AN INVESTIGATION OF BLACK
STEPMOTHER STRESS

THESIS

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By

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Much research conducted on stepmothers has not been racially representative. This includes Janice Nadler's (1976) research on three psychological stresses (anxiety, depression, and anger) of stepmotherhood. To investigate the stress of black stepmotherhood, this study replicated a portion of Nadler's investigation on a black sample. It was hypothesized that 1) black stepmothers would report more stress than black natural mothers; and that 2) black stepmothers would report more stress than the white stepmothers in Nadler's study.

The data indicated no significant difference in the levels of stress experienced by black stepmothers and black natural mothers. Overall, white stepmothers reported more stress than black stepmothers. The former may be attributable to black stepmothers and natural mothers having the same support system, the black extended family.
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AN INVESTIGATION OF BLACK STEPMOTHER STRESS

In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of research investigations that focus on the stepfamily. The issues addressed most often include the role of the children (Bohannon, 1971), the role of the couple (Canton, 1977), the role of the stepfather (Stern, 1978), and the role of the stepmother (Draughon, 1975) in stepfamily adjustment. A discussion of each of these issues follows.

Numerous studies have investigated the effects of remarriage on children. Goldstein (1973) contends that the stepchild is initially hampered by a sense of loss. This loss begins when a divorce or death of parent takes place, and the child is confronted with a parental loss that he did not choose (Visher and Visher, 1979). The child subsequently feels rejected and abandoned.

When a parent enters into a courtship (a time in which children are generally excluded), the child's feelings of rejection and abandonment are exacerbated. As the wedding day approaches, the distant parent (the parent with whom the child no longer lives) is euphoric with hopes of gaining a satisfying couple relationship and a new parent for his or her child. The child, however, may perceive his distant parent's second marriage as a total loss of that parent to
the new spouse. To the child he is not gaining a new parental figure (the stepparent), but rather is being completely abandoned by the distant parent (Visher and Visher, 1979).

The child also experiences divided loyalties when remarriage takes place (Simon, 1964; Nolan, 1977). Children feel caught between opposing factions when their parents divorce. These children may feel obligated to choose sides and usually associate themselves with their custodial parent, the parent with whom the child currently lives. However, although the child grows closer to his custodial parent, he may still yearn for a close relationship with his other parent (Visher and Visher, 1979).

When a parent remarries, the child's insecurity is increased (Nye, 1957). The distant parent's remarriage forces the child to reconsider loyalty issues that the child thought had already been decided. The child fears that he may lose his custodial parent if he accepts his new stepparent (Visher and Visher, 1979). Thus the separation of parents forces conflicting emotions on the child and can pull him in opposite directions.

When a remarriage occurs, the familiarity present in the original family structure is replaced by the second marriage's new and unfamiliar family structure. The new stepfamily is in its developmental stages of organization. New rules may be instigated and familiar family roles and
duties may be reassigned. For instance, the oldest child who has been a helpmate to his single parent and substitute parental figure to his siblings may find his responsibilities relegated to his new stepparent. Thus the stepchild is forced to contend with a new family situation where the familiar "givens" no longer apply (Simon, 1964). The stepchild may thus incur much confusion and resentment when his formerly recognized status is supplanted by a new status that is unfamiliar and unrequested.

Another source of anxiety for the stepchild is instantaneous membership in two households (Messinger, Walker, and Freeman, 1978). Different families have different ways of communicating and interacting. Therefore, Messinger et al. say that the child's continuous traveling between one household to another household can be perceived by the child as "culture shock." Children who feel such confusion and displacement may battle with at least one family pattern. This retaliatory action is bound to cut them off from one of their parents. The already discussed insecurity of the child about the stability of his relationship with his distant parent is thus further jeopardized (Visher and Visher, 1979).

Despite the upheaval that stepchildren experience upon the remarriage of a parent, the detrimental effects of remarriage on stepchildren appear to be short-term (Bohannon,
Burchinal (1964) conducted research on 1500 Iowa high school students to determine if their parents' marital status had any longlasting negative effects on their personal adjustment. Using the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, Burchinal concluded that the students felt that neither the divorce nor remarriage of their parents had any significantly detrimental impact on their lives.

Similarly, Bohannon (1971) asked a sample of stepfamily members and a sample of intact family members to rate themselves on their perceived level of family adjustment. Bohannon also found no significant differences between the stepfamilies and intact families in his samples.

Also, Lucille Duberman (1973) further supports the general consensus that stepchildren suffer little psychological impairment due to divorce and remarriage in their families. Duberman studied step-relationships among eighty-eight stepfamilies in Cleveland, Ohio. Each family was requested to rate familial relationships and evaluate family closeness. Sixty-four percent of the stepfamilies she interviewed rated their family relationships "excellent."

Finally, Wilson, Zurcher, McAdams, and Curtis (1975) conducted a statistical analysis of two national surveys. Their aim was to determine whether children involved in stepfather families have more difficulty in socially interacting with others than children of intact families. Wilson and colleagues (1975) also investigated the effect that
The adjustment of the couple to a stepfamily situation has also received much attention. Canton (1977) noted that the strength or weakness of the marital tie can affect the adjustment of the stepfamily. A solid bond of unity between marital partners is needed to withstand the pressures of remarriage and the formation of a new family. The pair must cope with adjusting to each other and helping their children adjust to the new family situation. Added to these demands is the necessity of coping with the individual insecurities of the couple members. The combination of such responsibilities and pressures can result in serious consequences that impede or prevent stepfamily and recoupling satisfaction (Visher and Visher, 1979).

Finally, another common problem incurred by remarried couples is the subject of discipline. McClenahan (1978) asked adults in stepfamilies to rank problematic areas in their family's situation. He found discipline ranked as the number one area of difficulty in stepfamilies.

There are several factors that may interfere with the couple's efforts to develop a strong conjugal (marital) bond. Such factors include external pressures imposed on
the new marital dyad. Society, friends, and relatives usually perceive remarriage as a sudden change although the remarried couple may not (Visher and Visher, 1979). Societal organizations like the Parents Teachers Association and churches are unsure of how to recognize stepparents and remarriages (Cherlin, 1978). Friends of the original couple may feel disloyal to the ex-spouse if they are friendly with the new marital partner (Nadler, 1976). Relatives like grandparents may feel threatened by a new marriage (Maddox, 1975). Grandparents often step in after a divorce or death and take care of the grandchildren. The grandparents also begin to relate to their child, the parent of their grandchildren, as they did before their child's first marriage. Thus grandparents may resent the new spouse and remarriage when they must once again relinquish the more involved role of parent for the less involved role of grandparent (Simon, 1964).

Other factors that strain the remarried conjugal bond include internal pressures within the pair. After a divorce, behaviors and living styles have been established and habituated among the people involved in the old family (Satir, 1972). Bringing such regimented people together in a successful cohesion upon remarriage requires considerable flexibility and patience on the part of those involved in the new family (Canton, 1977). Also bonds between parents and their natural children have been established before
the present adult relationship existed. Thus a spouse may feel jealous and excluded in his new marriage as reminders of the previous marital union keep reappearing (Reingold, 1976). This situation breeds insecurity and mistrust, and this makes it more difficult to achieve couple unity.

