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## **STEPMOTHER SELF-ROLE INCONGRUENCY IN THE NEWLY FORMED FAMILY: AN ANALYSIS OF STEPMOTHERS IN THE GREAT PLAINS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study is a cross-sectional analysis of stepmothers from a Midwestern community in South Dakota. In this study, the relationships among six sets of variables are analyzed. The dependent variable is stepmother self-role incongruence index. The independent variables along with the strength of relationship in regards to stepmother self-role incongruence, are as follows; role ambiguity index (.393), anticipatory socialization index (-.203), wicked stepmother index (.494), stepfamily/stepparent unfavorability index (.288), and a spousal disagreement index (.241). Hypothesis testing supported the hypotheses introduced in this study. Multiple regression analysis identified wicked stepmother beliefs as the best predictor of stepmother self-role incongruence (Beta = .355). Elaboration analysis revealed that the greater stepmother's anticipatory socialization the lesser the belief in the wicked stepmother, and the lower the level of self-role incongruence.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Changes in the structure of family life have led to an increase in research on stepfamilies in recent years. With the high

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number of first marriages and remarriages ending in divorce, the stepfamily form is becoming more common in America. Approximately one third of all Americans will marry, dissolve the relationship through divorce, and then remarry. Of first marriages, half will end in divorce and of these divorced men and women, over 75% will remarry. For women who become second wives, 84% marry men with children (Keenan 1992). Every day over 1,000 stepfamilies are created because of previous marriages ending through death or divorce (Whitsett and Land 1992b), and approximately 35 million adults are stepparents (Anderson and White 1986).

Lacking family norms specific to the stepfamily, the nuclear family has become the benchmark by which varying family forms are being analyzed. No clear cultural guidelines exist for problems that stepfamilies encounter (Cherlin 1978; Clingempeel and Brand 1985; Furstenberg and Spanier 1984; Furstenberg, Spanier and Rothschild 1982; Keshet 1990; Schulman 1972).

Although there has been an increase in stepfamily research over the last twenty years, continued research is warranted in order to understand all of the many intricacies of stepfamily life. Specifically, self-role incongruence can be problematic for stepmothers because personal expectations clash with societal norms that tell her to be the primary nurturer. The result of these incongruent feelings is self-role incongruence (Whitsett and Land 1992b). This article will set out to determine whether the level of stepmother role incongruency is associated with stepmothers' role ambiguity, anticipatory socialization, belief in the wicked stepmother, evaluation of the step/nuclear family, judgment of stepmother role, level of involvement with stepchildren, and disagreement over children.

## **KEY VARIABLES**

### **Anticipatory Socialization**

Anticipatory socialization refers to both the practicing of role behaviors and the understanding about norms equivalent with a prescribed role, prior to actually executing a particular role (Miller 1976). According to Burr (1973), the quantity of anticipatory socialization has a positive effect on role transition.

In a study on how men and women prepared to remarry, Ganong and Coleman (1989) found that women were more likely than men to seek advice and that advice led them to feel better about family members. Likewise, Messinger (1976) found that for divorced and remarried couples and their families, failure could be reduced through remarriage preparation courses. According to MacDonald and Demaris (1995), in some instances stepparents may naturally be at an advantage over biological parents in that through dating they can get a feel for the stepparenting role. It is apparent that without some sort of guidance, stepparents tend to make up their own guidelines and often do this without key information about what is ahead of them.

### **Myth of the Evil Stepmother**

The legend of the evil stepmother has its roots in fairy tales, myths, and proverbs which are universal and are handed down from generation to generation. These myths help reinforce the concept of "wicked stepmother" and make it hard for new stepmothers to take their place as nurturers in the new stepfamily. Stepmothers are in the most peculiar situation in that they not only feel the general ambivalence that children often naturally feel for their parents, but they also have to deal with how the children react

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to the stigmatizing stereotypes of stepmother as wicked witch (Jacobson 1979).

### **Evaluation of Step/Nuclear Family**

Often, stepmothers feel that the stepfamily can never be as good as a family in which children live with both biological parents. Ganong, Coleman and Mapes (1990: 293) maintain that members of nuclear families are looked at more positively than those that are members of stepfamilies. Lacking family norms specific to the stepfamily, the nuclear family has become the benchmark by which varying family forms are being analyzed. Cherlin (1978) describes the incomplete institution hypothesis in an analysis of remarriages. According to the hypothesis, remarriages have higher divorce rates than first marriages because remarriages lack cultural guidelines in dealing with difficulties.

