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## Stepfamilies Are Becoming The Norm, So Let's Retire Cinderella: How Stepfamilies Can Learn To Thrive

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## **Stepfamilies Are Becoming the Norm, So Let's Retire Cinderella: How Stepfamilies Can Learn to Thrive**

*Glen-Peter Ahlers, Sr.\**

Question: What do George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Abraham Lincoln have in common?

Answer: They all grew up in blended or stepfamilies.<sup>1</sup>

Parenting is a daunting task for anyone. Our tiny, precious bundles of joy come home from the hospital in a car seat, but without any rulebooks. Even adults who were nurtured and guided by two, loving, wise, and understanding parents of their own, find that the lessons learned during childhood only carry them so far towards parenting their own children. The daunting task of parenting is easier if the family remains intact because, at least over time, mom and dad might approach, approximate, or administer something close to uniform rules of parenting. However, the rule book is shredded when the marriage is dissolved by death or divorce.

As challenging and intimidating as parenting biological children is, it is a walk in the park compared to stepparenting. Biological parents have a fighting chance with their own children because when a member of their family has a terrible and miserable day, the rest of the family can find wiggle room for forgiveness and understanding. Unfortunately, there is no such room for stepparents because they are not the biological mother or father. Stepchildren perceive them as aliens from another world who cannot possibly understand how things work on planet Earth.

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\* Professor Glen-Peter Ahlers, Sr., Barry University School of Law. Professor Ahlers is a dad and a stepdad who experiences a blended family every day.

<sup>1</sup> Liz Covart, Episode 027: Lisa Wilson, A History of Stepfamilies in Early America, BEN FRANKLIN'S WORLD: A PODCAST ABOUT AMERICAN HISTORY, <http://www.benfranklinsworld.com/027/>. See generally LESLIE LINDENAUER, I COULD NOT CALL HER MOTHER: THE STEPMOTHER IN AMERICAN POPULAR CULTURE, 1750-1960 (Lexington Books, 2013) (traces cultural history of the stepmother revealed by popular fiction, advice literature, and film).

While adults in blended families see themselves as a parent or stepparent, children in blended families see either a parent or stepmonster. My wife and I learned this the hard way. Blinded by the thought that we would create a new generation Brady Bunch,<sup>2</sup> my bride and I forgot the fairy tales. Cinderella<sup>3</sup> is not the only tale of stepparenting breaking bad.

It seems Euripides was onto something twenty-four plus years ago when he had his character, Alcestis, a dying Queen, utter the words, “*Better a serpent than a stepmother.*”<sup>4</sup> Wicked stepmothers appear in many well-known Western fairy tales. According to Professor Christie Williams, the “wicked stepmother is a staple of the popular fairy-tale tradition and arguably its most famous villain.”<sup>5</sup> The Brothers Grimm brought to life many evil stepmothers, including those of Cinderella, Snow White, Hansel and Gretel, and of the lesser known who appear in stories such as *The Six Swans* and *The Juniper Tree*.<sup>6</sup>

Walt Disney took the Grimms’ wicked stepmother and gave her an unforgettable face in his 1937 film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.<sup>7</sup> Snow White’s stepmother stands out for her terrifying image as the wicked queen. Since then, the wicked stepmother has become a stock figure, a fairy-tale type that invokes a vivid image at the mention of her [name] role—so much so that stepmothers, in general, have had to fight against their fairy-tale reflections. A quick Internet search for the term “wicked stepmother” will produce hundreds of websites dedicated to the plight of stepmothers fighting against the “wicked” moniker they have inherited from fairy tales.<sup>8</sup>

Movies also provide plenty of evil stepmothers. Dr. Stephen Claxon-Oldfield reported that no stepmom characters appearing in movies released from 1990 to 2003 were portrayed positively. More than

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<sup>2</sup> *The Brady Bunch* (ABC television broadcast 1969-1974).

<sup>3</sup> CINDERELLA (Walt Disney Productions 1950).

<sup>4</sup> GILBERT MURRAY, *THE ALCESTIS OF EURIPIDES* 19 (Oxford University Press 1915).

<sup>5</sup> Christy Williams, *Who’s Wicked Now? The Stepmother as Fairy-Tale Heroine*, 24 *MARVELS & TALES: J. OF FAIRY-TALE STUD.*, 255 (Issue No. 2 (2010)), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41388955>.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* See generally Judith M. Planitz & Judith A. Feeney, *Are stepsiblings bad, stepmothers wicked, and stepfathers evil? An assessment of Australian stepfamily stereotypes*, 15 *J. FAM. STUD.* 82, (Issue 1, (2009)) (examined stereotypes of Australian stepfamilies and found persistent negative stereotypes shared by members of stepfamilies).

<sup>7</sup> SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS (Walt Disney Productions 1937).

<sup>8</sup> Williams, *supra* note 5, at 255.

a third were portrayed as “money-grubbing or unwanted” and another third were shown as “murderous or abusive.”<sup>9</sup>

Are stepmothers ever not wicked? “The answer is no, at least in these fairy tales.”<sup>10</sup> The idea of the wicked stepmother has become an overused trope.

Wicked stepdads appear in literature too—Hamlet’s wicked uncle, King Claudius, comes to mind—but they are fewer than stepmoms. And who knows, may never have ever heard of David Copperfield if his stepdad hadn’t sent him away to boarding school? Google searches for wicked stepdads result in far fewer articles than searches for wicked stepmothers, and the links to stepdad articles are older; many dating back eleven years—extremely ancient in Internet time!<sup>11</sup>

Merriam-Webster online defines “blended family” as “a family that includes children from a previous marriage of one spouse or both.”<sup>12</sup> Merriam dates the first use of the term to 1975, but does not provide its source. The tenth print edition of *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, published in 1999, does not include the word.<sup>13</sup>

The print edition of the Oxford English Dictionary Second Edition, (OED 2d) provides seven modern<sup>14</sup> definitions for the term blended:

1. To mix, to mingle...
2. To mix or stir up (a liquid); hence sometimes, to render turbid, pollute, spoil, destroy; sometimes to agitate, trouble; to disturb...
3. To mingle intimately or closely with...
4. To mix (components) intimately or harmoniously so that their individuality is obscured in the product...
5. To mix up in the mind, regard as the same, confound with...
6. To mix, mingle; [especially] to unite intimately, so as to form a uniform or harmonious mixture...
7. To pass imperceptibly into each other by assimilation or confusion of contiguous parts....<sup>15</sup>

Members of blended families may see a little of their own lives reflected in each of the above definitions.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Claxton-Oldfield & Bonnie Butler, Portrayal of Stepparents in Movie Plot Summaries, 82 PSYCHOL. REP. 879, 881 (1998). See also Kim Leon & Erin Angst, Portrayals of Stepfamilies in Film: Using Media Images in Remarriage Education, 54 FAM. REL. 3-23 (2005).

<sup>10</sup> Schmoop Editorial Team, Are They Ever Not Wicked?, SHMOOP, Nov. 11, 2008, <http://www.shmoop.com/grimms-fairy-tales/stepmothers.html>.

<sup>11</sup> GOOGLE, <https://www.google.com> (last visited Oct. 24, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> MERRIAM-WEBSTER’S COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY 122 (Merriam-Webster, Inc., 10th ed. 1999).

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY (Oxford University Press, 2d ed. 1989) (The term “modern” is relative; some of the uses are pegged back to the 1300s. Earlier uses of the word, on another etymological branch of the verb meant “to blind” or “to make blind.”).

<sup>15</sup> *Id.* at 279.

Stepfamilies take a multitude of forms, including:

- Divorced with children; the children reside with one parent and visit the other. Most are dating or looking for new partners.
- Remarried, re-coupled, living together, with his and/or her children; he/she is now in the role of a stepparent.
- Single mothers; re-coupled, dating and alone.
- Divorced dads; these dads generally visit their children. Often they are re-coupled, bringing a stepmother figure into their children's lives.
- Lesbian and gay couples with children from a prior relationship.<sup>16</sup>

The United States Bureau of Census believed there would be more stepfamilies than original families by the year 2000.<sup>17</sup> The Bureau also stated that: 1,300 new stepfamilies form every day; over 50% of U.S. families are remarried or re-coupled; the average marriage in America lasts only seven years; one out of two marriages ends in divorce; 75% remarry; 66% of those living together or remarried break up, when children are involved; 80% of remarried, or re-coupled, partners with children both have careers; 50% of the 60 million children under the age of 13 are currently living with one biological parent and that parent's current partner.<sup>18</sup>

Professor Anne C. Jones at the University of North Carolina says:

The proliferating stepfamily has come to reflect the multiple social changes in American family life. Nevertheless, the dominance of the nuclear family culture continues to marginalize and stigmatize stepfamilies. Concepts drawn from narrative theory are used to examine how the privileged status accorded biological parentage serves to restrict society's thinking about the nature of families and parenting roles. The promotion of the nuclear family as the benchmark for family life perpetuates stepfamily invisibility and bias that permeate both stepfamily policy and practice. Illustrations from family policy and practice

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<sup>16</sup> *Step Family Statistics*, THE STEP FAMILY FOUNDATION, <http://www.stepfamily.org/stepfamily-statistics.html> (last visited Oct. 24, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

are offered. Social workers can help to shape more appropriate policies by fostering new family values that honor kinship ties based not only on biology, but more and more on affection and responsibility. In clinical practice, social workers can assist stepfamilies in abandoning misguided attempts to reinvent themselves as nuclear families and to create their own commensurate and unique stepfamily story.<sup>19</sup>

We seem to understand that the times, they are a changin', but questions remain. What can we do about all this stigmatization surrounding stepfamilies, and how can we help stepfamilies thrive?

This article does not end the questioning, but it does attempt to provide answers. The hope is that stepfamilies will find ideas, places, and people to turn to when the going gets rough, as it inevitably will.

Almost immediately after remarrying in 2011, my new wife and I found ourselves floundering in stormy stepfamily seas. Loving one another, and truly believing we were doing the best for the children of both marriages (I have six, she has one, we have seven), was not enough.

We could not believe the storms that were brewing. Being tossed about by the waves of ...whatever they were, we reached for any buoy, any handhold, any anchor to help us survive without drowning. Among other things, I'm a librarian, and among other things, my wife is a social media wiz. Seasick, and beginning to turn on one another, we turned instead to the Internet.

There, we first found that we were not alone in our sufferings; virtually all stepfamilies transverse difficult paths. We then found ways other stepfamilies use to cope and ride out their own storms; it was a godsend. Apparently, the information we found was accurate. Dr. Claire Cartwright of the University of Auckland and her doctoral student Anna Miller "investigated the information and guidance available on the Internet for mothers in stepfamilies, and compared this information to the conclusions that researchers have reached about parenting and stepparenting."<sup>20</sup>

The study looked at sixty-nine websites that purported to provide information for stepfamilies.<sup>21</sup> The extracted data were analyzed and the

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<sup>19</sup> Anne C. Jones, *Reconstructing the Stepfamily: Old Myths, New Stories*, 48 SOC. WORK 228 (Issue No. 2 (2003)), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23720847>.

<sup>20</sup> Anna Miller & Claire Cartwright, *An Investigation of Internet-Based Information for Mothers in Stepfamilies*, 42 NEW ZEALAND J. PSYCHOL. 66 (Issue No. 3 (2013)), <http://www.psychology.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/NZJP-Vol423-2013-10-Miller.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.* at 72-73 (Aamft.org, Advice for Relationships, American Psychological Association, Articlesbase.com, Better Health Channel, Bounty, Buzzle.com, Crosswalk.com, Department for Ministry & Family Ministry, Divorcedmenonline.com, Drcomeau, E! Science News, Ehow.com, Essortment.com, Ezinearticles.com, Family

good news is that data showed that the content was relatively consistent with research findings in regard to parenting in a stepfamily. It emphasized the importance of mothers' care and support, a supportive stepfather role, problems around stepfather discipline, and the importance of the couple's relationship.<sup>22</sup>

However, Cartwright and Miller also found the information provided was often brief, did not cover all important areas, and was presented inconsistently across the websites, leading to a lack of consistent research-based information and guidance.<sup>23</sup>

So researcher, beware!

This article will show the path to relevant information and point out a few salient buoys along the way. It is not an exhaustive litany of what can be found, but a guide to useful tools in the form of articles, books, films, journals and magazines, blogs, podcasts, social media, associations and organizations, and experts in the field.