Still another source of friction between married couples concerns financial difficulties. Bowerman and Irish (1962) contended that stepfamily adjustment is dependent on income; the greater the income, the better the adjustment of the stepfamily and vice versa. People with larger sources of income have one less area of tension to deal with. Bowerman and Irish also add that marital partners do not feel imposed upon by child support and alimony because the payments do not greatly affect their standard of living.

Also Simon (1964) stated that individuals with more economic security remarry for satisfying relationships. By contrast Simon hypothesizes that poor individuals remarry to provide their children with a parental replacement. This hypothesis suggests that poorer couples have little compatibility with which to begin building a sound marital foundation (Visher and Visher, 1979).

Bohannon and Erikson (1978) also commented that the way discipline is handled by the remarried couple may be the
touchiest subject in instituting a new household. In first marriages, the husband and wife have years to develop uniform opinions about their children's behavior. They thus have ample time to jointly decide what child behaviors should be controlled and what methods of discipline should be employed to bring about that control.

Such is not the case for remarried couples. Rather than having years in which to work out differences in discipline methods, couples in remarriages must make decisions about discipline at an instant's notice. Tension between a remarried couple occurs when the partners view child behaviors differently. The partner may disagree on what method of discipline is appropriate for a particular behavior, or whether a particular behavior warrants any discipline at all. Consequently, conflicting opinions concerning discipline matters can result in alienation between spouses.

Further, the role of the stepfather plays in stepfamily adjustment has been a source of concern to investigators. Rallings (1976) concluded that a stepfather must cope with joining a functioning group and establishing a place for himself there. Stepfathers are often placed in the position of trying to break into the mother-child unit whose bonds predate the adult association. The mother and child have shared common backgrounds and cultural values which have unified them into a close-knit group. The longer this group
has been in existence, the more difficult it becomes for the stepfather to integrate himself into the family (Stern, 1978). Such difficulty in establishing himself a space within the group can leave the stepfather feeling rejected and set apart from his own family.

There is evidence suggesting the discipline issue may have even greater significance for the stepfather. In 1978 Stern investigated thirty stepfather families in the Cleveland, Ohio area. Her results suggest that the stepfather's assimilation into the ongoing mother-child system depends heavily on his timing of when to discipline and when not to discipline his stepchildren.

Some stepfathers may try to exert discipline at the beginning of the remarriage. They may believe that discipline is a prime responsibility for the man of the household (Visher and Visher, 1979). However, Stern (1978) hypothesized that "the stepfather who moves slowly and attempts to make a friend of the child before moving to control him has a better chance of having his discipline integrated into the . . . order of the family." Thus, stepfathers who enforce discipline before a bond of friendship is established may never form close ties with the family unit.

Stern (1978) further believed that the integration period takes about one and a half to two years to accomplish, but warns that many stepfathers are unprepared for such a
long period of adjustment. The stepfather may expect immediate love and trust from his new children. But this expectation is seldom met and the stepfather will likely feel a greater sense of alienation and rejection if he insists on exerting too much discipline too soon (Visher and Visher, 1979).

Another problem that many stepfathers face is dealing with their guilt about leaving their own natural children to become stepfathers in a new family (Visher and Visher, 1978). Upon divorce, fathers usually see their natural children only on weekends and holidays. Thus some fathers may feel compelled to lavish time and money on their children to the exclusion of their wives and stepchildren (Visher and Visher, 1979). The wives feel deprived of leisure time with their husbands, and the stepchildren receive little opportunity to get to know and enjoy their stepfather (Mayleas, 1977).

Finances may be an important source of irritation for the stepfather (Mayleas, 1977), also. Bitterness over money matters can become intense in stepfamilies (Noble and Noble, 1977). Standards of living are lowered in remarried families when the husband must help support his ex-wife and natural children along with his stepfamily. In trying to satisfy both sets of families, the stepfather satisfies neither (Messinger, 1976). The ex-spouse feels she and her children are receiving too little support. The current wife feels that the ex-spouse and her children are receiving too much
support. For stepfathers, money is no longer an example of achievement and manliness as it is for other husbands and fathers (Mayleas, 1977). Instead the stepfather may feel so besieged by demands for monetary support that he feels like a "walking checkbook" (Visher and Visher, 1979).

However, the role of the stepmother may be the most precarious and crucial factor in stepfamily adjustment. Society primarily holds the female responsible for family adjustment (Sardanis-Zimmerman, 1977). Thus the stepmother must cope with all the aforementioned difficulties of the other stepfamily members as well as difficulties of her own. Perhaps the greatest limitation of stepmotherhood is the expectancy of family members and society that the stepmother give considerable emotional support to her family (Visher and Visher, 1978; Fast and Cain, 1966; Maddox, 1975; Bitterman, 1968). Visher and Visher (1979) noted that a man in a stepfamily may suffer much hurt when trying to find a foothold in the stepfamily situation. However, they also add that when the tension becomes too much for him, the husband looks to his wife to improve the family circumstances.

Yet the harder the wife tries, the worse the situation is likely to become (Maddox, 1975). Not only may her husband be unsupportive, but her stepchildren may purposely sabotage her well-meaning efforts in hope that the stepmother will depart (Schulman, 1972). The expectation that the wife is
responsible for emotional relationships within the family is unrealistic (Maddox, 1975). It is impossible for any one person to eliminate or even reduce the complexity found in the stepfamily situation. Visher and Visher (1979) noted that the wife needs her husband's help and approval when dealing with the social interactions within the home. She should not be expected to carry the burden alone.

Fast and Cain (1966) report on the contradictory functions of the stepparent role. They note that society expects the stepmother to provide an optimum level of emotional support for her family. They contend that it is socially unacceptable for a woman to act out the role of stepmother because of its evil connotation. Yet these researchers also point out that these same social norms deem it inappropriate for the stepparent to assume the parental role.

Maddox (1975) further elaborated on society's expectation that the stepmother serve as the primary emotional buffer for her family. In her book The Half Parent, Maddox lists some requirements of the stepmother which include 1) supplying whatever elements of parenting a stepchild lacks; 2) supplying whatever elements of parenting her spouse demands her to give to the stepchild; and 3) loving the stepchild.

Bitterman (1968) further suggested that the stepmother is expected to fill a role that is conducive to the child's...
personality growth at the same time compatible with the role of her husband.

Paradoxically, the stepmother receives little or no emotional support from her family in return (Nadler, 1976). Roosevelt and Lofas (1976) stated the stepmother's receiving recognition of her role is essential to her self-esteem. They added that the stepmother needs to know that her efforts to become an effective parental figure and spouse are appreciated by her family.

Yet the stepmother seldom receives acknowledgement of and expressed appreciation for her endeavors (Nadler, 1976). Consequently, at the critical time when the woman needs to feel like a recognized valued member of the family, she may feel treated like the family outcast. This can have a negative impact on the woman's self-esteem.