### **According to Visher and Visher (1990: 6-7):**

When individuals hold fast to a nuclear or first marriage family as the "ideal" family, progress towards stepfamily integration is hindered because there is likely to be little resemblance of this model to the characteristics of the more complex supra family system of stepfamilies.... When stepfamilies attempt to duplicate a nuclear family, tensions often arise as children react to a stepparent whom they perceive as trying to replace their biological parent; stepparents and stepchildren may feel guilty when they fail to respond with love to one another; and remarried parents become angry about all the frustrations and tensions.

Likewise, Mills (1984) states that the expectation that the stepfamily should function optimally based on a biological nuclear family role system is problematic. The myth of "instant family" with immediate closeness has the potential to mask real intimacy indefinitely. There must be a societal model that is nonbiological,

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taking into consideration that the stepparent role will never be exactly the same as the biological parent role.

### **Stepmother's Role Judged by Others**

Stepmothers sometimes feel that, because of being a stepmother, others judge them negatively. No matter how skillful and nurturing a stepmother is at fulfilling her obligations, there still is a stigma associated with her role. This issue is promoted and sustained by the dominant culture who sees the biological connection as drastically important (Bohannon 1970). If any single label suits all the varieties of stepparent, it is 'the watched parent'. Stepparents feel that the world is watching to see if they will be cruel. They feel that their finest motives may be misinterpreted (Maddox 1975).

### **Involvement with Youngest Stepchild**

How integrated into the stepfamily a stepparent becomes is directly related to a stepparent's effort to procure a close relationship with the stepchildren (Cherlin and Furstenberg 1994). According to Furstenberg (1987) stepparents are less involved with stepchildren than biological parents, stepchildren report doing less activities with stepparents, and biological parents see their spouses not being involved enough in childrearing. In a study conducted by Schwebel et al. (1991), college students felt that stepparents would be and should be less actively involved in the lives of their nonbiological children.

### **Spousal Disagreement Over Children**

Couples frequently disagree on issues concerning the rearing of children. When stepchildren are involved, disagreements over these children appears to be a recurrent problem for stepfamilies (Albrecht, Bahr, and Goodman 1983; Visher and Visher 1982). Ganong and Coleman (1989) found that

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the seriousness of disagreements over children varied based on gender. Remarried men, when asked about rules for stepchildren, mentioned discipline of stepchildren as the greatest concern. This overshadows concerns for quality of marriage and anxiety over their partner's former spouse. Remarried women, on the other hand, rated issues of disciplining stepchildren as less important than quality of marriage and worries over their partner's former spouse.

### **Self-Role Incongruence**

Self-role incongruence is a component of conflict within the stepparent role, and refers to the degree to which qualities of the self and one's inner self-representation (traits, values, and beliefs) fit uncomfortably with the demands of the role. In other words, self-role incongruence could result if stepparents wish they were feeling the way they think they should feel about elements of the stepparenting role (Whitsett and Land 1992a). The combination of a stepmother's personal expectations in light of societal norms that tell her to be the primary family nurturer, may arouse incompatible feeling towards the stepchild. The result of these incongruent feelings is self-role incongruence (Whitsett and Land 1992b). Whitsett and Land (1992b) found that, overall, stepparents reported a lack of clarity of parental expectations as well as a lack of understanding about what is involved in being a stepparent. Of the 73 stepparents surveyed, 65% felt frustrated about stepparenting (Whitsett and Land 1992a). The pressure to act as one thinks they should is increased when one spouse feels that the counterpart stepparent is not fulfilling the roles that are expected of them. When expected roles are not fulfilled, the result

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is what Pearlin (1983) calls role strain.<sup>1</sup>

Failure to fulfill role expectations can be reduced if stepparents are clear about what is expected of them in relation to role behaviors (Saint-Jacques, 1995). If one has congruence in their roles, this leads to a greater level of cooperative achievement (Smelser 1961).

Compared to biological and adoptive parents, college students perceived stepparents to be least likely to fulfill parenting roles. "Because beliefs about the process of building 'successful stepfamilies' have not been informed by conventional wisdom, stepfamily members may hold unrealistic expectations or may behave ineffectively in the pursuit of their model of how new stepfamilies should operate" (Schwebel et al. 1991: 50). Perceptions, feelings, attitudes, and expectations make up a person's conception of one's family. "Family satisfaction" is considered to be the congruence between the belief about what one thinks a family should be like compared to what one's own family is like (Tinelli 1981).