#### RESEARCH TOOLS

Today's most powerful broad-based tools are the Internet search engines such as Bing,<sup>24</sup> Google,<sup>25</sup> Internet Explorer,<sup>26</sup> Safari,<sup>27</sup> and Yahoo!<sup>28</sup> Additionally, more targeted search tools include library

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Education, Familyresource.com, Findarticles.com, Firstthings.org, Happy Stepfamily day, Health – Howstuffworks.com, Healthline, Healthy Place.com, Helpguide.com, Home and Family, Infidelity.com, Kidsline, Kiwifamilies.co.nz, Library adoption.com, Lifemanagement.com, Lifestyle.ezine.com, Mass General Hospital for Children, Mayoclinic.com, Mind publications, Missouri families.org, Msucares.com, Netdoctor, Newsforparents.org, Parenthood in America, Parenting South Australia, PBS Kids GO!, Psychcentral.com, Psychology Today, Raising Children Network, Relationship Services, Remarriage.com, Remarriageworks.com, Searchwarp.com, Smartmarriages.com, Smartstepfamilies.com, St. Louis Healthy Families, Stayhitched.com, Stepfamilies Today, Stepfamily Foundation, Inc., Stepfamilyzone.com, Success for Steps, Suite101.com, The Australian Psychological Society, The Positive Way, The Stepfamily Centre, The stepstop.com, Thecutekid.com, Thefreelibrary.com, Troubledwith.com, US Catholic, West Valley Parents, Wikipedia, Women's and Children's Health Network, and Wyoming Healthy Family Initiative).

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> BING, <https://www.bing.com> (last visited Oct. 24, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> GOOGLE, <https://www.google.com> (last visited Oct. 24, 2016).

<sup>26</sup> MICROSOFT, <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/internet-explorer/download-ie> (last visited Oct. 24, 2016).

<sup>27</sup> APPLE, <http://www.apple.com/safari> (last visited Oct. 24, 2016).

<sup>28</sup> YAHOO!, <https://www.yahoo.com> (last visited Oct. 24, 2016).

catalogs,<sup>29</sup> Amazon.com,<sup>30</sup> and subject-specific database search engines identified below.

Terms to use in these search engines regarding step families combine the word “step” with the word “family” and with the various words used for members of the family: child, mom, mother, dad, father, and their plurals (but rarely uncle, aunt, cousin, grandparent). Sometimes the compound word is formed by putting the two words together: “stepchild.” Sometimes it is hyphenated: “step-child”, sometimes it is simply two separate words: step child. For our purposes throughout this paper, I will use the compounded single word spelling: “stepchild,” but researchers need to use the various spellings for complete searches, which include:

stepchild, step-child, step child; stepchildren, step-children, step children; stepdad, step-dad, step dad; step dads, step-dads, step dads; stepfather, step-father, step father; stepfathers, step-fathers, step fathers; stepfamily, step-family, step family; stepfamilies, step-families, step families; stepmom, step-mom, step mom; stepmoms, step-moms, step moms; stepmother, step-mother, step mother; stepmothers, step-mothers, step-mothers.

#### *Academic Search Complete*<sup>31</sup>

Academic Search Complete is a multidisciplinary, full-text database providing access to more than 8,500 full-text periodicals,<sup>32</sup> and offering indexing and abstracts for more than 12,500 additional journals and more than 13,200 monographs, reports, and conference proceedings.<sup>33</sup> A simple search using the term “stepfamilies” yielded 2,746 “hits.” Below are examples of thirteen published items from the past three years:

Castrén, Anna-Maija & Widmer, Eric, *Insiders and Outsiders in Stepfamilies: Adults’ And Children’s Views on Family Boundaries*, 63 *CURR. SOCIOLOGY* 35 (2015);

Coleman, Marilyn’ & Ganong, Lawrence, *Stepchildren’s Views About Former Step-Relationships Following Stepfamily Dissolution*, 77 *J. MARRIAGE & FAM.* (2015);

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<sup>29</sup> Researchers may search individual library catalogs or simultaneously search multiple catalogs. See for example, a list of popular catalogs available at [WORLDcat.ORG](http://WORLDcat.ORG), <https://www.worldcat.org/>.

<sup>30</sup> AMAZON, <https://www.amazon.com> (last visited Oct. 24, 2016).

<sup>31</sup> EBSCOHOST, <https://www.ebscohost.com> (last visited Oct. 29, 2016).

<sup>32</sup> *Id.*

<sup>33</sup> *Id.*



DeGreeff, Becky L., & Platt, Carrie Anne, Green-Eyed (Step)Monsters: Parental Figures' Perceptions of Jealousy in the Stepfamily, 57 J. DIVORCE & REMARRIAGE 112 (2016);

Favez, Nicolas & Widmer, Eric, Coparenting in Stepfamilies: Maternal Promotion of Family Cohesiveness with Partner and with Father, 24 J. CHILD & FAM. STUDIES 3268 (2015);

Gibson, Diane, Ambiguous Roles in a Stepfamily: Using Maps of Narrative Practices to Develop a New Family Story with Adolescents and Parents, 35 CONTEMPORARY. FAM. THERAPY Therapy 793 (2013);

Jensen, Todd & Shafer, Kevin, (Step)Parenting Attitudes and Expectations: Implications for Stepfamily Functioning and Clinical Intervention. FAM. IN SOCIETY 213 (2014);

Todd & Shafer, Kevin, Stepfamily Functioning and Closeness: Children's Views on Second Marriages and Stepfather Relationships, 58 SOCIAL WORK 127 (2013);

King, Valarie & Amato, Paul, Stepfather-Adolescent Relationship Quality During the First Year of Transitioning to a Stepfamily, J. MARRIAGE & FAM. 1189 (2015);

King, Valarie & Boyd, Lisa M., *Adolescents' Perceptions of Family Belonging in Stepfamilies*, 77 J. MARRIAGE & FAM. 761 (2015);

Papernow, Patricia L. *Providing Evidence-based Help to Stepfamilies*, 30 BROWN UNIV. CHILD & ADOLESCENT BEHAVIOR LETTER 1 (Issue 3, Mar. 2014); and

Wood, Sarah J., Rearranging the Puzzle: Working Systemically with Stepfamilies when Parents Re-partner, 36 AUSTRALIAN & NEW ZEALAND JOURNAL OF FAMILY THERAPY 245 (2015).

*Family Studies Database*<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> EBSCOHOST, <https://www.ebscohost.com/academic/request-information/family-studies-abstracts>.

Phone: (978) 356-6500

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For example, a search on the term “stepfamilies” identified 435 items; a search on the term “stepfather” identified 148 items; a search on the term “stepmother” identified forty-five items; and a search on the term “stepchildren” identified eighty-nine items. A selection of items from more recent offerings are included in the appropriate section of the paper below.

### *Heinonline*<sup>35</sup>

A search of the Heinonline law library database using the term “blended families” yielded 544 articles dealing with topics as diverse as the tax consequences of blending families, the changing roles of stepparents and stepchildren in blended families, estate planning considerations for stepfamilies, and other practical advice. A selection of items from more recent offerings are included in the appropriate section below.

For example, a search on the term “stepfamilies” identified 574 items; a search on the term “stepfather” identified 7,717 items; a search on the term “stepmother” identified 3,859 items; and a search on the term “stepchildren” identified 3,873 items. A selection of items from more recent offerings are included in the appropriate section below.

### *JSTOR*<sup>36</sup>

JSTOR is a [not-for-profit] shared digital library created in 1995 to help university and college libraries free up space on their shelves, save costs, and provide greater levels of access to more content than ever before. More generally, by digitizing content to high standards and supporting its long-term preservation, we also aim to help libraries and academic publishers transition their activities from print to digital operations. Our aim is to expand access to scholarly content around the world and to preserve it for future generations. We provide access to some or all of the content free of charge when we believe we can do so while still meeting our long-term obligations.

JSTOR currently contains more than 2,000 academic journals, dating back to the first volume ever published, along with

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<sup>35</sup> HEINONLINE, <http://heinonline.org>.

<sup>36</sup> JSTOR, <http://about.jstor.org/>.

thousands of monographs and other relevant educational materials. JSTOR has digitized more than 50 million pages and continues to digitize approximately 3 million pages annually. Our activities, our fee structure, and the way we manage the service and its resources reflect our historical commitment to serve colleges and universities as a trusted digital archive, and our responsibility to publishers as stewards of their content. This underlying philosophy at JSTOR remains the core of our service even as we continue to seek ways to expand access to people beyond academic institutions.<sup>37</sup>

### *LexisNexis Academic*

This subscription-based, interdisciplinary, full-text database contains “over 18,000 sources including newspapers, journals, wire services, newsletters, company reports and SEC filings, case law, government documents, transcripts of broadcasts, and selected reference works.”<sup>38</sup>

A selection of items from more recent offerings are included in the appropriate section of the paper below.

### *PsycARTICLES*

Made available through Ebsco in many university libraries, this database contains more than 25,000 full-text articles from 57 journals published by American Psychological Association and allied organizations. Coverage includes general psychology and specialized basic, applied, clinical, and theoretical research in psychology.<sup>39</sup>

A selection of items from more recent offerings are included in the appropriate section of the paper below.

### *PsycINFO*

Available from the American Psychological Association, PsycINFO provides abstracts and citations from books and journals in psychology and other related disciplines, including full text to thirty plus journals published by American

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<sup>37</sup> *Need to JSTOR? Learn More About Us*, JSTOR.COM, <http://about.jstor.org/10things>.

<sup>38</sup> *Databases by Title*, Monsignor William Barry Memorial Library, <http://bucwis.barry.edu.ezproxy.barry.edu/libraryservices/catalogResources/eDatabaseTitle.htm#1>.

<sup>39</sup> *Id.*

Psychological Association in PsycARTICLES which provides full-text links to about ten percent of journal articles.

For example, a search on the term “stepfamilies” identified over 1,300 items; a search on the term “stepfather” identified 745 items; a search on the term “stepmother” identified over 357 items; and a search on the term “stepchildren” identified more than 578 items. A selection of items from more recent offerings are included in the appropriate section below.

#### *Westlaw*

Westlaw is one of the premier online legal research services, providing a broad collection of primary and secondary resources, as well as news, business, and public records information.<sup>40</sup>

A selection of items from more recent offerings are included in the appropriate section below.

#### *WorldCat*<sup>41</sup>

WorldCat is a network of library content and services dedicated to providing access to resources on the Web. At WorldCat.org, researchers may search many libraries at once and locate items in nearby libraries, in addition to finding books, music, and videos to check out, as well as discovering research articles and digital items that can be directly viewed or downloaded.<sup>42</sup>

Local libraries often allow library members to access WorldCat from their online catalogs. In addition to finding books, WorldCat provides access “to article citations with links to their full text and authoritative research materials, such as documents and photos of local or historic significance, as well as digital versions of rare items that are not available to the public ... these include direct links to articles and other resources in electronic databases. To access these resources, [researchers may first] be required to log in with a valid library membership.”<sup>43</sup>

For example, a search on the term “stepfamilies” identified more than 2,400 items; a search on the term “stepfather” identified 5,400 items; a search on the term “stepmother” identified over 5,700 items; and

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<sup>40</sup> Barry Law Library A-Z Research Databases: Home, <http://eguides.barry.edu/c.php?g=351621&p=2370903#s-lg-box-wrapper-8834477>.

<sup>41</sup> WORLDCAT, <https://www.worldcat.org/>. <https://www.worldcat.org/>.

<sup>42</sup> *What is WorldCat?*, WORLDCAT, <http://www.worldcat.org/whatis/>.

<sup>43</sup> *Id.*

a search on the term “stepchildren” identified more than 3,100 items. A selection of items from more recent offerings are included in the appropriate section below.

#### ARTICLES

*Doodson, L. Understanding the factors related to stepmother anxiety: A qualitative approach, 55 J. DIVORCE & REMARRIAGE 645 (2014).*<sup>44</sup>

Stepparenting is widely recognized as a stressful experience, with higher levels of stress and anxiety experienced by stepmothers than stepfathers. This study sought to examine the experiences of stepmothers to help understand the perceived factors related to their increased anxiety within the stepfamily. A qualitative study using focus groups was conducted in the United Kingdom. Results suggested that stepmother anxiety is predominantly related to three areas: their relationship with the biological mother, their relationship with their stepchildren, and lack of clarity regarding the stepmother’s role. It is posited that interventions designed to clarify the stepmother role, while improve and strengthen relationships between stepfamily members, would help alleviate anxiety and thus improve stepmother well-being.<sup>45</sup>

*Dunn, Judy & O’Connor, Thomas, Children’s Responses to Conflict between Their Different Parents: Mothers, Stepfathers, Nonresident Fathers, and Nonresident Stepmothers, 34 J. CLINICAL CHILD & ADOLESCENT PSYCH. 223 (2005).*<sup>46,47</sup>

Children who have experienced parental separation have potentially three sets of parents whose relationships may impact them: mother and former partner, mother and stepfather, and father and new partner. Children’s accounts of their response to conflict between these different parental dyads were studied in

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<sup>44</sup> L. J. Doodson, *Understanding the Factors Related to Stepmother Anxiety: A Qualitative Approach*, 55 J. DIVORCE & REMARRIAGE 645 (Nov. 4, 2014), <http://www.tandfonline.com.ezproxy.barry.edu/doi/pdf/10.1080/10502556.2014.959111>.

<sup>45</sup> *Id.* at 645.

<sup>46</sup> Judy Dunn & Thomas O’Connor, *Children’s Responses to Conflict Between their Different Parents: Mothers, Stepfathers, Nonresident Fathers, and Nonresident Stepmothers*, 34 J. CLINICAL CHILD & ADOLESCENT PSYCH. 223, 223 (Jun. 7, 2010), [http://www.tandfonline.com.ezproxy.barry.edu/doi/pdf/10.1207/s15374424jccp3402\\_2](http://www.tandfonline.com.ezproxy.barry.edu/doi/pdf/10.1207/s15374424jccp3402_2).