Thus because the stepmother is faced with such awesome responsibilities, her emotional stability can make or break a stepfamily (Smith, 1953). As previously stated, the female of a family or stepfamily is the individual primarily expected to oversee the emotional well-being of the other family members. Her husband may be too frustrated to cope with the stepfamily situation any longer. More significantly, her stepchildren may not even want the complex stepfamily situation to improve in hopes that the stepmother will leave the family (Schulman, 1972). Coping with the massive
task of solely improving stepfamily adjustment can thus cause the woman great emotional strain. As a result, the female may collapse under the load's heavy weight (Nadler, 1976). Thus the stepmother's facing such enormous odds has led researchers like Bossard (1956) to conclude that the stepmother is the person who most determines the overall adjustment of the stepfamily.

Much importance is thus attached to the stepmother role in regards to stepfamily satisfaction. As a result, the most significant concern that runs throughout these studies on the stepfamily probably concerns the adjustment of women to stepmotherhood. Researchers have found that stepmothers are in a precarious position (Roosevelt and Lofas, 1976; Fast and Cain, 1966; Maddox, 1975; Visher and Visher, 1979). A stepmother's position is precarious because although she may be held accountable for her stepfamily's adjustment, no one gives her consistent information on how to bring about such stepfamily adjustment. Poor role clarification, unrealistic expectations and unflattering stepmother myths make it difficult for stepmothers to know and carry out their familial duties. A discussion on these factors follow.

First, the stepmother has poor role clarification because she receives no set guidelines on how to carry out her stepmother role. Cherlin (1978) commented that the rights and duties of the child and stepmother toward each other are
ill defined. The stepmother's giving too much affection to her stepchild is perceived as attempted usurpation of the natural mother's place with her child. Paradoxically, the stepmother's giving too little affection to her stepchildren is perceived as child neglect. Instead of the stepmother being told what the specific obligations of stepmotherhood entail, the stepmother finds her role fraught with confusion and frustration.

Further, the stepmother may also find her role entangled in a web of myths and half-truths. Literary tales like Cinderella portray stepmothers as ogres (Schulman, 1972; Maddox, 1975). Stepchildren by contrast are portrayed as mistreated waifs who are abused by their stepmothers. Since the stepmother may be unsure of how to behave, she is forced to set her own criterion for "correct" stepmother behavior through the process of trial and error. Such an erratic approach, however, is more likely to produce problems than solve them (Nadler, 1976).

A stepmother's plight may be further complicated by her own unrealistic expectations. Fast and Cain (1966) stated that attempts to make the stepfamily resemble the nuclear family model will end in defeat. Nevertheless, the stepmother may unwittingly adopt unrealistic expectations and behaviors designed to recreate the nuclear family pattern. But such reactions will be resented by her stepchildren who may perceive her as pushy and infringing on the father-child
relationship. The result is not increased cohesiveness between stepfamily members but increased alienation.

Thus the extreme difficulty of adjusting to stepmotherhood results in the stepmother experiencing more emotional and mental stress than natural mothers (Bowerman and Irish, 1962; Nadler, 1976; Sardanis-Zimmerman, 1977). Furthermore role ambiguity along with the responsibility of insuring emotional stepfamily satisfaction makes the adjustment of stepmothers significantly more difficult than the roles of the other stepfamily members (Duberman, 1973; Kompara, 1980; Visher and Visher, 1979).

On careful examination of these studies concerning stepmotherhood, several limitations can be identified. Some investigations involve case studies and/or anecdotal accounts of stepmothering. Spann and Spann (1977) presented a discussion on the complications that plague stepfamily status. They recounted their own stepfamily experience as being continually marred by unforeseen problems such as the total lack of privacy and the husband's difficult transition from bachelorhood to everyday family life.

In her book The Half Parent, Maddox (1975) provides detailed accounts of her stepmother experience to explain the sense of bewilderment and isolation that many stepmothers experience. She reports that part of the problem is the failure of societal institutions to credit stepparents with any legal parental authority. For example, stepparents
cannot sign medical release forms or driver's license forms for underaged stepchildren. The result is that legally a stepparent may feel like a nonentity.

Roosevelt and Lofas are other authors who commented on their own stepfamily experiences. In their book, Living in Step (1976), they explain how a stepmother's expectations of instant love between herself and her stepchildren can have a boomerang effect. The continuing cycle of the stepmother offering her stepchild attention, and that stepchild rejecting such attention does not encourage a loving relationship between the two parties. Rather, mutual retaliation may ensue, and the child may be sent away to maintain peace in the family. Thus the wicked stepmother myth becomes reality.

Other investigations are limited to hypothesized theoretical explanations about stepfamilies and their problems. Several authors have speculated on the cause of disturbances in the stepfamily. In 1953, William C. Smith, a sociologist, wrote a scholarly book on the stepchild from his examination of twenty-nine studies on juvenile delinquents. Smith's examination revealed that stepchildren and stepmothers have the hardest time in adjusting to one another. He then hypothesized that being a stepmother made it more difficult to positively relate to their stepchildren because of the negative effects of stepmother myths that depict the stepmother as an evil tyrant.
Bruno Bettelheim (1977) wrote a book entitled *The Uses of Enchantment* after perusing the available literature on stepfamilies. In his book he hypothesized that fairy tales are a necessary part of our culture. He stated that fairy tales serve the purpose of providing children with a means for dealing with their ambivalent feelings about their natural mothers. Like Smith, Bettelheim believed that negative images of stepmothers portrayed in fairy tales are projected on real-life stepmothers. This projection makes stepmotherhood more difficult.

Edward Podolsky considered the emotional problems of stepchildren from a psychiatric study of stepchildren in 1955. From his findings he hypothesized that the stepchild's insecurity is manifest in a rivalry for affection. In addition, Podolsky pointed out that the stepchild will attempt to restrict the attention of his real parent to himself and resents sharing any of this attention with someone new to the family.

Anne Simon (1964) examined the results of three investigations focusing on the influence of socio-economic status in stepfamily adjustment. From her examination, Simon speculated that the correlation between higher socio-economic status and higher stepfamily adjustment is related to the reason for the remarriage. She believed that well-to-do persons remarry for companionship, and that persons of a lower-income bracket remarry for security.
Still other sources of information are secured from surveys. Glick and Norton (1971) and Carter and Glick (1970) reported results from the 1970 U.S. Census. They reported results indicating that one in every three American marriages is a remarriage for one or both partners. They also noted that every year in the United States approximately one million children under eighteen years of age see a parent remarry. The authors further stated that the 1970 U.S. Census revealed that 12.4 million children under eighteen lived with remarried parents.

Bohannon and Erikson (1977) at the Western Behavioral Sciences Institute in La Jolla, California, studied a stratified random sample of San Diego, California residents. Out of 190 natural and stepfamilies from the total sample interviewed in depth, almost all of the natural families had at least one stepparent a generation back.

Glick (1980) published findings from updated annual estimates of marital dissolutions. He obtained his statistics from the 1980 U.S. Census and the National Center for Health Statistics. Glick stated that although thirty percent of marriages in 1970 involved the remarriage of one or both spouses, the proportion rose to forty-one percent by 1977.

