erella Reichman (nee Pe'er-Lamc) was born on June 16, 1944 in Haifa, Israel. She attended primary school in Kirat-Ata, Israel and finished secondary school in Baltimore, Maryland. In 1962 she returned to Israel and completed two years of mandatory military service.

She enrolled at Bar Ilan University in Ramat-Gan, Israel in 1964 and completed a diploma in Criminology in 1966. During the years 1965-1968 she was employed by the Criminology Department in Bar-Ilan University as a research assistant, on a part time basis.

In 1966 she enrolled at Bar-Ilan University School of Social Work, and completed her B.S.W. degree in 1970. In 1970, she was accepted as a social worker in the Social Service Department of Petach-Tikva Municipality. In 1974, she completed an in-service supervisor training program. During this time and until September 1976 she was employed as a supervisor in the Social Service Department of Petach-Tikva Municipality.

Due to her husband's occupation, Erella and her family moved to Austin, Texas in September 1976. In 1977 she began working as a library assistant at the University of Texas until 1979. In 1979, Erella and her family moved to Newport
News, Virginia, where she was employed as a Hebrew teacher with the Jewish Federation. In June 1980 her family moved to Birmingham, Michigan, and throughout these years she has been employed as a Hebrew teacher on a part time basis.

In September 1982 she enrolled in the Master of Social Work Program at the University of Windsor. Throughout the academic year, her field placement was at Catholic Social Services of Wayne County, in Detroit Michigan. The expected date of graduation is May 1984.
Vitae Auctoris

Patricia Ann Eanks-Tukes (nee Eanks) was born May 13, 1949 in Windsor Ontario. She completed both elementary and secondary education in Windsor and graduated from the Windsor High School of Commerce in 1967.

After an extensive and successful sales career, Patricia decided to return to school. She was accepted into the Social Work Program at the University of Windsor in September 1978. In 1981 she obtained a B.A. (Psychology) from the University of Windsor, and in June 1982 she obtained her B.S.W.

Following the completion of her B.S.W. program in 1982 she was accepted and entered into the Master of Social Work Program. Throughout the academic year her field placement experience was at Catholic Social Services of Wayne County, Detroit Michigan. As well, she was employed as a Graduate Assistant for the University of Windsor. The expected date of graduation is May 1984.