<sup>47</sup> *Id.*

relation to the quality of their relationships with these parents and were assessed with child interviews and questionnaires, and to maternal reports of the children's adjustment, in a sample of 159 children growing up in different family settings. Involvement in conflict within one parental dyad was chiefly unrelated to such involvement in conflict between the other parental dyads. In contrast, there was evidence of "spillover" effects in relationships within families. For instance, high frequencies of conflict between parents were linked to more troubled parent-child relationships. Children were more likely to side with the parent to whom they were biologically related than with stepparents. Involvement in mother-nonresident father conflict and in mother-stepfather conflict were both associated with adjustment problems, independent of the qualities of positivity and conflict in the relationship between child and parent.

*Favez, Nicolas & Widmer, Eric. Coparenting in Stepfamilies: Maternal Promotion of Family Cohesiveness with Partner and with Father. 24 J. CHILD & FAM. STUDIES, 3268 (2015).*

Co-parenting refers to the support parents bring to each other when rearing a child. Supportive co-parenting ensures cohesiveness of the family, which is linked with child outcomes. Little is known, however, about the co-parental relationship in stepfamilies between the custodial parent, usually the mother, and the new partner, and how it compares to co-parenting with the father. This study addressed mother-reported co-parenting in stepfamilies and also compared it with that in first-marriage families.<sup>48</sup>

*Filinson, Rachel, Relationship in Stepfamilies: An Examination of Alliances, 17 J. COMPARATIVE FAM. STUDIES 43 (Issue 1, Spring, (1986)).<sup>49</sup>*

The stepfamily has been characterized in the literature as a family artificially bound together by law, rather than emotion or shared household and where familial ties and obligations may be felt, by at least some family members, to be imposed by law, rather than spontaneously arising through ties of blood kinship or communal

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<sup>48</sup> Nicolas Favez & Eric Widmer, *Coparenting in Stepfamilies: Maternal Promotion of Family Cohesiveness with Partner and Father*, 24 J. CHILD & FAM. STUDIES, 3268, 3268 (January 22, 2015).

<sup>49</sup> Rachel Filinson, *Relationship in Stepfamilies: An Examination of Alliances*, 17 J. COMPARATIVE FAM. STUDIES 43, 43-44 (1986).

living. It has been argued that loyalty to the natural parent, child or sibling, distrust of invading stepfamily members, ghosts from a former marriage and the ambiguity of the stepfamily roles impair the cohesiveness of the stepfamily unit. The stepfamily, in effect, has been portrayed as an imperfect substitute for the “normal” family.

The predominantly negative view of the stepfamily has been derived from studies which, in general, have examined stepfamilies in isolation from other families. It has been uncertain, therefore, if the dysfunctional aspects discovered are unique to the stepfamily. Moreover, the validity of the prevailing view has been questioned because of the steady increases in the number of stepfamilies and variant families of all types in conjunction with a growing attack on the adequacy of the “normal” family.

The objective of this paper is to explore family relationships within stepfamilies through comparison of the family lives of stepfamilies and those of non-stepfamilies. Relationships will be described in the study reported below in terms of “alliances” between family members. This idea has been developed in the stepfamily literature and applied to describe the separation of the stepfamily into separate cliques or subgroups, typically along blood kinship lines. Alliances are used here to describe any set of preferences among family members for one or more family members above all others, whether they occur in stepfamilies or not, and whether they are composed of biologically-related kin or not. By examining the pattern of alliances and their effects on the family unit in both stepfamilies and non-stepfamilies, the characteristic and distinctive features of stepfamily relationships can be assessed.<sup>50</sup>

*Ganong, Lawrence & Coleman, Marilyn, Patterns of Stepchild-Stepparent Relationship Development, 73 J. MARRIAGE & FAM. 396 (2011).*<sup>51</sup>

Thirty-two stepdaughters and seventeen stepsons participated in this ... study of emerging adult stepchildren’s perceptions about how relationships with their stepparents developed. The theory created from this study proposes that the degree to which

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<sup>50</sup> *Id.*

<sup>51</sup> Lawrence Ganong & Marilyn Coleman, *Pattern of Stepchild-Stepparent Relationship*, 73 J. MARRIAGE & FAM. 396, 396 (2011).

stepchildren engage in relationship-building and maintaining behaviors with stepparents is a function of stepchildren's evaluative judgments about the stepparents' positive contributions. Stepchildren's judgments about stepparents are made with inputs from biological parents and other kin. Stepchildren's ages when relationships began, gender of stepchildren and stepparents, and time spent together because of custody arrangements provided the context within which relationships developed. The outcomes ...were six patterns of step-relationship development: accepting as a parent, liking from the start, accepting with ambivalence, changing trajectory, rejecting, and coexisting ... Only 30% of stepchildren with multiple stepparents evaluated them similarly.<sup>52</sup>

*Jensen, Todd & Howard, Matthew. Perceived stepparent-child relationship quality: A systematic review of stepchildren's perspectives. 51 MARRIAGE & FAM. REV. 99 (2015).*<sup>53</sup>

Stepfamily scholars have emphasized the importance of including stepchildren in the analysis and discussion of stepfamily life. Screening and eligibility assessment based on priori inclusion criteria yielded a final sample of twenty-three studies, including published studies and reports found in the "gray" literature. Significant [predictors] associated with stepchildren's perceptions of stepparent-child relationship quality were [found, including:] individual characteristics, family characteristics, features of (step)parent-child interactions, and step-couple dynamics. Limitations, implications, and future research directions are discussed.<sup>54</sup>

*Jensen, Todd & Shafer, Kevin. Transitioning to Stepfamily Life: The Influence of Closeness With Biological Parents and Stepparents on Children's Stress.*<sup>55</sup> *CHILD & FAMILY SOCIAL WORK (May 10, 2015).*

Abstract family transitions, such as stepfamily formation, can be a source of stress for adults and children. Yet, the stepfamily literature lacks a focus on factors that influence child stress levels

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<sup>52</sup> *Id.*

<sup>53</sup> Todd Jensen & Matthew Howard, *Perceived Stepparent-Child Relationship Quality: A Systematic Review of Stepchildren's Perspective*, 51 MARRIAGE & FAM. REV. 99, 99 (Feb. 12, 2015).

<sup>54</sup> *Id.*

<sup>55</sup> Todd Jensen & Kevin Shafer, *Transitioning to Stepfamily Life: The Influence of Closeness With Biological Parents and Stepparents on Children's Stress*, CHILD & FAMILY SOC. WORK (2015).



while transitioning to stepfamily life. Using a social support perspective, the purpose of this study was to assess the independent and additive influence of closeness with three common parental figures on retrospective reports of stress experienced by children during stepfamily formation. A sample of 1,139 emerging adults from a retrospective U.S.-based national quota sample, the Stepfamily Experiences Project, was analyzed. Results indicated that parental relationships have independent, not combined, effects on stress. More specifically, we found that greater closeness with resident stepparents and resident biological parents was associated with less stress in children, whereas greater closeness with non-resident biological parents was associated with slightly greater levels of stress. These findings reflect (i) the primacy of residential relationships in children's stress reduction; (ii) the benefit of parental relationships to children as sources of social support during stressful family transitions; and (iii) the potential for children to experience stressful loyalty binds during stepfamily formation. Implications for social work practice, limitations and future directions for research are discussed.<sup>56</sup>

*Kellas, Jody Koenig & Baxter, Leslie. Telling the Story of Stepfamily Beginnings: The Relationship Between Young-Adult Stepchildren's Stepfamily Origin Stories and Their Satisfaction with the Stepfamily. 14 J. FAM. COMM. 149 (2014).*<sup>57</sup>

This article examines eighty stepchildren's stepfamily origin stories. Results reveal five types of stepfamily origin stories: Sudden, Dark-sided, Ambivalent, Idealized, and Incremental. Results support the hypothesis that story type would predict differences in family satisfaction; stepchildren who described their stepfamily origins as Idealized were more satisfied than those whose origins were Dark-sided or Sudden. Overall, participants framed their stepfamily identity more positively when their stepfamily beginnings were characterized by closeness, friendship, and even expected ups and downs, rather than when they were left out of the process of negotiating or forming the stepfamily and when the beginnings were tainted by issues they considered to be dark.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *Id.*

<sup>57</sup> Jody K. Kellas & Leslie Baxter, *Telling the Story of Stepfamily Beginnings: The Relationship Between Young Adult Stepchildren's Stepfamily Origin Stories and Their Satisfaction with the Stepfamily*, 14 J. FAM. COMM. 149, 149 (2014).

<sup>58</sup> *Id.*

King, Valarie & Thorsen, Maggie. *Factors Associated With Positive Relationships Between Stepfathers and Adolescent Stepchildren*. 47 *SOC. SCI. RESEARCH* (Sep. 2014) at 16.<sup>59</sup>

This study examined factors associated with positive stepfather–stepchild relationships in married stepfamilies. The results reveal substantial variability in the perceived quality of adolescents’ relationships with stepfathers. Data reveal that close relationships with mothers and close ties between mothers and stepfathers are positively related to the perceived quality of adolescents’ relationships with stepfathers [and] suggest that the direction of influence runs in both directions, with the mother–child relationship and the stepfather–stepchild relationship mutually reinforcing one another.<sup>60</sup>

Nancy Levit, *Cohabitation, Domestic Partnerships, and Nontraditional Families Annotated Bibliography* 22 *J. AM. ACAD. MATRIMONIAL LAW*. 169 (2009).<sup>61</sup>

Although a bit dated, Professor Levit’s article provides a solid insight into issues nontraditional families face, including stepparenting. Here are a few of the articles identified:

Megan S. Calvo, Note, *Uniform Parentage Act—Say Goodbye to Donna Reed: Recognizing Stepmothers’ Rights*, 30 *W. NEW ENG. L. REV.* 773 (2008) (arguing that the Uniform Parentage Act should give stepmothers standing in maternity suits).

Margaret M. Mahoney, *Stepparents as Third Parties in Relation to Their Stepchildren*, 40 *FAM. L.Q.* 81 (2006) (exploring the law of stepparent visitation and the factors limiting the legal rights of stepparents, such as protection of the rights of noncustodial biological parents, as well as the variety of differing stepparent arrangements).

Melissa Murray, *The Networked Family: Reframing the Legal Understanding of Caregiving and Caregivers*, 94 *VA. L. REV.* 385 (2008) (suggesting ways to legally recognize familial caregiving networks—by expanding the category of parenthood

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<sup>59</sup> Valarie King & Maggie Thorsen, *Factors Associated With Positive Relationships Between Stepfathers and Adolescent Stepchildren*, 47 *SOC. SCI. RES.* 16, 16 (Sept. 2014).

<sup>60</sup> *Id.*

<sup>61</sup> Nancy Levit, *Cohabitation, Domestic Partnerships, and Nontraditional Families Annotated Bibliography*, 22 *J. AM. ACAD. MATRIMONIAL LAW* 169, 180-81 (May 29, 2009), [http://www.aaml.org/sites/default/files/MAT103\\_0.pdf](http://www.aaml.org/sites/default/files/MAT103_0.pdf).

or creating alternative statuses that are afforded some legal protection).

Peter Wendel, *Inheritance Rights and the Step-Partner Adoption Paradigm: Shades of the Discrimination Against Illegitimate Children*, 34 HOFSTRA L. REV. 351 (2005) (sorting through various state rules concerning stepparent and step partner adoption and inheritance rights).

Barbara Busharis, *A Very Brady Conflict: Are Stepparents “Close Family Members?”*, 26 TRIAL ADVOC. Q. (Fall 2007).

John C. Ruck, *Discipline of Stepchildren by Stepparents in Cases Involving Joint Custody*, 87 MICH. B.J. 39 (Oct. 2008) (Michigan).

Lawrence Schlam, *Third Party “Standing” and Child Custody Disputes in Washington: Non-Parent Rights—Past, Present, and . . . Future?*, 43 GONZ. L. REV. 391 (2007-08).

David B. Sweet, *Annotation, Stepparent’s Postdivorce Duty to Support Stepchild*, 44 A.L.R. 4TH 520 (2006).<sup>62</sup>

Michael Howlad, *Blending Religious Practices*, 36 FAM. ADV. 30 (2013).<sup>63</sup>

Parents in blended families who want to make their religious experiences harmonious for themselves and their children should begin by contacting the clergy of the religious congregation to which they already belong or wish to join. Most religious leaders in North America deal routinely with issues raised by blended families and an honest and reflective conversation about the relationship with a former spouse can help reduce or eliminate potential conflict later.<sup>64</sup>

*Kimberly Leyerle, Note: A Shift from Incidental to Instrumental: A Promise of Stability When Stepparents Have Been a Primary Source of Parenting Support*, 14 WHITTIER J. CHILD. & FAM. ADVOC 90 (2015).<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *Id.*

<sup>63</sup> Michael Howlad, *Blending Religious Practices*, 36 FAM. ADV. 30, 30 (2013).