Structural interview data regarding stepmotherhood were collected by Messinger (1976), Baer (1972), and Duberman (1973).
Lilian Messinger of the Clarke Institute in Toronto, Canada reported on an investigation of couples who were married for the second time. Her interviews revealed that the couples were unprepared for the specific problems and stresses they had to face. The couples discussed several issues involving stepfamily adjustment including stepchildren, finances, a sense of guilt over lacking positive emotions about the stepfamily, guilt over the negative feelings toward their partners' children, and dissatisfaction with moving into a home formerly occupied by their partners' ex-spouses.

Jean Baer (1972) is a journalist writer who wrote a book entitled *The Second Wife*. Her work focused on her own personal stepmother experiences and on detailed interviews conducted with part-time and full-time stepmothers. Topics discussed in the interviews included stepmother role definition, a stepmother's lack of situational control, and outside interference from the stepchild's natural mother. Baer concluded that the full-time stepmother has less problems than the part-time stepmother on all counts. The full-time stepmother has a greater opportunity to develop a working relationship with her stepchild because she sees her stepchild more often than the part-time stepmother.

Lucille Duberman (1973) studied the aspects of steprelationships among eighty-eight stepfamilies in the Cleveland area. She taped interviews with the adult family members and asked each adult to rate familial relationships and to evaluate
family closeness. She found that sixty-four percent of the families rated themselves as having "excellent" relationships. Eighteen percent of the families rated themselves as having poor relationships. She also found that stepfathers achieve better relations with stepchildren than do stepmothers and that stepmothers have better relations with stepchildren under the age of thirteen than with teenagers.

Clinical observations have also been sources of information about reconstituted families. Fast and Cain (1966) used case records from a study of fifty families in a child guidance center to illustrate role confusion experienced by stepmothers. The authors defined role confusion as the stepparents' difficulty in developing stable patterns of feeling, thinking, and acting toward their stepchildren. In other words, stepparents do not know whether to act as parents, stepparents, or non-parents. The authors contend that one factor related to this role confusion is the lack of role-learning opportunities that are available to the natural parent, but not available to the stepparent. Role-learning opportunities can be defined as more available time in which stepparents can get to know and positively interact with their stepchildren and vice versa.

In their book *Stepfamilies: A Guide to Working with Stepparents and Stepchildren*, Visher and Visher (1979) used case records of clients to illustrate how professional intervention can help alleviate some of the stress associated
with the stepfamily experience. These case studies presented common situations of individuals and stepfamilies who seek help. They thus revealed to mental health professionals knowledge of types of situations and dynamics encountered in the stepfamily. The case studies also provided problem-solving techniques that can be used in a variety of ways to suit individual clients and helping professionals.

Jean and Veryl Rosenbaum’s (1977) book *Stepparenting* included case studies to better illustrate how self-help groups can be effective in helping stepfamilies. The case studies provided detailed accounts of the problems of some individuals and how self-help groups aid such people in coping with their particular anxieties and frustrations. Also included are instructions on how to start your own self-help programs for stepfamily members.

Thus most of the studies focusing on stepfamilies are based on accounts of personal experiences, theoretical explanations based on the works of other experimenters, structured interview data, or clinical observations. These studies are of importance to stepfamily literature because they are among the first investigations conducted on the stepfamily. These studies are also worthwhile because they generate ideas for future research projects.

However, these investigations are sorely limited because they do not utilize reliable and valid research procedures (Walker, Rogers, and Messinger, 1977). For example, these
studies fail to use samples that are representative of ethnic minorities as well as the ethnic majority. This is a glaring oversight in view of the facts that according to Glick (1980), blacks have a consistently higher rate of divorce and remarriage than whites or persons of Spanish origin. Nineteen percent of black women and 20 percent of black men divorce and remarry as compared to 15 percent for white men and women and 13 percent for Spanish men and women. It has been further suggested by Glick (1980) that blacks have a higher rate of marital dissolution of remarriage.

Despite such compelling statistics, little if any research has been systematically conducted on the psychological adjustment issues of ethnic minority stepfamily members. Consequently, the present study is designed to assess the existence and extent of psychological stress experienced by black women as they attempt to adjust to the demands of stepmotherhood. Three intrapsychological stresses measured in Nadler's (1976) research will be used in this investigation (i.e., anxiety, depression, and anger). Nadler's investigation of stepmother stress has been lauded in the literature as one of the better experimental studies done on stepfamilies to date. A portion of Nadler's investigation both in terms of procedures and instrumentation will be duplicated. Only a portion of Nadler's assessment will be used, however. This research is only a pilot study to determine if further investigation of black stepmother
stress is warranted. Further, this investigation will compare the findings of the black stepmother to those of Nadler's white sample to determine racial similarities and/or dissimilarities between black and white stepmothers. (A brief summary of Nadler's research can be found in Appendix A.)

It is hypothesized that black stepmothers will experience more intrapersonal conflicts as measured on three variables (anxiety, depression, and anger) than black natural mothers. It is further hypothesized on the basis of the research, that black stepmothers and natural mothers will experience greater intrapersonal conflict than white stepmothers and natural mothers.

Methods

Subjects

This sample consisted of seventy-two participants: twenty-four (24) black stepmothers who had stepchildren living with them; twenty-four (24) black stepmothers who did not have stepchildren living with them; and twenty-four (24) black natural mothers. Each of the three groups were then divided according to the ages of the children. Group one had children between the ages of four and eleven. Group two had children between the ages of twelve and eighteen. The sample was correlated with Nadler's (1976) sample of seventy-two white stepmothers grouped comparably (i.e. twenty-four stepmothers living with stepchildren, twenty-four stepmothers living without stepchildren, and twenty-four natural mothers).
All subjects in this study were volunteers recruited from churches, community centers, and individual contacts in Northeast Texas. Data was collected in the Spring of 1982.

**Instruments**

Each subject was required to complete the following:

**Informed Consent Form.** An informed consent form explaining the purpose of the investigation and detailing how the investigation would be conducted. The form also verified the willingness of the subjects to participate in this investigation. (Appendix B).

**Demographic Information Questionnaire.** A demographic information questionnaire detailed the background and socioeconomic status of the subjects. The instrument was included for control purposes and for gathering comparative data to insure that the experimential results were a function of the variables being investigated and not error variance. (Appendix C).

**The Multiple Affect Adjective Check List (MAACL).**

Multiple Affect Adjective Check List (Zuckerman and Lubin, 1965) was used to measure anger, anxiety, and depression. The score was calculated by the addition of the number of items marked which noted the presence of each affective state.

The validity of the MAACL has been ascertained by many investigations showing that the test correlates significantly with ratings of overt behavior, the Buss-Dunkert Hostility Scale, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Scale and the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale. High split-half and retest correlations have determined an acceptable level of reliability.
for the Anxiety, Depression and Hostility scales have been established at .70, .65, and .54 respectively.

**Procedure**

Data was collected during interviews lasting approximately one hour in length. All participants were made aware of the purpose of the investigation. Instructions were uniformly administered to all subjects and confidentiality and anonymity was maintained as promised.