### **Structural Symbolic Interactionism**

The work of sociologists often focuses on understanding human interaction in the context of societal structure. But this understanding is often tentative because of varying definitions of

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<sup>1</sup> \* It ought to be noted that Pearlin does not use the term role strain in the same way as most sociologists. Structural functionalists use the term role strain to mean incompatibility among roles and not variability of role expectations. When process role theorists talk about role conflict, they are usually talking about both role conflict and role strain. While functionalists make the distinction between the two.



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key concepts. The concept of "role" in and of itself, is one of the most precarious notions in sociology (Turner, 1991). Stryker (1959) contends that it is nearly impossible to reach a complete agreement as to what exactly encompasses the term. Because the concept of role is ambiguous, researchers must define the term in light of their particular use of the concept. Linton (1936), one of the earliest role theorists, saw roles as sets of social norms determined by society which influence interaction in various circumstances. "A role represents the dynamic aspect of a status. The individual is socially assigned to a status and occupies it with relation to other statuses. When he puts the rights and duties which constitute the status into effect, he is performing a role" (Linton 1936: 114). People learn the roles associated with each status through socialization. When their behavior corresponds to these roles, people are said to be performing roles.

Role theory and symbolic interactionism share important elements. According to Stryker and Statham (1985), both look to social phenomenon through an analysis of individual's interactions, and both utilize the metaphor of the theater with a conception of role in their study of human behavior. Interactionists, who view a position as a result of some specific behavior, stress the emergent qualities of roles as a result of interaction. To interactionists, a position is a result of some specific behavior. While to the structuralists, particular behaviors come from individuals occupying certain positions (Nye and Gecas 1976).

The Iowa school of symbolic interactionism, also called structural symbolic interactionism, is positivistic and structural. This school relies more on the influence of societal norms, such as wicked stepmother beliefs and consistency of expectations, and less on self-directed interaction. From the structural symbolic interactionist perspective, people are seen as social actors, acting

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alone or in conjunction with others in order to address situations that confront them. They act toward a symbolic reality, not a physical one: they "name, remember, categorize, perceive, think, deliberate, problem solve, transcend space and time, transcend themselves, create abstractions, create new ideas, and direct themselves--all through the symbol" (Charon 1992: 65). They learn the meanings of symbols and how to manipulate those symbols through interaction with others. Although not perfect, this socialization process makes possible a shared social reality, a consensus that allows people to interact with others with purpose. Just as they act toward others with purpose, people act toward themselves with purpose. They name and categorize themselves, define what they are doing and why they are doing it. They even critique their own feelings and behaviors.

With regards to stepmothering, stepmothers have multiple definitions of who they are. There is a core self consisting of salient role-identities. The core self is "a stable set of meanings... that provides structure and relative stability to personality and provides continuity to behavior" (Stryker 1981: 11). Regarding role-identities, stepmothers see themselves through a mirror of social positions they occupy, the groups to which they belong, and the ties they have with others in their communities. Identifying one's self as a stepmother would be one of these role-identities. When perceptions of stepmothering is consistent with the stepmothers' sense of who she is, stepmothers' are more likely to desire enacting roles. One has self-role congruence when he or she perceives that there is a "good" fit between self and the demands of the role (Whitsett & Land 1992a). Self-role-incongruence would be just the opposite: the actor sees a "bad" fit between self and the demands of the role. For instance, many people in our society define "stepmother" as "wicked," as in the "wicked stepmother." A stepmother who does not see herself as wicked, would have

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difficulty perceiving herself playing the stepmother role; thus, she would be experiencing self-role incongruence (Ceglian 1997). She would also have difficulty embracing the stepmother role, and may choose, instead, to distance herself from the role. A strong sense of role desirability extends the confusion stepmothers might experience. Role identities develop and evolve over time as stepmothers respond to others' reactions toward their behaviors.

For the most part, structural symbolic interactionists study the social behavior of people who occupy social positions and have fully developed self-perceptions and self-attitudes. They are most concerned with describing actors' self-structures, how these self-structures in conjunction with goal aspirations and role taking, are created, sustained, and changed, and how self-structures affect role-performances.