<sup>64</sup> *Id.*

<sup>65</sup> Kimberly Leyerle, *Note: A shift from Incidental to Instrumental: A Promise of Stability When Stepparents Have Been a Primary Source of Parenting Support*, 14 WHITTIER J. CHILD & FAM. ADVOC. 90, 90 (2015).

While some stepparents are incidental in relation to their stepchildren by playing minimal or even peripheral roles in their children's lives, this type of relationship is just a fraction of reality.<sup>66</sup>

*Douglas Lord, Collection Development: Stepfamily Ties, 134 Library Journal, 42 (April 2009).*<sup>67</sup>

This article focuses on resources for building successful stepfamilies and parenting children in stepfamily scenarios. While remarriage after divorce is the basis of most stepfamilies, divorced parenting differs from stepfamily parenting and is covered only peripherally in this article. Worthy stepparenting titles emphasize the singularity of their subject, read: stepfamilies are “not” in any way like nuclear families, and forcing them into functioning as “one” won’t work. Successful stepfamilies are quite intentional; it takes an enormous amount of finesse to balance an adult’s sanity with the physical and psychological needs of children who are not biologically related. Issues common to any kind of parent-child relationship become magnified in stepfamilies, with discipline, anger, and finance commonly surfacing as hot-button topics. Librarians will find a surprising bounty of decent works in print; no single one holds the title of “definitive,” nor is there one go-to publisher or author. Most of the available resources cater to lay readers (as opposed to social workers, school counselors, etc.) and will fit nicely in public libraries and collections dedicated to the helping professions. Many of the best are written by real-life stepparents. Manuals featuring interviews with stepfamilies tend to offer particularly enlightening how-to advice.<sup>68</sup>

*Sarah Malia, Balancing Family Members’ Interests Regarding Stepparent Rights and Obligations: A Social Policy Challenge, 54 FAM. REL 298 (2005).*<sup>69</sup>

Although stepparents often play important roles in their stepchildren’s lives, residential stepparents generally have fewer rights than legal guardians or foster parents. U.S. law does not consistently recognize stepparents’ roles, functions, rights, and

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<sup>66</sup> *Id.*

<sup>67</sup> Douglas Lord, *Collection Development: Stepfamily Ties*, 134 LIBR. J. 42, 42 (April 1, 2009).

<sup>68</sup> *Id.*

<sup>69</sup> *Id.*

obligations regarding their stepchildren. This paper examines and synthesizes diverse current stepfamily legal policies and regulations as well as legal and social science policy reform concerns. Policy recommendations related to stepparents' roles and responsibilities that would better balance various interests while promoting children's welfare and strengthening diverse family forms and relationships are offered.<sup>70</sup>

*Papernow, Patricia. Therapy for People Who Live in Step-families, 5 FAMILY THERAPY MAGAZINE 34 (2006 Issue 3).*

*Danielle Shapiro & Abigail Stewart, Parenting stress, perceived child regard, and depressive symptoms among stepmothers and biological mothers, 60 FAM. RELATIONS 533 (2011).*<sup>71</sup>

Although stepmothering is a common undertaking in American families, little research has investigated the mental health consequences and their correlation associated with the adoption of the stepmother role. To help fill this gap, the current study examines parenting stress and participants' perceptions of their (step)children's regard toward them and the family as mediators in the relation between parenting role (stepmother or biological mother) and depressive symptoms. Participants included sixty biological mothers and seventy-five stepmothers living in the United States. Stepmothers reported more depressive symptoms and parenting stress and lower perceptions of child regard than did biological mothers. Further, the relation between parenting role and depressive symptoms was mediated by parenting stress and perceptions of child regard. Results suggest that stepmothers are at risk for depressive symptoms and illuminate possible contributors to this risk, providing important directions for research and intervention.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Sarah E. C. Malia, *Balancing Family Members' Interests Regarding Stepparent Rights and Obligations: A Social Policy Challenge*, 54 Fam. Rel. 298, 298 (2005).

<sup>71</sup> *Id.*

<sup>72</sup> Danielle N. Shapiro & Abigail J. Stewart, *Parenting Stress, Perceived Child Regard, and Depressive Symptoms Among Stepmothers and Biological Mothers*, 60 Fam. Rel. 533, 533 (2011).

*Susan Stewart Boundary Ambiguity in Stepfamilies, 26 J. FAM. ISSUES 1002 (2005).*<sup>73</sup>

Family Boundary Ambiguity refers to a lack of clarity as to who is in and who is out of the family system. Few studies have examined this concept in the stepfamily context, which is problematic because such definitional problems hinder our understanding of close relationships in stepfamilies. Based on a nationally representative sample of first-married, remarried, and cohabiting couples with minor children, this study investigates the prevalence and nature of boundary ambiguity in stepfamilies (families that include children from previous unions) and the relationship between boundary ambiguity and couples' relationship quality and stability. Results suggest that boundary ambiguity is much more prevalent in stepfamilies than original two-parent families and that boundary ambiguity is associated with the structure of the stepfamily. Boundary ambiguity is negatively associated with the quality of the couple's relationship and stability of the union, but only from the perspective of wives and female partners.<sup>74</sup>

*Megan Sweeney, Remarriage and Stepfamilies: Strategic Sites for Family Scholarship in the 21st Century, 72 J. MARRIAGE & FAM. 667 (2010).*<sup>75</sup>

This article reviews areas of advancement over the past decade in our understanding of remarriage and stepfamilies and suggests promising new directions for future work. Profound shifts in the demographic context of family life motivate central themes in recent scholarship on remarriage and stepfamilies, including the diversity and complexity of stepfamily structures and processes, the consequences of multiple partnerships for adults and children, and potential selectivity in the characteristics of individuals entering remarried families and stepfamilies. Despite challenges to further progress, I argue that remarriage and stepfamilies offer strategic opportunities to investigate many core concerns of family scholars.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Susan D. Stewart, *Boundary Ambiguity in Stepfamilies*, 26 J. Fam. Issues 1002, 1002 (2005).

<sup>74</sup> *Id.*

<sup>75</sup> Megan M. Sweeney, *Remarriage and Stepfamilies: Strategic Sites for Family Scholarship in the 21st Century*, 72 J. Marriage & Fam. 667, 667 (2010).

<sup>76</sup> *Id.*

Jay Teachman, *Complex Life Course Patterns and the Risk of Divorce in Second Marriages*, 70 *MARRIAGE & FAM.* 294 (2008).<sup>77</sup>

I use data on women ... to examine the correlation of second marital dissolution. I have updated the limited number of previous studies on this topic by focusing on the relationships between divorce and the complex life course patterns that characterize respondents in second marriages. I pay particular attention to the roles played by stepchildren and cohabitation. I find that women who brought stepchildren into their second marriage experience an elevated risk of marital disruption. Premarital cohabitation or having a birth while cohabiting with a second husband did not raise the risk of marital dissolution, however. In addition, marrying a man who brought a child to the marriage did not increase the risk of marital disruption.<sup>78</sup>

Shannon E. Weaver & Marilyn Coleman, *Caught in the Middle: Mothers in Stepfamilies*. 27 *JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS* 305 (2010 issue 3).<sup>79</sup>

This article presents a grounded theory investigation of the roles women fulfill as mothers in stepfamilies. A key role for these twenty-four mothers was serving as the link between the stepfather (her husband) and her children. When conflicts arose between children and stepfathers, mothers' loyalties lay with their children, and they engaged in protective behavior manifested in four ways: defender, gatekeeper, mediator, and interpreter. Influences on these roles include (i) expectations for and perceptions of her family, (ii) her partner's experiences with families and children, (iii) structural characteristics of stepfamilies, and (iv) beliefs about children's needs. The performance of protective mother roles has important implications for the integration and development of the stepfamily, familial roles for family members, and women's general well-being.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Jay Teachman, *Complex Life Course Patterns and the Risk of Divorce in Second Marriages*, 70 *J. Marriage & Fam.* 294, 294 (2008).

<sup>78</sup> *Id.*

<sup>79</sup> Shannon E. Weaver & Marilyn Coleman, *Caught in the Middle: Mothers in Stepfamilies*, 27 *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 305, 305 (2010 Issue 3).

<sup>80</sup> *Id.*

## BOOKS

Helpful books on stepfamilies and stepparenting can most easily be found by searching online library catalogs,<sup>81</sup> Google,<sup>82</sup> and Amazon.com. The most useful search terms are again stepfamily, stepfamilies, stepdad, stepdads, stepfather, stepfathers, stepmom, stepmoms, stepmother, stepmothers, stepchild, stepchildren, and all their hyphenated offshoots.

(Include: 1. Finding books, 2. LCSH, 3. Amazon, 4. library catalogs, 5. what's included in pathfinder listings (author, title, link, publisher, date, library of congress and Dewey Decimal Call Numbers, length) 6. A blurb of why included.

## Library of Congress Subject Headings:

- Father and child
- Mother and child
- Parent and child
- Remarried people—United States
- Stepfamilies
- Stepfamilies—United States
- Stepfathers
- Stepmothers

*Anne Burt, My Father Married Your Mother: Writers Talk About Stepparents, Stepchildren, and Everyone in Between, (New York: W.W. Norton (2006)). ISBN: LC: Dewey.*

With the U.S. divorce rate hovering around fifty percent, most people recognize remarriage as a now-familiar occurrence. And remarriage often means stepfathers, -mothers, -brothers, and -sisters, and the formation of a new type of blended family. Jacquelyn Mitchard, Barbara Kingsolver, Roxana Robinson, Susan Cheever, and others share experiences of being stepdaughters, stepmothers, or ex-wives.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> See a list of selected catalogs available at WorldCat <https://www.worldcat.org/>.

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.google.com/>.

<sup>83</sup> From abstract of Anne Burt, *My father married your mother : writers talk about stepparents, stepchildren, and everyone in between* (2006) found on Worldcat at [https://www.worldcat.org/title/my-father-married-your-mother-writers-talk-about-stepparents-stepchildren-and-everyone-in-between/oclc/62381191&referer=brief\\_results](https://www.worldcat.org/title/my-father-married-your-mother-writers-talk-about-stepparents-stepchildren-and-everyone-in-between/oclc/62381191&referer=brief_results).



Ron L. Deal, *THE SMART STEPFAMILY: SEVEN STEPS TO A HEALTHY FAMILY* (Bethany House Publishers, Bloomington, MN (2014)). ISBN: 9781441264206, LC: Dewey.

Ron L. Deal, *THE SMART STEPDAD* (Bethany House Publishers, Bloomington, MN (2011)). ISBN: 9780764206962; E-Book ISBN: 9781441214645, LC: Dewey.

Ron L. Deal & Laura Petherbridge, *THE SMART STEPMOM: PRACTICAL STEPS TO HELP YOU THRIVE* (Bethany House Publishers, Bloomington, MN (2009)). ISBN: 9781441210999.

Shirley Cress Dudley, *Blended Family Advice: A step-by-step guide to help blended and step families become strong and successful* (Exlibris, www.Xlibris.com (2009)). ISBN: 9781441591104; E-book: 9781450001908.

Joshua M. Gold, *STEPPING IN, STEPPING OUT: CREATING STEPFAMILY RHYTHM* (Alexandria, VA, American Counseling Association (2016)). xv, 138 pp. ISBN: 9781556203312, LC: Dewey:

This much-needed resource offers insight into building and maintaining satisfying and successful stepfamily relationships. As the number of stepfamilies continues to increase, counselors and other mental health professionals are likely to encounter clients seeking help in navigating these often-complicated relationships. In this book, Dr. Gold emphasizes the principles and practices of narrative therapy as a means to address key concerns within the family system, re-author dominant social myths surrounding stepfamily life, and create realistic treatment plans that are inclusive of all members of the family. Detailing the inherent strengths and challenges of the stepfamily experience, he provides an in-depth examination of the roles of each member in a blended family, including stepfathers and stepmothers, ex-spouses, grandparents, and children. This book is an excellent guide to thoughtful, practical, and empirically validated interventions for helping stepfamilies thrive.<sup>84</sup>

Brian Higginbotham & Sheryl Goodey, *Relationship and Marriage Education for Remarried Couples and Stepfamilies, (Chapter) in*

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<sup>84</sup> From abstract of Joshua M. Gold, *Stepping in, Stepping Out: Creating Stepfamily Rhythm*, 138 (2016).