Subjects were asked to remember a typical family situation that included themselves, their husbands, and at least one of their stepchildren or children. They were instructed to describe their feelings using the adjective check list.

**Data Analysis**

Scores on the instruments were evaluated for significant differences between the three groups of black respondents by means of a 3x2 multiple analysis of variance. The results of these findings were compared with the findings of Nadler (1976).

**Results**

This investigation was designed to determine if there are differences in the extent of intrapsychological stresses among black stepmothers and black natural mothers (intrapsychological stress was defined by the measurement of three variables -- anxiety, depression, and anger). Furthermore, this study was designed to ascertain if there are differences in the extent of intrapsychological stresses experienced among black stepmothers and black natural mothers as opposed
to the extent of stresses experienced by white stepmothers and white natural mothers.

Hypothesis One

It was hypothesized that black full-time and black part-time stepmothers would experience more intrapsychological stress than black natural mothers (full-time stepmothers are defined as women who live with their stepchildren; part-time stepmothers are defined as women who receive visits from their stepchildren). Specifically, the three groups differ in their levels of:

a) anxiety regarding family relations;
b) depression regarding family relations; and
c) anger regarding family relations.

Findings for Hypothesis One

There were no statistically significant differences between black full-time stepmothers, black part-time stepmothers, and black natural mothers on either the Anxiety, Depression, or Hostility Scales of the Multiple Affect Adjective Check List (MAACL) (Table 1). These findings were consistent regardless of the ages of the stepchildren or natural children.

Hypothesis Two

This hypothesis held that black stepmothers and black natural mothers experience greater psychological stress than white stepmothers and white natural mothers. Specifically, these groups will differ in their levels of:
a) anxiety regarding family relations;
b) depression regarding family relations; and
c) anger regarding family relations.

Findings for Hypothesis Two

The results were mixed. Overall, white part-time stepmothers were reported as experiencing significantly more intrapsychological stress than black part-time stepmothers on all three variables—anxiety ($p < .01$), depression ($p < .05$), and anger ($p < .01$) (Table 2, 3, and 4). White full-time stepmothers reported experiencing significantly greater stress on anger than full-time stepmothers ($p < .05$) (Table 4). There was no significant difference reported between the two groups on anxiety and depression.

Black natural mothers reported experiencing significantly greater stress on anxiety than white natural mothers ($p < .05$) (Table 2). There was no significant difference reported between the two groups on depression and anger. The discussion to follow will look at each four measures.

Anxiety

The results of Nadler's study reported that white full-time stepmothers and white part-time stepmothers experienced more anxiety than white natural mothers.

The results of this study reported that black full-time stepmothers, black part-time stepmothers, and black natural mothers do not experience significantly different levels of anxiety.
When Nadler's white sample was compared and contrasted to this study's black sample, white part-time stepmothers reported experiencing more anxiety than black part-time stepmothers. Black natural mothers also reported experiencing more anxiety than white natural mothers. Furthermore, the results did not suggest any significant differences on the level of anxiety between white full-time stepmothers and black full-time stepmothers. These findings were consistent across age levels of the children.

**Depression**

Nadler's results indicated that white full-time stepmothers and white part-time stepmothers experience significantly more depression than white natural mothers.

This study's results indicated that black full-time stepmothers, black part-time stepmothers, and black natural mothers do not experience significantly different levels of depression.

When Nadler's white sample was compared and contrasted to this study's black sample, the results indicated that white part-time stepmothers reported more depression than black part-time stepmothers. There was no significant difference on depression reported between white full-time stepmothers and black full-time stepmothers. There was also no significant difference on depression reported between white natural mothers and black natural mothers. These results were consistent across age levels of the children.
The results of Nadler's study based on a white sample reported that white full-time stepmothers and white part-time stepmothers experience significantly more anger than white natural mothers.

The results of this study reported that black full-time stepmothers, black part-time stepmothers, and black natural mothers do not experience significantly different levels of anger.

When Nadler's white sample was compared and contrasted to this study's black sample, the results reported that white full-time stepmothers experience significantly more anger than black full-time stepmothers. The results also reported that white part-time stepmothers experience significantly more anger than black part-time stepmothers. Lastly, the results reported no significant difference in the levels of anger experienced between white natural mothers and black natural mothers. These findings were consistent across age levels of the children.

**Discussion**

Stepmothers in general have been traditionally stereotyped and misunderstood in classical literature. Scientific literature has also had little success in improving the understanding of stepmothers. This is a result of many scientific investigations being based on case histories and interviews as opposed to controlled experimental procedures.
Thus little factual information regarding the needs and concerns of stepmothers has been collected.

Whereas stepmothers in general are misrepresented in the literature, minority stepmothers are virtually ignored. An example of such an omission of minority representation includes Nadler's (1976) research where she found that stepmothers experience more intrapsychological stress than natural mothers. Although her investigation is one of the better studies conducted on stepfamily members, generalizability of the results of her study is limited due to the absence of persons of minority status in her sample.

It was the intent of this investigation to briefly explore the black stepmother's intrapsychological experience by replicating a portion of Nadler's study. First, the two types of black stepmothers (stepmothers with visiting stepchildren and stepmothers with live-in stepchildren) were differentiated and separately analyzed in order to better recognize their different lifestyles and relationships to their stepchildren.

Secondly, the two groups of black stepmothers were compared to black natural mothers on the intrapsychological stresses experienced by the women regarding their familial relations. The extent that the age of the stepchildren may be compared with stepmother stress was also investigated. Furthermore, this study compared the results of its black
sample to the results of Nadler's white sample to determine racial similarities and/or dissimilarities.

**Hypothesis One**

It was hypothesized that black full-time stepmothers and black part-time stepmothers would report more intrapsychological stress than black natural mothers. However, the results of this investigation indicate no significant difference in the amount of stress experienced between black part-time stepmothers, black full-time stepmothers, and black natural mothers. Thus contrary to Nadler's findings that stepmothers experience more stress than natural mothers, the results of this study report that black stepmothers experience no more psychological stress in relationships to their stepchildren than black natural mothers experience in relation to their children.

**Psychological Stress Levels of Black Step and Natural Mothers**

Black stepmothers and black natural mothers may not experience different levels of stress since they may be exposed to basically the same sources of support for child caretaking. This support system might be the black extended family network (BEFN). The BEFN is a group of relatives including mother, father, children, uncles, aunts, grandparents, and other family kin who interdependently share emotional and economic resources such as child care among family members (Martin and Martin, 1978).
Although many past cultures have adhered to this family network, many black families still maintain a high level of multifaceted sharing due to economic necessity (Hill, 1971 and Ladner, 1972). Such a family network might assist both black natural mothers and black stepmothers in child rearing practices. Thus both types of mothers may receive child care assistance from the same support system. Hence, if both black stepmothers and black natural mothers have the same support system for child caretaking, the black extended family network, their levels of intrapsychological stress in relation to child caretaking would also be approximately the same.