In light of the preceding discussion, we hypothesize that stepmother self-role incongruence is related negatively with (H1) scores on an anticipatory socialization index, and (H2) an involvement with stepchild index. It is hypothesized that stepmother self-role incongruence index is related positively with (H3) scores on a wicked stepmother index, (H4) scores on a stepfamily/stepparent unfavorability index, (H5) a spousal disagreement index, and (H6) a role ambiguity index. It is also hypothesized (H7) that (while controlling for level of socialization) the greater the stepmothers anticipatory socialization the lesser the belief in the wicked stepmother,

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Sample**

The stepmothers' names for the survey, of a Midwestern community in South Dakota, were generated from marriage license applications. Of the 2,277 surveys sent out, 917 individuals could

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not be found. Of the remaining 1,360, 344 mailed surveys were returned undeliverable because of insufficient address, no forwarding address, expired forwarding address, or no one living at a particular address with that name. Another 106 surveys were returned due to no children from the previous marriage, stepchildren already being adults at the time of remarriage, little to no contact with the stepchildren, or they were not the individuals identified by the sample (no match between telephone address and the marriage license name). In all, 154 usable surveys were returned.

### **Measurement**

In this study, six sets of variables are analyzed (see Appendix A for operational definitions). The dependent variable is identified as the stepmother self-role incongruence index. The independent variables include the role ambiguity index, anticipatory socialization index, wicked stepmother index, stepfamily/stepparent unfavorability index, and a spousal disagreement index.

### **ANALYSIS OF DATA**

In this study the influence of stepmother role ambiguity, anticipatory socialization, wicked stepmother beliefs, stepfamily/stepparent unfavorability, and spousal disagreement are analyzed in relation to stepmother self-role incongruence. Multiple regression is utilized to test the entirety of the research hypotheses. Elaboration analysis was used to draw conclusions about the relationship between self-role incongruence and wicked stepmother beliefs, while controlling for high or low levels of socialization.

**The Great Plains Sociologist Volume 12 Number 1, 2000****Bivariate Relationships****Table 1. Relationship of Stepmother Self-Role Incongruence with Selected Variables (N = 126)**

Variable	r	sig.
Role Ambiguity	.393	.000*
Anticipatory Socialization	-.203	.011*
Wicked Stepmother Beliefs	.494	.000*
Stepfamily/Parent Unfavor. Index	.288	.001*
Spousal Disagreement	.241	.003*

\*Significant at the .05 level

The following relationships compare self-role incongruence to selected variables:

For role ambiguity (H6), the correlation coefficient of .393 is significant at the .05 level. (see Table 1). There is a moderate positive correlation between scores on the role ambiguity index and self-role incongruency index. The greater the role ambiguity, the greater the self-role incongruency. Therefore, the research hypothesis is accepted.

For anticipatory socialization (H1), the correlation coefficient of -.203 is statistically significant at the .05 level. There is a weak negative correlation between scores on a stepmothers' anticipatory socialization index and self-role incongruence index.

The correlation coefficient for wicked stepmother beliefs (H3) is .494. This is statistically significant at the .05 level (see Table 1). There is a moderate to strong positive correlation between scores on the wicked stepmother belief index and the self-role incongruence index. The greater the belief in the wicked stepmother, the greater the stepmothers' self role incongruence. Therefore, the research hypothesis is accepted.

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For the analysis of stepfamily/stepparent perceived unfavorability (H4), the correlation coefficient .288 is significant at the .05 level (see Table 1). There is a moderate positive association between scores on the stepfamily/stepparent unfavorability index and the self-role incongruence index. The more stepmothers' perceive themselves and their stepfamily as inferior to the nuclear family, the greater the self-role incongruence. Thus, the research hypothesis is accepted.

In regards to stepmothers' involvement with stepchildren (H2), the correlation coefficient of  $-.277$  is statistically significant at the .05 level (see Table 1). There is a moderate negative correlation between stepmothers' involvement with stepchildren and self-role incongruence. The greater the stepmothers' involvement, the lesser the self-role incongruence. The null hypothesis is rejected and the research hypothesis is consequently accepted.

For the spousal disagreement scale (H5), the correlation coefficient of .241 is statistically significant at the .05 level (see Table 1). There is a weak positive correlation between the spousal disagreement index and self-role incongruence index.

### **Multiple Regression**

Multiple Regression extends simple regression (predict scores on one variable from knowledge of scores on a second variable) and predicts criterion variables from two or more predictor variables. An examination of the multiple regression analysis (see Table 2) reveals a multiple correlation of .559, which is a strong positive relationship. This is significant at the .0001 level or better. Based on this test, the entirety of the research hypotheses should be accepted; however, once extension to

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analysis of separate t-tests of significance are completed, it is revealed that only wicked stepmother beliefs is statistically significant.