*Evidence-Based Approaches to Relationship and Marriage Education. James Ponzetti, Jr. (Ed) (New York, Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group (2016)) at 301.*

Remarriages and stepfamilies have received increased attention in the past decade. The attention stems from the prevalence of divorce and re-partnering and an interest in how unique issues in stepfamilies affect relationship quality. In addition to normative marital challenges, many couples in stepfamilies also face negative cultural stereotypes about their family structure, stepparenting responsibilities, and ongoing interactions with ex-partners. Addressing stepfamily-specific issues can distract couples from attending to the enhancement of their own relationships and can, unintentionally lead to increased conflict and dissolution. Fortunately, clinicians have noted that many of the problems commonly encountered by couples in stepfamilies stem from preventable or modifiable situations, not individual psychopathology.... Social scientists have recognized the need for distinct content in remarriage preparation and have cautioned family practitioners that couples entering stepfamilies may not be adequately prepared if they only participate in educational experiences geared toward general couple relationship skills and issues. There is ample research to create and provide useful resources geared specifically to the needs of couples with step-relationships. Now, the challenge for scholars and practitioners alike is to find ways to make quality, research-based resources widely accessible and attractive to these couples and the sources they look to for advice.<sup>85</sup>

*Rachelle Katz, THE HAPPY STEPMOTHER (Harlequin, Buffalo, NY2010). This source can be referenced by ISBN: 9780373892259. LC: HQ759.92; Dewey Decimal: 646.78 It has a resource guide in appendix.*

*Rose Kreider, Adopted Children and Stepchildren (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census Bureau, 2003).*

This report presents information on the characteristics of the 2.1 million adopted children and 4.4 million stepchildren of U.S. Census Bureau householders as estimated from the Census 2000 sample, which collected data from approximately one out of every six households. Together, these children represented

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<sup>85</sup> From abstract of Brian J. Higginbotham, *Relationship and Marriage Education for Remarried Couples and Stepfamilies*, 301 (2016).

approximately eight percent of the 84 million sons and daughters of householders in 2000.<sup>86</sup>

In a similar manner, in Census 2000, householders who listed stepchildren as living in their households may not always be married to the person who is the biological parent of the stepchild. Most of the 271,000 unmarried male householders who reported having stepchildren in their households also had a female unmarried partner (198,000). It seems unlikely that so many men would have the biological child of their former spouse living with them and more likely that the “stepchild” is the biological child of the unmarried partner with whom they are currently living. Since the English language does not have a more precise word to describe this kind of relationship, some respondents may have decided to report their partner’s child as their stepchild, even though they are not married to the child’s biological parent.<sup>87</sup>

However, it is estimated that Census 2000 may have identified only about two-thirds of all stepchildren living with at least one stepparent because of the manner in which the data were collected. For this reason, characteristics of the stepchildren shown in this report may not represent all stepchildren.<sup>88</sup>

*Elizabeth Marquardt, BETWEEN TWO WORLDS: THE INNER LIVES OF CHILDREN OF DIVORCE (Crown Publishing, New York 2005). ISBN: LC: Dewey.*

*Williams Marsiglio, STEPDADS: STORIES OF LOVE, HOPE, AND REPAIR ISBN: 9780742546646. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, (2004)). 319 pages. LC: HQ759.92 .M347 2004.*

Marsiglio has written an insightful and compelling account of the perceptions, feelings, and experiences of stepfathers in the contemporary United States. Ever so timely, stepdads grapple with a phenomenon that increasing numbers of men—and,

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<sup>86</sup> Rose Kreider, *Adopted Children And Stepchildren*, 2000, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census Bureau, (2003)) at 1, <https://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/censr-6.pdf>.

<sup>87</sup> *Id.* at 3.

<sup>88</sup> *Id.* at 2, n. 3.

indirectly, their new spouses or partners and stepchildren—will experience.<sup>89</sup>

The book has ten chapters and an appendix. The ten chapters are entitled: Contents include: Talking to Stepdads; A Lens for Stepfathering; Getting Started; Opening Doors, Being Involved; Overlooked Aspects Of Stepfathering; The Name Game, Owning And Bonding; Fathering Visions, Philosophy, And Context; Layers Of Stepfathering; And Taking Action.<sup>90</sup>

*Wednesday Martin, STEPMONSTER: A NEW LOOK AT WHY REAL STEPMOTHERS THINK, FEEL, AND ACT THE WAY WE DO (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, New York 2009). ISBN: 9781517071387, LC: HQ759.92M377, Dewey: 306.874.*

*Lilli Morgan, BLENDED FAMILIES: STEPS TO HELP YOU SUCCEED IN STEP-PARENTING AND BECOME A STRONG FAMILY, (Amazon Digital Services, 2006).*

This short text is a basic primer. It doesn't delve deeply into the nuances of blended families, but does provide an overview of the minefields perspective stepparents are about to transverse. Written by a layperson who writes of her experiences. It seems to be self-published; at least this librarian could find no publication information other than access via purchase from Amazon.com.

*Lynne Oxhorn-Ringwood & Louise Oxhorn, STEPWIVES: 10 STEPS TO HELP EX-WIVES AND STEPMOTHERS END THE STRUGGLE AND PUT THE KIDS FIRST (New York, Fireside, 2002) (ten-step program designed to help ex-wives and stepmothers work together to overcome enmity, develop a mutually beneficial relationship, put the children's needs first, and improve the happiness of the family).*

This is one of the most dated books in the list, but is included because of its refreshing style. Lynne and Louise were stepwives for ten years. While they managed a barely civil relationship, each was seething with anger on the inside. It all boiled over in an ugly scene on the day Lynne saw that Louise was wearing shoes identical to her favorite pair and then they knew they had to find a new way of being a family.

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<sup>89</sup> Pamela J. Smock, 111 *American Journal of Sociology* 1619, 1619 (Issue No. 5 (March, 2006)).

<sup>90</sup> From abstract of William Marsiglio, *Table of contents for Stepdads : stories of love, hope, and repair* (2004), <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip045/2003013676.html>.

With the guidance of marriage and family therapist Marjorie Vego Krausz, Lynne Oxhorn-Ringwood and Louise Oxhorn developed a ten-step program that has helped thousands of women begin to go from sworn enemies to Co-Mamas. You don't have to follow the program together with your stepwife; even if only one of you follows the plan, your stepwife relationship and the happiness of your family will improve.

Packed with quizzes, lists, and other helpful tools, *Stepwives* can show you how to *step into her shoes* and have a peaceful, cooperative relationship with your stepwife.<sup>91</sup>

*Patricia Papernow, SURVIVING AND THRIVING IN STEPFAMILY RELATIONSHIPS: WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T (New York: Routledge 2013). (229 pages) ISBN: 9780415894371, LC: HQ 759.92.P353 2013.*

*Surviving and thriving in stepfamily relationships* draws on current research, a wide variety of clinical modalities, and thirty years of clinical work with stepfamily members to describe the special challenges stepfamilies face. The book presents the concept of "stepfamily architecture" and the five challenges it creates, while delineating three different levels of strategies—psychoeducation, building interpersonal skills, and intrapsychic work—for meeting those challenges in dozens of different settings. The model is designed to be useful both to stepfamily members themselves and to a wide variety of practitioners, from a highly trained clinician who needs to know how and when to work on all three levels, to a school counselor or clergy person who may work on the first two levels but refer out for level three. It will also provide an accessible guide to educators, judges, mediators, lawyers, and medical personnel who will practice on the first level, but need to understand the other two to guide their work.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> From abstract of Lynne Oxhorn-Ringwood & Louise Oxhorn, *STEPWIVES: 10 STEPS TO HELP EX-WIVES AND STEPMOTHERS END THE STRUGGLE AND PUT THE KIDS FIRST* (New York, Fireside, 2002), <http://www.comamas.com/thebook.htm>.

<sup>92</sup> From abstract of Patricia L. Papernow, *Surviving and Thriving in Stepfamily Relationships: What Works and What Doesn't* (2013), [https://www.worldcat.org/title/surviving-and-thriving-in-stepfamily-relationships-what-works-and-what-doesnt/oclc/727702714&referer=brief\\_results#relatedsubjects](https://www.worldcat.org/title/surviving-and-thriving-in-stepfamily-relationships-what-works-and-what-doesnt/oclc/727702714&referer=brief_results#relatedsubjects).

*Carl E. Pickhardt, KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL STEPFATHERING\_(Barron's Educational Services, Inc. Hauppauge, N.Y. 1997). ISBN: 0812097157, LC: HQ 756.P52; Dewey: 306.874.*

*Jan Pryor, STEPFAMILIES: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON RESEARCH, POLICY, AND PRACTICE 222 (New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group 2014). ISBN: 978-0415814669, LC: Dewey:*

This new book reviews the most current global research and highlights the challenges, possibilities, and dynamics of stepfamily households. It describes their formation, their experiences, and the factors that help them thrive. International and cultural differences are highlighted throughout, along with issues of class, gender, and religion. Nontraditional stepfamilies, such as those headed by same-sex parents, are also explored along with clinical and legal issues. Engagingly written with numerous vignettes and examples, each chapter features objectives, an introduction, boldfaced key terms, summary, list of key terms, discussion questions, exercises, and additional text and web resources. The book concludes with a glossary. Highlights of coverage include: The history, diversity, and demography of stepfamilies (Chapter 1); the impact of race and culture on stepfamily dynamics (Chapter 3); the wellbeing of adults in stepfamilies including resident and nonresident parents (Chapter 5); relationships in stepfamilies including those between adults, between adults and children, and between siblings (Chapters 6 and 7); children's wellbeing in stepfamilies and factors that help explain outcomes (Chapter 8); the importance of intergenerational relationships (Chapter 9); stepfamilies headed by same-sex couples: wellbeing, stigma, and legal issues (Chapter 10); factors that promote wellbeing in stepfamilies such as communication patterns, rituals, and flexibility (Chapter 11); and interventions and therapy, and recent legal and policy issues (Chapters 12 and 13). Intended as a core advanced undergraduate/beginning graduate text for courses on stepfamilies or as a supplement for courses on divorce, family studies, introduction to the family, and/or marriage and the family taught in human development and family studies, psychology, sociology, and social work. The book also appeals to those who work with families in a counseling or legal setting. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2014 APA, all rights reserved).

*Catherine Ford Sori & Lorna Hecker, Ten Commandments for Stepfamilies, (Chapter) in Catherine Ford & Lorna Hecker, The*

*therapist's notebook for child and adolescents: Homework, handouts, and activities for use in psychotherapy 346* (Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group eds., 2016).

This chapter presents a psychoeducational tool that offers vital and succinct information for stepfamilies. Although the content is critical for healthy stepfamily functioning, the Ten Commandments format conveys this serious information with some levity. It can be used simply as a handout, or the content and issues may be integrated into couple and family psychotherapy sessions. The handout provided here is coupled with a concrete summary of topics that can be discussed in future sessions or at home. It can also serve as a guide for families in transition. The handout may also spur couples to read other suggested materials. It is especially useful in brief therapy, or when a family is rapidly headed toward a crisis.<sup>93</sup>

*Susan Stewart, BRAVE NEW STEPFAMILIES: DIVERSE PATHS TOWARD STEPFAMILY LIVING*<sup>94</sup> (Sage Publications 2007). ISBN: 076193023X, LC: HQ 759.92.S764 2007, Dewey: 306.874.

Brave New Stepfamilies maps the changing landscape of American stepfamilies, taking readers on a tour through the diverse assortment of traditional and not-so-traditional stepfamily forms that have emerged in recent years . . . [T]his book examines recent trends, such as couples having children and living together outside of marriage, parents sharing custody of children, gay marriage, the aging population, and increasing racial and ethnic diversity, that provide multiple pathways to stepfamily formation . . . [and] captures the lived experience of contemporary Americans . . .

Counting the number of stepfamilies in society is difficult; published estimates are sometimes unreliable. This book describes the latest data sources, trends in data collection, and data limitations.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> From abstract of Catherine Ford Sori, *Ten Commandments for Stepfamilies*, 346 (2016).

<sup>94</sup> Susan Stewart, *BRAVE NEW STEPFAMILIES: DIVERSE PATHS TOWARD STEPFAMILY LIVING* (Sage Publications 2007). ISBN: 076193023X, LC: HQ 759.92.S764 2007, Dewey: 306.874.

<sup>95</sup> Susan Stewart, *BRAVE NEW STEPFAMILIES: DIVERSE PATHS TOWARD STEPFAMILY LIVING* (Sage Publications 2007). ISBN: 076193023X, LC: HQ 759.92.S764 2007, Dewey: 306.874.

*Samantha Waltz, Blended: Writers on the Stepfamily Experience (Seal Press 2015). ISBN: 9781580055574, LC: HQ 759.92 .B547 2015, Dewey 306.874.*

This is a terrific compilation of essays.

*Blended* explores stepfamilies from the inside out through the perspectives of thirty writers who know what it's like first hand. Sometimes funny, often poignant, and always deeply personal, the stories in *Blended* capture the essence of stepfamilies in all of their weird and wonderful varieties. The journeys range from the first encounters between new step-relatives, to marriages, honeymoons, daily experiences, and divorces. The diverse voices in *Blended* reflect the realities of today's world in which yesterday's ideas of family structures and types just don't cut it anymore. Parents, children, siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins: all of these relationships change when families are melded into one, and the writers of *Blended* help explore the truth of what these new relationships look like, and, especially, feel like. *Blended* offers something for everyone: laughter, wisdom, empathy, and guidance, and, above all, the knowledge that you are not alone.<sup>96</sup>

*Lisa Wilson, A HISTORY OF STEPFAMILIES IN EARLY AMERICA (University of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill, NC 2014) (172 pages) ISBN: 9781469618425, LC: HQ 535.W55 Dewey: 306.874.*

*A History of Stepfamilies* examines the stereotypes and actualities of colonial stepfamilies and reveals them to be important factors in the early United States domestic history. Remarriage was a necessity in this era, when war and disease took a heavy toll, all too often leading to domestic stress. Cultural views of stepfamilies during this time placed great strain on stepmothers and stepfathers. Both were seen either as unfit substitutes or as potentially unstable influences. Nowhere were these concerns stronger than in white, middle-class families, for whom stepparents presented a paradox.