Also, the lack of significant difference in the amount of stress experienced between the three groups of black mothers might be related to differences in location. The subjects of this sample were from different geographical areas in the region of Northeast Texas. All three locations were within a hundred mile radius of each other. Approximately one-third of the black stepmothers in the sample lived in a metropolitan city of approximately one million people; another third of black stepmothers lived in two communities of approximately twenty-five to thirty thousand people; and another third of the black stepmothers lived in a community of approximately five thousand people. Contrastly all of the black natural mothers except one urban dweller lived in
one of the communities of approximately twenty-five to thirty thousand people.

The different geographical areas in which the three groups of black mothers live could be representative of different economic statuses, moral values, educational levels, and social conditions. Thus the three groups of black mothers may have been exposed to various stress levels by virtue of their place of residence. Such contamination would thus decrease the opportunity to distinguish noticeably significant differences in the amount of stress the women experience solely in relation to their mother-type status.

Another factor effecting the results may have been this study's sample size. All three groups of black women only contained twenty-four people in each group. Thus the sample size may have been too small to determine significant differences between the two groups of black stepmothers and one group of black natural mothers.

**Hypothesis Two**

It was hypothesized that black stepmothers and black natural mothers experience greater psychological stress than white stepmothers and white natural mothers.

When this investigation's black sample was compared to Nadler's white sample, this study's results indicated that overall, white stepmothers seemingly experience more psychological stress than do black stepmothers. White part-time stepmothers report more stress on all three dimensions—anxiety, depression, and anger.
White full-time stepmothers reported significantly more stress on the dimension of anger. Black natural mothers reported experiencing significantly more anxiety than white natural mothers.

**Psychological Stress Levels of Stepmothers**

There are several reasons that might account for the surprising results that white stepmothers experience more stress than black stepmothers. First, the findings of Glick that blacks have higher rates of divorce, remarriage, and dissolution of remarriages may be correct or incorrect. If Glick's results are correct the higher rates of divorce and remarriage may not be factors related to the psychological stress of rearing step-children. Rather, the higher rates may be attributable to various other factors that are not psychological in nature such as incompatibility between spouses, economy fluctuations, cultural differences, varying social codes, or moral values.

If Glick's results are incorrect, such a result may be a factor of poor sampling. Glick's findings were derived from the United States Census Reports. Statistics from such reports may be inconclusive since many Americans do not complete census forms. Forms that are completed may not be correct. Also human error in assessing the forms and computing the statistics may have affected Glick's results.

Thirdly, although many black families may adhere to the extended family model, most white families adhere to the nuclear family model. The nuclear family model can be
defined as two adults with children in the household who are all biologically related to both adults (Martin and Martin, 1978). Families of the latter model are more self-sufficient and do less sharing of emotional and economic resources with family members outside the nuclear model boundaries than do families of the extended family network.

Thus possible previous extended family experiences may allow many black stepmothers to develop more realistic expectations about and greater acceptance of the stepfamily situation than white stepmothers. Black stepmothers may also have developed more efficient skills in relating to their stepchildren for the same reason. Furthermore, black stepmothers of extended family experiences might also have a greater source of aid in child care from other family members than their white counterparts. Hence, possible extended family ties might better prepare many black stepmothers for the stepfamily situation than the nuclear family prepares white stepmothers for the stepfamily situation. As a result, black stepmothers would more likely experience less intrapsychological stress than their white counterparts.

White part-time stepmothers reported significantly more psychological stress than black part-time stepmothers on all three dimensions (anxiety, depression, and anger). One reason for this result may again be attributed to the possible black extended family experience of black part-time stepmothers.
Also, if the black stepchildren have been exposed to black extended family ties, they too, may be more amenable to being cared for by someone other than their natural mother. Such children might also be more adaptable to the varying communication styles and structure of different family units because of their prior experience with different family households in the extended family network.

Another reason that would explain white part-time stepmothers experiencing significantly more stress than black part-time stepmothers is the difference in locations between the two groups. The sample of this study was obtained in Northeast Texas. Nadler's sample, however, was obtained in California. Different locations could represent varied lifestyles, cultures, economy, social mores, and/or educational opportunities influencing the results of the study.

Another explanation for the results relates to Nadler's study. Although Nadler's study is one of the best studies available on stepfamily members, her investigation has not been duplicated in total. Thus her results have not been verified by replication. Nadler's results may be inaccurate or if correct applicable only to the location of the subjects in her study.

Finally, this investigation was only a pilot study to determine if further investigation of black stepmother stress was warranted. Thus only a portion of Nadler's investigation
was replicated. Different results may have been obtained if Nadler's entire research project had been duplicated. Further analysis of this black stepmother research is thus warranted to ascertain if the results of this study are conclusive.

Unlike white part-time stepmothers who reported more stress on all dimensions, white full-time stepmothers reported significantly more stress than black full-time stepmothers only on the degree of anger. This phenomenon may be explained by several factors. Some of these factors include the aforementioned explanations for why part-time stepmothers might experience significantly more stress than black part-time stepmothers. Such reasons are the a) possible differences in urban vs. rural geographical areas between the two groups; b) accuracy of Glick's findings indicating the greater propensity of blacks to divorce, remarry, and dissolve remarriages more often than whites; c) degree of validity of Nadler's results for applying to the entire nation or the general living area of her sample; d) degree of appropriateness in replicating only a portion of Nadler's study. Thus unlike white full-time stepmothers, black full-time stepmothers might have the advantage of having both their husband's family and their own family to rely on for child care assistance. (There may be instances where the white stepmother's family may not be willing to give assistance in the rearing or caring of the stepmother's stepchildren since those children are not biologically
related to her own family.) In fact, a black full-time stepmother might rely on her own family for support more than her husband's family even though his family is related by blood to the children in question.

The black full-time stepmother may rely on her own family more in such circumstances because her relatives would likely be more sympathetic to her problems with her stepchildren. The stepmother could also depend on her own family depicting her in a favorable light to her stepchildren. The black full-time stepmother's in-laws (blood relatives of the stepmother's stepchildren) however, might try to prejudice the stepchildren against their stepmother if the in-laws view the stepmother as a family intruder. The black full-time stepmother's dependence on her own family to help care for her stepchildren might thus reduce the negative impact of hostile in-laws and provide the black stepmother and her stepchildren with some familial common ground. The results might be a closer affiliation between the black full-time stepmother and her stepchildren. This would also ease the tension of the stepfamily as a whole.

It has been hypothesized that the black extended family might make the stepfamily situation less stressful for black part-time and full-time stepmothers. It is surprising, then, that white full-time stepmothers only experience more stress than black full-time stepmothers on the dimension of anger rather than on all three dimensions like white part-time vs. black part-time stepmothers.
This result may have been influenced by the fact that white part-time stepmothers only have periodic opportunities to learn the personalities and habits of their stepchildren. Thus part-time stepmothers vacillate between nuclear family status and stepfamily status. This may lead to the part-time stepmothers feeling confused and frustrated in handling the stepfamily. The result—the stepmothers experience higher levels of anxiety, depression, and anger.