The adjusted R-Square value (.278) in this analysis reveals that 28% of the variation in stepmother self-role incongruence can be explained by the independent variables. A comparison of beta-weights reveals that the strongest significant predictor of stepmother self-role incongruence is wicked stepmother beliefs (.355).

Table 2. Multiple Regression Analysis of the Independent and Dependent Variables

Independent Variable	B	beta	t	p
Role Ambiguity	.216	.122	1.25	.213
Anticipatory Socialization	-.224	-.078	-.942	.348
Wicked Stepmother Beliefs	.742	.355	4.01	.000 *
Stepfam/Par. Unfav. Index	.230	.083	.980	.329
Involvement with Stepchild	-.040	-.113	-1.36	.176
Spousal Disagreement	.075	.077	.920	.360
(Constant)	8.59		3.65	.000
R = .559	F = 9.04		Signf F = >.0001*	
R SQR = .313	Adjusted R SQR = .278			
Significance at the .05 level				

### Elaboration Analysis

The correlation between anticipatory socialization and stepmother self-role incongruence revealed a weak negative association (-.203), yet at the same time wicked stepmother beliefs was the strongest significant predictor of stepmother self-role incongruence (.355). The authors in this study wished to evaluate whether stepmother level of socialization altered the relationship

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between wicked stepmother beliefs and self-role incongruence. Elaboration analysis revealed that among those stepmothers who experienced a high level of anticipatory socialization, 40.5% had a high level of belief in the wicked stepmother and 44.6% had experienced a high level of incongruence. However, among those stepmothers who experienced a low level of anticipatory socialization, 53.3% had a high level of belief in the wicked stepmother and 66.7% had high incongruence. In other words, the lower the level of anticipatory socialization, the greater the belief in the wicked stepmother, and the greater one's self-role incongruence. Likewise, the greater one's anticipatory socialization, the lesser the belief in the wicked stepmother, and the lower the level of self-role incongruence. Yet, among those experiencing low anticipatory socialization, the relationship between wicked stepmother beliefs and self-role incongruence is only moderate ( $\Phi^2 = .30237$ ;  $\Phi^2 = .09143$ ), while among those experiencing high anticipatory socialization, the relationship between wicked stepmother beliefs and self-role incongruence is strong ( $\Phi^2 = .58815$ ;  $\Phi^2 = .34592$ ). In other words, it is quite possible that what stepmothers saw, read, or discussed with their future husbands (whether it be positive or negative in nature), appears to have had a greater impact on those with more anticipatory socialization.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

From a structural symbolic interactionist approach, perceiving the concerns and expectations of others is necessary if stepmothers want to establish stable, healthy relations with their husbands, stepchildren, and others. But this is only possible when concerns and expectations are consistent with the stepmother's sense of who she is, what she wants to do as a stepmother, and why she wants to act a certain way. The strong positive correlation (.494) between wicked stepmother beliefs and stepmother self-role



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incongruency points to this concern. Stepmothers who accept the notion that stepmothers are evil and wicked experience greater incongruency between their perceptions of self and their perceptions of the stepmothering role. Although the correlations between role ambiguity, anticipatory socialization, stepfamily/stepparent unfavorability, involvement with children and spousal disagreement, are weaker, the general congruency hypothesis is still supported.

Multiple regression analysis in this study revealed that the strongest significant predictor of stepmother self-role incongruence is wicked stepmother belief. It is apparent that a stepmother's belief in the wicked stepmother has a significant negative influence on the degree to which qualities of the self and one's inner self representation fit comfortably with the unique demands of stepmothering roles.

In an Elaboration analysis to divulge whether stepmothers' level of anticipatory socialization influenced the relationship between wicked stepmother beliefs and self-role incongruency, it was revealed that the greater one's anticipatory socialization the lesser the belief in the wicked stepmother, and the lower the level of self-role incongruence. The relationship between wicked stepmother beliefs and self-role incongruence is stronger for those experiencing high levels of anticipatory socialization. What stepmothers see, read, or discussed with their future husband (whether it be positive or negative in nature), appears to have a greater impact on stepmothers who had more anticipatory socialization. While studies indicate that anticipatory socialization is a good predictor of stepmother role adjustment (Ganong and Coleman 1989; Messinger 1976; MacDonald and Demaris 1995), it must not be assumed that all anticipatory socialization is positive in nature.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