Wilson shares the stories of real stepfamilies in early New England, investigating the relationship between prejudice and lived experience, and in the end, offers a new way of looking at family units throughout history and the cultural stereotypes that still affect stepfamilies today.

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<sup>96</sup> Samantha Waltz, *BLENDED: WRITERS ON THE STEPFAMILY EXPERIENCE* (Seal Press 2015). ISBN: 9781580055574, LC: HQ 759.92. B547 2015, Dewey 306.874.



Susan Wisdom & Jennifer Green, *STEPCOUPLING: CREATING AND SUSTAINING A STRONG MARRIAGE IN TODAY'S BLENDED FAMILY* (Three Rivers Press 2002). ISBN: 0609807412, LC: HQ 759.92 W57 2002, Dewey: 306.874.

The authors use the word “stepcoupling” because they feel “it captures the unique ongoing process of forming and maintaining a marriage when children are involved. It also focuses squarely on the adults, as opposed to the stepfamily or stepchildren.”<sup>97</sup>

The short, (240 pages of text plus twenty pages of index and resources) is easy to read and helpful. Chapter titles include: *Congratulations! You're Part of a Step Couple*,<sup>98</sup> *Tailoring Your Expectations of Your Family and Your Spouse*,<sup>99</sup> *Shaping and Knowing Your Own Boundaries*,<sup>100</sup> *Rewriting Roles—A Feat of Family Acrobatics*,<sup>101</sup> *Blending Your Sometimes Opposing Styles*,<sup>102</sup> *Embracing Values: Your Own and Your Partner's*,<sup>103</sup> and *Empowering Everyone—The Key to Stepcoupling Success*.<sup>104</sup>

You can have a solid marriage – and an enjoyable family life. But, to do that, you have to understand the most important relationship in a stepfamily: the stepcouple.

‘Step-couple’ means the adults in a marriage (or committed relationship) that includes children from previous relationships. Stepfamily stability and success depend on the quality and strength of the step-couple.

Nobody ever told you it would be this hard. You expected the Brady Bunch – but you’re fighting all the time. Whether you’re arguing openly or freezing each other out, your home is a minefield of conflict.

The magical feelings of love and tenderness that propelled you into each other’s arms and down the aisle seem to have evaporated.

And, truth be told, you’re wondering if you made a big mistake.

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<sup>97</sup> Wisdom, Susan & Green, Jennifer. *Stepcoupling: Creating and Sustaining a Strong Marriage in Today's Blended Family*, 1 (Three Rivers Press, New York, (2002)).

<sup>98</sup> *Id.*

<sup>99</sup> *Id.* at 31.

<sup>100</sup> *Id.* at 52.

<sup>101</sup> *Id.* at 88.

<sup>102</sup> *Id.* at 124.

<sup>103</sup> *Id.* at 163.

<sup>104</sup> *Id.* at 205.

You've tried everything you already know to do, but nothing worked.

What you didn't understand is that stepfamilies are fundamentally different from nuclear families. Stepfamilies face challenges you couldn't begin to imagine before you were in one. In order to be successful, you have to understand the most important relationship in a stepfamily: the stepcouple.

Having a healthy, strong stepcouple relationship does not take magic – or luck. It takes four C's:

1. Nourishing strong emotional connections between partners,
2. Communicating effectively,
3. Becoming creative co-parents, and
4. Clarifying unresolved issues from previous relationships

These are all skills you and your partner can learn. Hundreds of other step-couples—people just like you, people at their wits' end about how to cope within their stepfamily—have learned them.<sup>105</sup>

*Ashley Womack, The Myth of The Stepmonster: A Qualitative Exploration Of The Stepmother Experience In A Complex Stepfamily System (Dissertation, Texas A&M) 76 Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: at (1-B), (Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest Information & Learning; 2015). ISBN: 9781321174977.*<sup>106</sup>

Stepfamilies are a common and growing family system in the United States, with an estimated 1,300 new stepfamilies forming every day. Stepfamily systems come in many shapes and sizes. The focus of this study is on the complex stepfamily, one in which both partners bring children to the marriage. Complex stepfamily systems have been shown to be the most difficult to navigate and meld of all the types of stepfamilies. Complex stepfamily systems include multiple households and require

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<sup>105</sup> Susan Wisdom, Stepcoupling: Creating and sustaining a strong marriage in today's blended family, STEPCOUPLING, <http://www.stepcoupling.com/>.

<sup>106</sup> Ashley B. Womack, *The Myth of the Stepmonster: A Qualitative Exploration of the Stepmother Experience in a Complex Stepfamily System* (Aug. 2014) (unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Texas A&M University-Commerce) (on file with author).

extensive boundary negotiation. The role of stepmother has been identified as the most ambiguous and stressful in the stepfamily system, yet it is the least researched. There are an estimated thirteen million women currently filling the role of stepmother. The purpose of the study is to take a qualitative look at the lived experience of ten stepmothers from complex stepfamily systems. The study used an interview format with open-ended questions to study the phenomenon of stepmother development in complex stepfamily systems.<sup>107</sup>

#### FILMS

*Ant-Man*.<sup>108</sup> (Marvel Studios 2015).

Dad and stepdad finally get along in this one! Dad, stepdad, daughter, and wife/ex-wife even share a dinner together.

*Daddy's Home*.<sup>109</sup> (Paramount Pictures 2015).

Stepdad, Brad Whitaker, is a radio host trying to get his stepchildren to love him and call him Dad, however his plans turn upside down when the biological father, Dusty Mayron, returns.<sup>110</sup>

*The Stepfather*.<sup>111</sup> (Incorporated Television Company 1987).

After murdering his entire family, a man remarries a widow with a teenage daughter in another town and prepares to do it all over again.<sup>112</sup>

*The Stepfather II*.<sup>113</sup> (Incorporated Television Company 1989).

After escaping the insane asylum in which he was incarcerated, the stepfather impersonates a marriage counselor and manages to win over a patient and her young son.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> *Id.* at iv.

<sup>108</sup> *Ant-Man*, MDB, [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0478970/?ref=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_1](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0478970/?ref=fn_al_tt_1) (last visited Oct. 18, 2015).

<sup>109</sup> *Daddy's Home*, MDB, [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1528854/?ref=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_1](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1528854/?ref=fn_al_tt_1) (last visited Oct. 18, 2016).

<sup>110</sup> *Id.*

<sup>111</sup> *The Stepfather*, MDB, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0094035/> (last visited Oct. 18, 2016).

<sup>112</sup> *Id.*

<sup>113</sup> *Stepfather II*, MDB, [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0098385/?ref=tt\\_rec\\_tt](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0098385/?ref=tt_rec_tt) (last visited Oct. 18, 2016).

*The Stepfather III.*<sup>115</sup> (Incorporated Television Company 1992).

That psycho stepfather has escaped from the insane asylum and had his face surgically altered. Now he's married again, this time to a woman with a child in a wheelchair. He goes on a killing spree once again.<sup>116</sup>

*The Stepfather*<sup>117</sup> (Screen Gems 2009).

A remake. Michael returns home from military school to find his mother happily in love and living with her new boyfriend. As the two men get to know each other, he becomes more and more suspicious of the man who is always there with a helpful hand.<sup>118</sup>

*Stepmom.*<sup>119</sup> (TriStar Pictures 1998).

Two children of Jackie and Luke have to cope with their parents' divorce and the new woman in their father's life, Isabel, a successful photographer. Isabel tries to make the children feel at home when they are with their dad, but loves her work and does not plan to give it up. Biological mom, Jackie, always a full-time, stay-at-home mom, is offended by Isabel's efforts. The conflict between moms deepens when Jackie is diagnosed with cancer.

*Stepmonster.*<sup>120</sup> (Concorde Pictures 1993).

Todd Dougherty has an imagination driven by a comic book. So when he accuses his soon-to-be stepmother of being a monster, no one believes him. When neighbors start turning up dead, it becomes a race against time for Todd to stop this hideous, carnivorous creature from marrying his dad and ruining his life.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>114</sup> *Id.*

<sup>115</sup> *Stepfather III*, MDB, [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0105470/plotsummary?ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_pl](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0105470/plotsummary?ref_=tt_ov_pl) (last visited Oct. 18, 2016).

<sup>116</sup> *Id.*

<sup>117</sup> *The Stepfather*, MDB, [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0814335/?ref\\_=tt\\_rec\\_tti](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0814335/?ref_=tt_rec_tti) (last visited Oct. 18, 2016).

<sup>118</sup> *Id.*

<sup>119</sup> *Stepmom*, MDB, [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120686/?ref\\_=ttco\\_co\\_tt](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120686/?ref_=ttco_co_tt) (last visited Oct. 18, 2016).

<sup>120</sup> *Stepmonster*, MDB, [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0108223/?ref\\_=ttpl\\_pl\\_tt](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0108223/?ref_=ttpl_pl_tt) (last visited Oct. 18, 2016).

<sup>121</sup> *Stepmonster*, MDB, [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0108223/plotsummary?ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_pl](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0108223/plotsummary?ref_=tt_ov_pl) (last visited Oct. 18, 2016).

## JOURNALS AND MAGAZINES

There are countless indexes to journals and magazines. Here are some of the more helpful and readily available in public and university libraries.

*Journal of Child and Family Studies*

*The Journal of Child and Family Studies* is an international forum for topical issues pertaining to the mental well-being of children, adolescents, and their families. The journal translates the latest research results into practical applications for clinicians and healthcare practitioners, by addressing all facets of emotional disorders, including issues associated with identification, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, and prevention. Original papers detail basic and applied research, program evaluation, service delivery, and policy issues on emotional or behavioral disorders, child abuse and neglect, respite care, foster care, mental health care financing, homelessness, family stress, AIDS, and substance abuse, among other timely topics.<sup>122</sup>

*The Journal of Marriage and Family (JMF)*

Published by the National Council on Family Relations, JMF is a leading research journal in the family field and highly cited.

JMF features original research and theory using the variety of methods reflective of the full range of social sciences, including quantitative, qualitative, and multi-method designs; research interpretation; integrative review; reports on methodological and statistical advances; and critical discussion concerning all aspects of marriage, other forms of close relationships, and families. The Journal also publishes brief reports.<sup>123</sup>

*Family Advocate*<sup>124</sup>

American Bar Association  
Section of Family Law  
321 N. Clark St

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<sup>122</sup> *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, SPRINGLINK, <http://link.springer.com/journal/10826> (last visited Oct. 19, 2016).

<sup>123</sup> *Journal of Marriage and Family*, NCFR, <https://www.ncfr.org/jmf> (last visited Oct. 19, 2016).

<sup>124</sup> *Family Advocate*, ABA, [http://www.americanbar.org/publications/family\\_advocate\\_home.html](http://www.americanbar.org/publications/family_advocate_home.html) (last visited Oct. 20, 2015).

Chicago, IL 60654  
Phone: (312) 988-5145  
Fax: (312) 988-6800  
E-mail: familylaw@americanbar.org

The *Family Advocate* is the quarterly news magazine of the American Bar Association Section of Family Law. It addresses “current family law topics and provides useful how-to articles in every issue.”<sup>125</sup>

It is available on Westlaw, Lexis, and Hein-on-line.

Individual hard copies may be purchased through the ABA Web Store.<sup>126</sup>

One recent issue of the *Family Advocate*<sup>127</sup> focused on the time separated or divorced parents spend with their children, the kinds of problems that may arise, and how to handle them.

*Family Law Quarterly*<sup>128</sup>

American Bar Association  
Section of Family Law  
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*Family Law Quarterly* is designed to keep practitioners current with an analytical view of existing and emerging family law issues and maintain them “informed on the year’s hot topics, including ‘Family Law in the Fifty States: Case Digests’ and ‘A Review of the Year in Family Law.’”<sup>129</sup>

It is indexed in Westlaw, Lexis, Hein-on-line, and JSTOR.

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<sup>125</sup> *Id.*

<sup>126</sup> 37.4 *Family Advocate*, (ABA 2015); see <http://shop.americanbar.org/eBus/Store/ProductDetails.aspx?productId=183916096> (last visited Oct. 20, 2015).

<sup>127</sup> 38.1 *Family Advocate*, (ABA 2015); see <http://shop.americanbar.org/eBus/Store/ProductDetails.aspx?productId=183916141> (last visited Oct. 20, 2015).

<sup>128</sup> *Family Law Quarterly* Home, ABA; see [http://www.americanbar.org/publications/family\\_law\\_quarterly\\_home.html](http://www.americanbar.org/publications/family_law_quarterly_home.html) (last visited Oct. 20, 2015).