White full-time stepmothers, however, spend more time with their stepchildren. They have longer and more consistent time periods in which to learn the habits and personalities of their stepchildren. Thus full-time stepmothers have a greater opportunity to develop more effective coping strategies for handling the stepfamily situation and their stepchildren. They would therefore not experience the more extensive amount of anxiety and depression reported of this sample's white part-time stepmothers. Also over an extended period of time, the stepfamily situation might also become no more anxiety and depression ridden for the white full-time stepmother than the black full-time stepmother.

Nevertheless, even if overtime white full-time stepmothers develop coping strategies as effective as their black counterparts, they may still resent having to raise someone else's children. Raising another person's child is somewhat inconsistent with the nuclear family model that ascribes to the belief that you take care of your own. Black full-time
stepmothers contrastly, may accept caring for the children of others as a normal part of their family structure.

According to this study, white and black full-time stepmothers may not differ in their levels of anxiety and depression. Over time they may have similar levels of acceptance of the stepfamily and coping skills for dealing with the stepfamily situation.

However, accepting and coping with the stepfamily situation is not the same as liking the stepfamily situation. Thus, white full-time stepmothers may have reported more anger than black full-time stepmothers if they still dislike or resent caring for children that they did not want, did not conceive, or did not request.

Black natural mothers reported more stress than white natural mothers on the variable of anxiety. A possible explanation for this result is that four of the twenty-four black natural mothers were unmarried at the time this investigation was conducted. Thus the absence of spousal support would leave these mothers to tackle family problems alone. Therefore, they would likely be more vulnerable to stress.

Also four of the twenty-four natural mothers were approximately forty-five or older. These women not only have a child under eighteen to supervise but also take care of a grandchild full-time that is three years old or younger. Thus
supervising teenagers and toddlers in the same household requires different and conflicting levels of supervision when interacting with these children. With toddlers, a mother controls practically every facet of the child's life. Yet with teenagers, a mother may need help to be less controlling. Shifting between these two extremes could be very taxing and confusing. Also, a mother caring for a toddler when she is past the age of forty-five may require more physical stamina than she is capable of mustering comfortably.

Furthermore, another set of four natural mothers conceived children later in life (past the age of thirty-five) when compared to the 1980 highest child-bearing age group of between twenty-five and twenty-nine (Fertility of American Women: June 1980 (Advance Report), 1981). These mothers also had other children who were teenagers or even adults. Thus like the black natural mothers who were raising young grandchildren and their own teenaged children, these mothers may also experience the confusion and complexity of dealing with children of extreme diverse ages. Such children would possess different needs and require different methods of communication and interaction. Also these women who conceived children when they were past the age of thirty-five are now all over forty. Consequently, they may have less physical stamina to cope with the high-level activity of preschool or elementary school-aged children.

There are no similar statistics on Nadler's sample with which to compare the aforementioned data. However, it
does seem highly possible that since half of this study's sample had mothers who were either unmarried, caring for teen-aged children and grandchildren, or over forty with preschool or elementary aged kids, that this sample of mothers might understandably report more anxiety than Nadler's sample.

Finally, the black extended family may have negative as well as positive effects on the psychological stress levels of black mothers. Since the black extended family provides more assistant caretakers for children than the nuclear family, it also provides more caretakers who may have varying viewpoints on how to care for and discipline these children than the nuclear family. These viewpoints may differ with those of the mother.

The above situation can be especially trying if the child realizes that he can manipulate his mother and caretakers by aggravating their disagreements about his caretaking. By manipulating the opposing factions, the child can make the situation work to his own advantage (e.g., avoid discipline or get more candy from grandmother than mother wishes) and to the disadvantage of the natural mother.

Consequently, the black natural mother may have to contend with the pressure of more extensive interpersonal conflicts with caretakers as well as the usual problems associated with child rearing.
Conclusions and Recommendations

This study was not devised to extensively investigate the differences and/or similarities of the psychological experiences between black and white stepmothers. Rather, it was devised to determine if further investigation of this area was justified.

It is believed that the design of the study was sufficient for meeting the needs of the purpose of this study. However, the controlling of other variables on the study might have yielded more convincing or conclusive results. Recommendations to this effect are detailed in the following paragraphs.

First, the study might have benefitted from a more comparable sample. The design of the study could have included direct comparisons of rural vs. urban dwellers, or the subjects of the sample could have been more centrally located in a smaller geographical area. This would have better insured that geographical distance and location did not unduly influence the results.

Second, it might also be profitable to collect one's own sample of white stepmothers and natural mothers, as well as one's own sample of black stepmothers and natural mothers. Nadler's investigation may not have been replicated if her results were inaccurate.

Also her sample was obtained from California. Therefore even if her results were correct, they may only be
applicable to the California area where she drew her sample. Comparing samples from such widespread locations as California and Texas leaves room for unwanted variables to effect the results.

The most valid results would probably be obtained by reproducing Nadler's entire investigation on both white and black stepmothers and natural mothers. In this way, unwanted influencing variables such as widespread geographical differences (i.e., urban vs. rural) would be better controlled.

Another factor affecting the accuracy of this study's results is time. Nadler's study was conducted in the mid-seventies. This investigation was conducted in 1982. Thus the results may reflect the impact of other variables on the stress of stepmothers and natural mothers due to a wide time interval. Such impacting variables would include social, economic, political, and theoretical changes occurring nationwide as well as changes occurring in each samples' particular locale.

Also Glick's findings may be accurate or inaccurate. If accurate, the higher divorce, remarriage, and dissolution of remarriages among blacks as compared to whites might be a product of other factors unrelated to the psychological stress of childcare. These factors could include couple incompatibility, changes in family structures, varying opinions about divorce, as well as the national socio-economic climate.
Glick's findings may be inaccurate because they were derived from United States Census Reports. Such reports are usually inconclusive because a) not everyone answers the forms; b) not everyone answers the forms correctly; c) some forms may be assessed incorrectly; and d) human error in tabulating the results may have occurred.

Another factor affecting the results of this investigation was the instrument used to assess the stress levels of black stepmothers and black natural mothers. There is no evidence in the Multiple Affect Adjective Check List manual that the sample it was normed on was racially representative. Thus the Multiple Affect Adjective Check List may not be comparable across races. It is suggested that future studies of this type include instruments that were based on racially representative samples to supplement the MAACL or replace the test altogether.

Finally there may be other factors that differentiate black vs. white stepmothers and black vs. white natural mothers. Such factors might include economic, theoretical, political, social, emotional, cultural, family structural, religious, and moral variables.

In summary, the results of this study were mixed. White part-time stepmothers reported more anxiety, depression, and anger than black part-time stepmothers. White full-time stepmothers reported more anger than black full-time stepmothers. Black natural mothers reported more anxiety than white natural mothers.
Appendix A

Nadler's Research of Stepmother Psychological Stress

As previously stated, the stepmother role imposes great psychological stress on the female. An investigation of these stresses was conducted by Janice Horowitz Nadler (1976). She compared three groups of women -- part-time stepmothers, full-time stepmothers, and natural mothers on three psychological variables -- anxiety, depression, and anger. Nadler found that part-time stepmothers and full-time stepmothers experienced more intrapersonal 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, and more conflict regarding finances, relatives, and community. Nadler hypothesized that the cause of these stresses may be related to a lack of familial or societal support in 1) effectively enacting her role, 2) satisfying major personal needs, and 3) affirming a favorable self-image.