While it is clear that belief in the wicked stepmother can greatly influence a stepmother's self-role incongruence, anticipatory socialization must be recognized for its impact on this relationship. First, the perception of the wicked stepmother must be changed to reflect a more positive image in contemporary society. Stepmothers are merely looking for a suitable and comfortable place in the newly formed family, where they have an understanding of their roles and can enact those roles without feeling disgraced. Second, in order for anticipatory socialization to reduce self-role incongruence, we must educate potential stepmothers about the stepfamily form prior to them taking their place in the newly formed family. With the continual increase in the number of stepfamilies, professionals in the rural helping professions need to better understand the stepfamily dynamic and strive to be proactive in educating stepmothers. With the value placed on nuclear families in rural areas, persons in the helping professions must realize that the dynamic relationships found in the stepfamily can never be modeled towards the nuclear family.

In order to have practitioners successfully help future stepfamilies, they must normalize and enlighten stepfamily members to the realities of the stepfamily form. Included in this enlightenment should be the stepfamily's realization that the stepmother is more than an "untidy appendage" (Visher and Visher 1978: 490).

According to Pearlin (1983) the best way for a person to prepare themselves for new roles is through anticipatory socialization. It is important that newly engaged couples who are planning a remarriage, seek out preventative help and discuss both the expectations in remarried life as well as what roles each is

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expected to play. While acquiring formal preventative help may be a problem because of lack of such resources in some parts of the rural Midwest, remarriage couples should seek out what support they can in preparing for their newly formed family.

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**APPENDIX A  
INDEXES**

**Anticipatory Socialization (1= nothing; 2= a little; 3= quite a bit; 4= a lot).**

1. How much did you learn about what to expect by observing other friends or relatives going through the same thing.
2. How much did you plan for this by talking with your husband.
3. How much preparation did you get by reading about what it would be like.

**Level of Involvement with Stepchild (1= not at all; 2= a little; 3= somewhat; 4= much; 5= very much).**

1. Disciplining of stepchild.
2. Dress and grooming.
3. Religious or moral training.
4. Running errands for/with stepchild.
5. Celebrating holidays with the stepchild.
6. Celebrating significant events (e.g., birthdays) with the stepchild.
7. Taking the stepchild for recreational activities.
8. Attending school or church-related functions.
9. Discussing problems with the stepchild that he/she might be having.
10. Taking the child for vacations.
11. Social activities with friends or extended family, grandparents.
12. Helping child with schoolwork.
13. Discussing stepchild's social activities (e.g., dating, friendships, parties, overnights).

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**14. Planning for the stepchild's future (e.g., education, career, marriage).**

**Role Ambiguity (0= strongly disagree; 1= moderately disagree; 2= neither agree or disagree; 3= moderately agree; 4= strongly agree).**

1. I am clear about the expectations my spouse has of me as a stepmother. (reverse coded)
2. I feel it's difficult to know what a stepparent is suppose to do.
3. I'm often confused as to how much or when to parent my stepchildren.

**Self-Role Incongruence (0= strongly disagree; 1= moderately disagree; 2= neither agree or disagree; 3= moderately agree; 4= strongly agree).**

1. I wish I felt the way I think I should feel about loving my stepchildren.
2. I wish I felt the way I think I should feel about spending more time with my stepchildren.
3. I wish I felt the way I think I should feel about sharing my things with my stepchild(ren).
4. I want to feel more positive about my stepchild(ren).
5. I wish I could give more of myself emotionally to my stepchild(ren) than I do.

**Stepfamily/Stepparent Unfavorability Index (0= strongly disagree; 1= moderately disagree; 2= neither agree or disagree; 3= moderately agree; 4= strongly agree).**

1. A stepfamily can never be as good as a family in which children live with both biological parents.
2. I feel others judge me negatively because I am a stepparent.

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**Wicked Stepmother Myth (0= strongly disagree; 1= moderately disagree; 2= neither agree or disagree; 3= moderately agree; 4= strongly agree).**

1. I sometimes hesitate in my interactions with my stepchildren for fear that they will think I'm a "wicked stepmother".

2. I sometimes fear that I am "the wicked stepmother" of the Cinderella story.

**Spousal Disagreement (1= not at all a problem; 2= a little problem; 3= somewhat of a problem; 4= serious problem).**

1. Mealtime routines
2. Household tasks
3. Children's general behavior
4. Children's bedtime
5. Allowances
6. Curfews
7. School performance
8. Discipline
9. Manners