<sup>129</sup> *Id.*

Individual hard copy<sup>130</sup> or downloadable pdfs<sup>131</sup> may be purchased through the ABA Web Store. Hard copies may be ordered by phone by calling the ABA Service Center at 1-800-285-2221.

*StepMom Magazine*<sup>132</sup>

This monthly, online publication purports to be a “how-to guide for any woman dating, living with, or married to someone who has kids.” The magazine promises to help stepmoms: stop feeling like an outsider in their own home, become a united front and strengthen their relationship, connect with their step-kids, reduce the negative impact the ex has on their life, communicate their feelings so their partner hears them, support their family without losing their own identity, overcome negative emotions, like anger and guilt, practice self-care without feeling selfish, master the art of detaching or disengaging with love, build a support network of other stepmoms, and take back control of their life and be happy.<sup>133</sup>

Being a stepmom is like having a dirty little secret. [Let’s face it, admitting] that his kids didn’t send you a card on Mother’s Day or explaining why you and your ex sit at opposite ends of the soccer field doesn’t make for great conversation at cocktail parties. If you’ve ever been told that you should love his kids like your own, or suck it up because you’re the adult, or that you knew what you were getting into when you started dating someone with kids, you know it’s easier to keep your stepmom status-a secret.<sup>134</sup>

In 2016, the five dollar monthly subscription (or twenty percent off with annual subscription) provides access to ongoing monthly issues and free online Support Group Access. Subscribers can

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<sup>130</sup> 49.3 Family Law Quarterly, (ABA 2016); see <http://shop.americanbar.org/eBus/Store/ProductDetails.aspx?productId=235787150&&term=51301004903> (last visited Oct. 20, 2016).

<sup>131</sup> 49.3 Family Law Quarterly, (ABA 2016); see <http://shop.americanbar.org/eBus/Store/ProductDetails.aspx?productId=240515975&ct=aae0fe8b0e610e188cbf047d78038f0a93ab14248efe38d48dfe2f5f5da60dd728f3a6b6a2d725f20cf2fbd7230e2f44cb87b21a30b44c543e94f17140412de2&term=51301004903> (last visited Oct. 20, 2016).

<sup>132</sup> STEP MOM MAGAZINE, <http://www.stepmommag.com/> (last visited Oct 20, 2016).

<sup>133</sup> *Id.*

<sup>134</sup> *Id.*

read the monthly issue on line, print it, or download it to a favorite reader.<sup>135</sup>

Sample columns and articles from the March, 2016 issue include: How Jealousy Affects Stepmom-Stepchild Relationships: It's Not Easy Being Green, by Wednesday Martin; Successful Stepmoms: Is It Luck—or Hard Work? By Trisha Ladogna; Successful Stepfamily Strategies: The Why and What of Putting Your Marriage First, by Heather Hetchler; Taking the Stepfamily Plunge: Add Value to Stepfamily Life by Being Vulnerable, by Mary T. Kelly; Stepfamily 101: Basic Protocols for a More Satisfying Life, by Claudette Chenevert; and The Looking Glass, a monthly roundup of news, events, reviews and more.<sup>136</sup>

#### BLOGS, PODCASTS, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

*www.thechildlessstepmom.com*<sup>137</sup>

Being a childless stepmom is not easy. We have the freedom to revert back to being the single women we once were, free from the responsibilities of children since we have none of our own, if we wish. But instead we choose to stay in a situation we do not have to be in, because we love the man we married, and have chosen to also love his [children].<sup>138</sup> She also has a Facebook page, The Childless Stepmom, noted below.

*Blended Family Support Network*<sup>139</sup>

This is a terrific website! While the author is certainly interested in readers purchasing her inexpensive (\$15-\$20) courses and materials, there is a great deal of free information available to those who are contemplating creating a blended family, or are already in one. The site offers support, help, and advice for stepfathers, stepmothers, and biological parents in a blended family.

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<sup>135</sup> Monthly Subscription, STEP MOM MAGAZINE, <http://www.stepmommag.com/shop/subscribe-today/monthly/> (last visited Oct 20, 2016).

<sup>136</sup> March 2016 Issue, STEP MOM MAGAZINE, <http://www.stepmommag.com/shop/2016-back-issues/march-2016-issue/> (last visited Oct 20, 2016).

<sup>137</sup> THE CHILDLESS STEPMOM, <http://www.thechildlessstepmom.com/> (last visited Oct 20, 2016).

<sup>138</sup> About Me, THE CHILDLESS STEPMOM, [http://www.thechildlessstepmom.com/About\\_Me.html](http://www.thechildlessstepmom.com/About_Me.html) (last visited Oct. 20, 2016).

<sup>139</sup> Adele Cornish, Support, Help and Advice for Stepfathers, Stepmothers, and Biological Parents in a Blended Family, Blended Family Success Network: Equipping Step-Families Worldwide for Success, <http://www.blendedfamilyfocus.com/>.



*The Blog*<sup>140</sup>

The Blog while dated, is free and filled with terrific advice. Sample posts include: Blending With Special Needs Children,<sup>141</sup> Discipline: Are your children treated unfairly?,<sup>142</sup> Respect: Is it crucial to success . . . .<sup>143</sup> Faults and all,<sup>144</sup> Forgiveness: What's the cost<sup>145</sup>, and How to get along with your stepchildren.<sup>146</sup>

<http://www.stepcoupling.com/blog/>

We each had custody of our five children—my two boys and his girl, boy, girl. Our ex-spouses moved away to greener pastures leaving us to raise the children. (We got well-needed breaks in the summer when the kids visited their other bio parents). We developed the skills to muddle through. Our new family slowly found its footing. There were days though when bolting seemed like the only way out! We never acted on it, fortunately.

Not surprisingly I developed a deep curiosity and passion for the plight of stepfamilies. I went to graduate school to earn a Masters Degree in counseling. I was prompted by colleagues and clients to write my book “Stepcoupling,”<sup>147</sup> based on my personal and clinical experience. “Stepcoupling” was published in 2003 by Three Rivers Press, a division of Random House. It has been a category best seller ever since.

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<sup>140</sup> Adele Cornish, Blending with Special Needs Children, Blended Family Success Network: Equipping Step Families Worldwide for Success; Blog, <http://www.blendedfamilyfocus.com/category/blog/>.

<sup>141</sup> Adele Cornish, Blending with Special Needs Children, Blended Family Success Network: Equipping Step Families Worldwide for Success, <http://www.blendedfamilyfocus.com/special-needs-child/>.

<sup>142</sup> Adele Cornish, Discipline: Are your Children Treated Unfairly?, Blended Family Success Network: Equipping Step Families Worldwide for Success, <http://www.blendedfamilyfocus.com/unfair-treatment/>.

<sup>143</sup> Adele Cornish, Respect: Is it Crucial to Success..., Blended Family Success Network: Equipping Step Families Worldwide for Success, <http://www.blendedfamilyfocus.com/respect/>.

<sup>144</sup> Adele Cornish, Faults and All, Blended Family Success Network: Equipping Step Families Worldwide for Success, <http://www.blendedfamilyfocus.com/faults-and-all/>.

<sup>145</sup> Adele Cornish, Forgiveness: What's the Cost, Blended Family Success Network: Equipping Step Families Worldwide for Success, <http://www.blendedfamilyfocus.com/forgiveness/>.

<sup>146</sup> Adele Cornish, How to get along with your Stepchildren, Blended Family Success Network: Equipping Step Families Worldwide for Success, <http://www.blendedfamilyfocus.com/getting-on-with-stepchildren/>.

<sup>147</sup> Susan Wisdom & Jennifer Green, *Stepcoupling: Creating and Sustaining a Strong Marriage in Today's Blended Family* (New York: Three Rivers Press 2002).

I have now retired from active clinical practice and hope to give someone else the opportunity to explore the use of the service trademark, Stepcoupling®, as well as the domain name and web presence. There is a wealth of material for future books and blogs.

Did our particular family ever “blend”? I don’t think so, but we became a more homogeneous mixture over time. We are still evolving as a family. As we shrink our household in preparation for our “golden years,” we can no longer accommodate fifteen or twenty for sit-down dinner occasions. Our family ranges in age from 6 to 76 years. This year, we rented a cozy commercial space on Christmas Eve for food, drink, and secret Santa presents. We all loved it and we now have a new way to celebrate. Even now we continue to bond and form our own special stepfamily traditions. It’s been an adventure and one I’m happy we stuck with together, as a step couple.

*Melissa Marks, Blended Family Podcast*<sup>148</sup>

Melissa Marks, Blended Family Podcast is available at <http://www.blendedfamilypodcast.com/> and users can subscribe to it on iTunes, Stitcher, and TuneinRadio. Although the blog pages say users can subscribe through RSS, the RSS link did not work. Tweets and replies concerning the blog are available on Twitter.<sup>149</sup>

The Blended Family Podcast is a weekly show with a strong focus on strategies and methods to help your family thrive. Blended Families face many difficulties and challenges which can sometimes drive families apart. The goal of this podcast is to help your family grow together through these challenges and create the peaceful and loving home you desire. Your host, Melissa, understands these struggles because she has a blended family of her own. When you listen to this podcast, you will see that the family life you have always dreamed of is completely attainable!<sup>150</sup>

Recent podcasts include: Episode sixty-nine, Blended Families in TV and Film (March 14, 2016); Episode sixty-eight, Sex Positivity Part 2: Children and their sexual identity (March 7, 2016); Episode sixty-

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<sup>148</sup> Blended: All you need is love, Blended Family Podcast, <http://www.blendedfamilypodcast.com/>.

<sup>149</sup> Mellisa Brown (@1blendedfamily), Twitter, <https://twitter.com/@1blendedfamily/>.

<sup>150</sup> Melissa Brown, Blended: All you need is love, Blended Family Podcast: iTunes, <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/blended-family-podcast/id925676451?mt=2&i=352775202>, Stitcher/.

seven, Sex Positivity Part 1: Fostering open communication about sex in your blended family (February 29, 2016); and Episode 66, Balancing business and a blended family (February 22, 2016).

### *Facebook*

Facebook can serve as a marvelous tool to bring friends and family together. It can also provide much needed support and assistance on almost any human endeavor, including stepparenting. Finding appropriate groups is as simple as typing in search terms into the Facebook search bar. Below is a listing of several sites; I omitted those that appeared purely commercial.

### *The Childless Stepmom.*<sup>151</sup>

A former custodial childless stepmom who has seen it all and lived to tell about it.<sup>152</sup> She also has a blog, [www.thechildlessstepmom.com](http://www.thechildlessstepmom.com), noted above.

### *Claudette Chenevert*<sup>153</sup>

This is the Facebook page for an online Stepmom Self-Study Program.

Being a stepparent is not something that comes naturally or even intuitively. Being a stepparent takes knowledge and support. Stepmom Self-Study program offers ... a selection of programs to help stepparents...have more confidence...deal effectively and positively with conflict [and] create a support system.<sup>154</sup>

### *National Step FamilyDay*<sup>155</sup>

### *Step-moms survival guide.*<sup>156</sup>

This health and wellness website “is a safe place for stepmoms to find advice about moving forward in their lives. A healthy outlet

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<sup>151</sup> The Childless Stepmom, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/ChildlessStepmoms/>.

<sup>152</sup> The Childless Stepmom, Facebook, [https://www.facebook.com/ChildlessStepmoms/info?tab=page\\_info](https://www.facebook.com/ChildlessStepmoms/info?tab=page_info). See also her blog at [www.thechildlessstepmom.com](http://www.thechildlessstepmom.com).

<sup>153</sup> Claudette Chenevert, The Stepmom Coach, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/ClaudetteChenevert.StepmomCoach/>.

<sup>154</sup> *Id.* see also <http://www.stepmomcoach.com/>.

<sup>155</sup> Larry James, Celebrate Love & Relationship, <http://www.celebratelove.com/>.

<sup>156</sup> Step-Moms Survival Guide, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/Step-moms-survival-guide-138879596201245/>.

for step-moms who have been unable to find an outlet for their experiences.”<sup>157</sup>

### *Stepmom Support*<sup>158</sup>

This page was created by a stepmom who recognized the need for a safe, encouraging, supportive place for stepmoms to gather and build each other up. We all know this role can be challenging, painful, and often thankless. Those who have never been in our shoes often don’t understand. It helps to have someone to talk to who understands the complexities of emotions that are so much a daily part of being a stepmom!

Fellow stepmoms seeking support are encouraged to send their requests for advice to us through the private message option. We then post these requests for advice on our page anonymously for our fans. We are NOT a closed group. If you post directly to the page, your own Facebook friends can see your activity and may see your posts. We have weighed the pros and cons of keeping this an open fan page vs. a closed group, and we feel keeping it an open fan page offers the most support for the most people. That is why we offer the option to have your requests posted anonymously. Under no circumstances will we give out the name of who requested an anonymous post.<sup>159</sup>

### *StepmomHelp.com.*<sup>160</sup>

This personal coaching page is hosted out of Ithaca, New York. Its author, Jenna, is a certified stepfamily coach, certified relationship coach, and co-author of the book *Skirts at War: Beyond Divorced Mom/Stepmom Conflict*. Jenna helps stepmoms become successful, happy and at peace in their families. She also helps step-couples strengthen their relationships. She offers coaching via phone or video plus a variety of other services, including a home-study program.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Step- Moms Survival Guide, Facebook, [https://www.facebook.com/Step-moms-survival-guide-138879596201245/info/?tab=page\\_info/](https://www.facebook.com/Step-moms-survival-guide-138879596201245/info/?tab=page_info/).