It is unfortunate that Nadler's study was not ethnically represented. All three aforementioned factors hypothesized by Nadler are relevant to black stepmothers because of their stepmother status and membership in a racial group: 1) Black women have received little societal support in effectively enacting their roles as wives, mothers, and breadwinners. Until recently, American society believed a woman belonged in the home only. Economic necessity,
however, dictated that the black woman seek work outside the home. This conflicted with societal norms resulting in the black woman receiving little societal approval (Ladner, 1971); 2) Also black women have received little societal support in satisfying major personal needs. The lack of economic security and the scarcity of suitable mates have forced many black women to accept what is available (Martin and Martin, 1978); 3) Finally, societal support has been sorely lacking in affirming black women a favorable self image. The stereotypes depicting black mothers as "mammies" or welfare cheats has seriously damaged the image of black womanhood and of black motherhood (Hill, 1971; Nobles, 1978).

Black stepmothers may therefore suffer as much or more psychological stress than their white counterparts. Black stepmothers carry the double burden of belonging to two groups, blacks and stepmothers, who receive little societal support and understanding. An analysis of the psychological stresses of black stepmothers would provide more information about the complex structures and problems of the stepfamily.
Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

I understand that Jacquelyn Rodgers, a graduate student of North Texas State University Psychology Department, is conducting interviews for research on her thesis. I also understand that questions asked in the interview will be relevant to her study's investigation of black stepmother stress. I further realize that my participation in this research is strictly voluntary and that any information I divulge during the interview will be kept confidential. I therefore willingly agree to be a participant in this study. I also willingly give the researcher, Jacquelyn Rodgers, permission to use information gained during the interview for research purposes.

Signature

Date
Appendix C

Instructions

1. Included in this packet are three items:
   a. Informed Consent Form
   b. Demographic Information Questionnaire
   c. Multiple Affect Adjective Check List

2. Complete each item in the order listed above. Please answer all questions.

3. Complete Informed Consent Form. Immediately give form to examiner. Sign your name on the Informed Consent Form only.

4. Complete Demographic Information Questionnaire.

5. Complete Multiple Affect Adjective Check List.

6. When all three items are complete:
   a. place sheets back in the packet
   b. return packet to examiner.

7. If you have any questions, ask the examiner.
Demographic Information Questionnaire

These questions are answered by checking the appropriate answer or by filling in the appropriate answer. Please answer every question, using your best guess where you are doubtful.

1. Stepfather____
   and/or
   Natural mother

2. Age_____  

3. Length of present marriage__________

4. Ethnic background:
   White______
   Black______
   Latin American_____
   Other __________

5. Religious Affiliation:
   Protestant____
   Catholic______
   None______
   Other_______

6. Draw a circle around the number of years of schooling you have received:

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4
   grade school    h. school    college    post graduate

7. Average family income:
   Below $5,000_____   $20,000 - $25,000_____
   $10,000 - $15,000____  $25,000 - $30,000____
   $15,000 - $20,000____  $30,000 - $50,000____
   Above $50,000____
8. Age of husband_____
9. Religious affiliation of husband:
   Protestant____
   Catholic____
   None____
   Other____
10. Ethnic background of husband
   White____
   Black____
   Latin American____
   Other ____________
11. Draw a circle around the number of years of schooling your husband has received:
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4
   grade school h.s. college post graduate
12. Information about husband's previous marriage(s):
   
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th># of yrs. married</th>
<th>Divorce</th>
<th>Death of Spouse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marriage 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. Information about your own marriage(s):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th># of yrs. married</th>
<th>Divorce</th>
<th>Death of Spouse</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marriage 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Marriage 2</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. Information about your natural children:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex of Child</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Child of Which Marriage (1st, 2nd, or 3rd)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. Information about your stepchildren:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex of Stepchild</th>
<th>Child of Which Adopted</th>
<th>Legally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Age (1, 2, 3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. Are there other persons living in your household besides yourself, your husband and your children and/or stepchildren?

Yes____ No____

17. Do any of your stepchildren live with you and your present husband?

Yes____ No____

18. What are the ages and the sex of the stepchildren who live with you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. If your stepchildren don't live with you how often do they visit?

twice a week____

once a week____

twice a month____

school vacations such as Christmas and Spring____

summer vacations____

20. When your stepchildren visit how long do they generally stay?

one day or less____

from one to three days____

from three days to one week____

from one week to two weeks____

from two weeks to four weeks____

four weeks or more____
21. Do the stepchildren who live with you visit other homes (e.g., relatives, friends, camp) during vacations?

   Yes____   No____

22. When your stepchildren visit elsewhere how long do they generally stay?
   one day or less____
   from one to three days____
   from three days to one week____
   from one week to two weeks____
   from two weeks to four weeks____
   from four weeks or more____

23. Do you as a stepmother have regular contact with your stepchild's/stepchildren's natural mother?

   Yes____   No____

   How often?____
Appendix D

Table 1

Summary of Analysis of Variance for Anxiety, Depression, and Anger of Black Step and Natural Mothers on the Multiple Affect Adjective Check List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>25.49</td>
<td>12.74</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>.371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>83.46</td>
<td>41.73</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>.318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>14.05</td>
<td>7.03</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.564</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations and t tests of Significance for Anxiety Scale of the Multiple Affect Adjective Check List for White and Black Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Sig. of t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stepmothers with visiting stepchildren</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>16.89</td>
<td>6.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stepmothers with live-in stepchildren</td>
<td>9.58</td>
<td>18.22</td>
<td>8.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural mothers</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>16.01</td>
<td>7.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(p .01)*

***(p .05)***
Appendix F

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations and t tests of Significance for Depression Scale of the Multiple Affect Adjective Check List for White and Black Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>White</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Sig. of t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(\bar{X})</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>(\bar{X})</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stepmothers with visiting</td>
<td>19.75</td>
<td>69.14</td>
<td>15.13</td>
<td>26.87</td>
<td>2.30**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stepchildren</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stepmothers with live-in</td>
<td>17.75</td>
<td>58.67</td>
<td>17.16</td>
<td>48.87</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stepchildren</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural mothers</td>
<td>12.25</td>
<td>32.86</td>
<td>14.21</td>
<td>37.59</td>
<td>-1.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* \((p \leq .01)\)
** \((p \leq .05)\)
Appendix G

Table 4

Means, Standard Deviations and t tests of Significance for Anger Scale of the Multiple Affect Adjective Check List for White and Black Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Sig. of t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$\bar{X}$</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>$\bar{X}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stepmothers with visiting stepchildren</td>
<td>13.42</td>
<td>40.32</td>
<td>8.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stepmothers with live-in stepchildren</td>
<td>12.66</td>
<td>37.30</td>
<td>9.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>natural mothers</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>9.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* ($p < .01$)
** ($p < .05$)
References


Bitterman, C.M. *The multimarriage family.* Social Casework, 1968, 49, 218-221.


**Fertility of American Women: June 1980 Advance Report.**