<sup>158</sup> Stepmom Support, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/StepmomSupportPage/>.

<sup>159</sup> Stepmom Support, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/StepmomSupportPage/posts/1105151859518805>.

<sup>160</sup> Jenna, StepmomHelp.com, Facebook, [https://www.facebook.com/StepmomHelpcom-258547397517783/info/?tab=page\\_info/](https://www.facebook.com/StepmomHelpcom-258547397517783/info/?tab=page_info/).

<sup>161</sup> StepMom Magazine, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/StepMomMagazine/>.

*StepMom Magazine*<sup>162</sup>

This is the Facebook page for the online magazine of the same name, listed above.

*Stepmom Real Talk*<sup>163</sup>

Stepmom Real Talk is a page where we talk about real issues us stepmoms face. All are welcome, but NO bashing and foul language! This is a safe zone.

You Can't Scare Me, I'm a Stepmom.<sup>164</sup>

"It's often the most thankless role in a blended family, one that brings doubt and insecurity and, yes, rewards. Share and support other stepmoms here!"<sup>165</sup>

## LICENSED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS

Licensed professional counselors refers to individuals licensed by the individual states to serve as counselors. Titles vary. The National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) tells us:

A state license in counseling is permission from a particular state to practice counseling or to call oneself a licensed counselor. Some states have a single license and some have a two-tiered system. The names of state licenses vary from state to state. Some examples are LPC, LCPC, LPCC, LMHC, LPCMH, LCMHC, [and] LPC-MH.<sup>166</sup>

According to NBCC, the credential differs from state to state and is determined by the state regulatory boards. The 'most common titles are: Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC), Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC), [and] Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC).'<sup>167</sup>

<sup>162</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/StepMomMagazine/>. This is the Facebook page for the online magazine of the same name, listed above.

<sup>163</sup> StepMom Magazine, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/StepMomMagazine/>.

<sup>164</sup> You Can't Scare me I'm a Stepmom, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/notsowickedstepmom/>.

<sup>165</sup> You Can't Scare me I'm a Stepmom, Facebook, [https://www.facebook.com/notsowickedstepmom/info?tab=page\\_info](https://www.facebook.com/notsowickedstepmom/info?tab=page_info).

<sup>166</sup> Understanding National Certification and State Licensure, Nat'l Bd. For Certified Counselors: Promoting Counseling through Certification, <http://www.nbcc.org/CertificationorLicensure/>.

<sup>167</sup> *Id.*

The NBCC espouses the virtues of national certification.

National counselor certification from NBCC demonstrates to the public and employers that the counselor has met the national standards set by the counseling profession. It is not a license to practice. In some states, holding a national certification can assist the counselor in obtaining a state license. National certification travels with the counselor no matter the state or country of residence. The flagship national certification offered by NBCC is the NCC (National Certified Counselor), and it is the largest national counselor certification in the world.<sup>168</sup>

The NBCC can be reached at:

NBCC  
 3 Terrace Way  
 Greensboro, North Carolina 27403-3660  
 Phone: 336-547-0607  
 Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

*American Counseling Association*<sup>169</sup>

- American Counseling Association Pamphlet
- State professional counselor licensure boards
  - This directory of state counselor licensure boards included phone numbers, addresses and internet addresses. Many websites allow searches to locate licensed practitioners.

*Florida Department of Health*

For example, Floridians look to the Florida Department of Health's Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage & Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling,<sup>170</sup> open hours from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday to Friday.

Florida Department of Health  
 Board of Mental Health Professions

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<sup>168</sup> *Id.*

<sup>169</sup> American Counseling Ass'n: Your Passion. Your Profession. Our Purpose, <https://www.counseling.org/>.

<sup>170</sup> Florida Bd. Of Clinical Soc. Work, Marriage & Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling, <http://floridasmentalhealthprofessions.gov/>.

4052 Bald Cypress Way  
Bin C-08  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-3257  
Phone (850) 488-0595

In February 2016, the Florida Department of Health, Division of Medical Quality Assurance launched its new Search Services Portal.<sup>171</sup> The new portal “combines five commonly-used MQA search sites into one search portal for easy access.” Among other things, the website allows users to use “MQA’s online License Verification search to review the Division’s database by licensee name, license number or other search criteria; search disciplinary and administrative actions; view practitioner profiles which contain information regarding education and training, specialty certifications, professional affiliations [and review] nursing education program information . . .

Another example is the State of Nevada Board of Examiners for Marriage & Family Therapists & Clinical Professional Counselors. The board “Exists for the protection of the public. The Board is empowered under [Nevada statutes] to set minimum standards for the licensing of marriage and family therapists and clinical professional counselors and to oversee the ethical conduct of licensed therapists, counselors and licensed interns in the State of Nevada.” The office is open 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, and closed during lunch hour from noon to 1:00 p.m.

#### *National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC)*

- Search for NBCC certified members
- Under one tab labeled “Resources for the Public”, the NBCC provides these helpful links:
  - Find a national Certified Counselor in your area
  - Verify a National Certified
  - Understanding Certification and Licensure Counselor
  - Why choose a National Certified Counselor
  - Why hire a National Certified Counselor
  - Ethics
  - Job Board

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<sup>171</sup> Florida Bd. Of Clinical Soc. Work, Marriage & Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling, <http://floridasmentalhealthprofessions.gov/>.

- *The Professional Counselor*, the “official, peer-reviewed, open-source, electronic journal of the National Board for Certified Counselors . . . .”
- Who are they
- How to find them

#### ASSOCIATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

##### *American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy*<sup>172</sup>

The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) is the professional association for the field of marriage and family therapy. We represent the professional interests of more than 50,000 marriage and family therapists throughout the United States, Canada and abroad.<sup>173</sup>

The Association provides helpful links to resources, job postings, and an online registry of marriage and family counselors.

*Bonus Families - A non-profit organization dedicated to peaceful coexistence between separated or divorced parents and their new families.*

*Divorce Net,*<sup>174</sup> (NOLO Press) includes State by State resource center<sup>175</sup> and interactive bulletin boards (forums) dealing with various divorced family and stepfamily issues.

##### *National Stepfamily Resource Center (NSRC)*<sup>176</sup>

NSRC is a division of Auburn University’s Center for Children, Youth, and Families. Its primary objective is to serve “as a clearinghouse of information, linking family science research on stepfamilies and best practices in work with couples and children in stepfamilies, [including] resources for stepfamilies, facts and FAQs about stepfamilies, posted research summaries and annotated bibliographies of stepfamily research, in addition to training institutes for family life and marriage educators,

<sup>172</sup> American Ass’n for Marriage and Family Therapy, <http://www.aamft.org/>.

<sup>173</sup> *Id.*

<sup>174</sup> DIVORCENET, <http://www.divorcenet.com> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>175</sup> Filing for Divorce, DIVORCENET, <http://www.divorcenet.com/topics/filing-for-divorce> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>176</sup> NAT’L STEPFAMILY RESOURCE CTR., <http://www.stepfamilies.info> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).



therapists and counselors, media consulting on stepfamily issues, as well as expert consulting on special projects, programs, and products targeting stepfamilies, and development of educational materials for use with stepfamilies.”<sup>177</sup>

One resource linked to is the Oregon Center for Applied Sciences Online Stepparenting Program,<sup>178</sup> a self-administered, interactive, and web-based program that uses videos to demonstrate effective couple, parenting, and stepparenting practices. It is available for free.

Another resource is its online annotated bibliography and summary of research findings on remarriage and stepfamilies from 2005 to 2012.<sup>179</sup> The bibliography is divided into eight topics: Remarriage and Stepfamilies: General Findings,<sup>180</sup> Marital Relationships and Other Adult Issues,<sup>181</sup> Stepfamily Life,<sup>182</sup> Stepparenting,<sup>183</sup> Child Outcomes,<sup>184</sup> Former Spouses and Generational Relationships,<sup>185</sup> Intervention,<sup>186</sup> and Broader Social Issues.<sup>187</sup>

Finally, the NSRC provides an extensive list of links to available resources.

Inclusion in this list does not necessarily imply NSRC endorsement of their ideas or services. Links are grouped by stepfamilies, stepmothers, stepfathers, divorce issues, [and] useful links for media professionals and research.<sup>188</sup>

<sup>177</sup> *Id.*

<sup>178</sup> Oregon Center for Applied Science Online Stepparenting Program, NAT’L STEPFAMILY RESOURCE CTR., <http://www.stepfamilies.info/stepfamilyprogram> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016) see also, Vicky A. Gelatt et al., *An Interactive Web-Based Program for Stepfamilies: Development and Evaluation of Efficacy*, 59 FAM. REL. (2010).

<sup>179</sup> Kay Pasley, *A Listing and Summary of Research Findings on Remarriage and Stepfamilies (2005 - 2012)*, NAT’L STEPFAMILY RESOURCE CTR., <http://www.stepfamilies.info/bibliography.php> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>180</sup> Remarriage and Stepfamilies: General Findings, NAT’L STEPFAMILY RESOURCE CTR., <http://www.stepfamilies.info/bib-general.php> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>181</sup> Marital Relationships and Other Adult Issues, NAT’L STEPFAMILY RESOURCE CTR., <http://www.stepfamilies.info/bib-adult.php> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>182</sup> Stepfamily Life, NAT’L STEPFAMILY RESOURCE CTR., <http://www.stepfamilies.info/bib-familylife.php> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>183</sup> Stepparenting, NAT’L STEPFAMILY RESOURCE CTR., <http://www.stepfamilies.info/bib-stepparenting.php> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>184</sup> Child Outcomes, NAT’L STEPFAMILY RESOURCE CTR., <http://www.stepfamilies.info/bib-child.php> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>185</sup> Former Spouses and Generational Relationships, NAT’L STEPFAMILY RESOURCE CTR., <http://www.stepfamilies.info/bib-generational.php> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>186</sup> Intervention, NAT’L STEPFAMILY RESOURCE CTR., <http://www.stepfamilies.info/bib-intervention.php> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>187</sup> Broader Social Issues, NAT’L STEPFAMILY RESOURCE CTR., <http://www.stepfamilies.info/bib-socialissues.php> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>188</sup> Links, NAT’L STEPFAMILY RESOURCE CTR., <http://www.stepfamilies.info/bib-socialissues.php> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

Selected links include: Bonus Families,<sup>189</sup> Designing Dynamics Stepfamilies,<sup>190</sup> ShareKids.com,<sup>191</sup> Stepfamily Association of Victoria, Inc.,<sup>192</sup> Stepfamily information,<sup>193</sup> The Second Wives,<sup>194</sup> StepTogether,<sup>195</sup> and Divorce Net.<sup>196</sup>

*Proactive Change*<sup>197</sup>

Includes useful links for divorced dads.

*Step Family Foundation, Inc.*<sup>198</sup>

*Stepfamily in Formation*<sup>199</sup>

This nonprofit, research-based, educational site is for prospective and current stepfamily members and their supporters. It suggests twelve ongoing projects that co-parents can work at together to overcome five re-divorce hazards, and build a high-nurturance stepfamily. Browse over 450 web pages on understanding and resolving typical stepfamily problems.

*Step Family Association of America.*<sup>200</sup>

Step Family Association of America was once a national organization dedicated to providing support and guidance to families with children from previous relationship . . . ; to develop and disseminate research-based information and materials; design, implement, and evaluate opportunities for support and education; evaluate and recommend programs, materials, and

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<sup>189</sup> BONUS FAMILIES, <https://bonusfamilies.com> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>190</sup> DESIGNINGDYNAMICSTEPFAMILIES.COM, <http://http://www.designingdynamicstepfamilies.com> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>191</sup> SHAREKIDS.COM, <http://www.sharekids.com>, (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>192</sup> STEP FAMILIES AUSTRALIA, <http://www.stepfamily.org.au> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>193</sup> Peter K. Gerlach, BREAK THE CYCLE!, <http://www.sfhelp.org> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>194</sup> SECOND WIVES CLUB, <http://www.secondwivesclub.com> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>195</sup> STEP TOGETHER, <http://www.steptogether.org> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>196</sup> DIVORCENET, *supra* note 174.

<sup>197</sup> STILL A DAD, Divorce Support for Men: How to be a Father During and After Divorce, <http://stilladad.com> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>198</sup> THE STEP FAM. FOUND., <http://www.stepfamily.org/> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>199</sup> Gerlach, *supra* note 193.

<sup>200</sup> FAMILY FIRST, <http://familyfirst.com/stepfamily-association-of-america.html>, (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

standards of practice; and advocate for financial, institutional, political and social changes that support stepfamilies.<sup>201</sup>

However, in 2006, the Nation's only nonprofit organization focused on the dissemination of research-based resources for stepfamilies and professionals who work with them. The Association voted not to renew its independent organization 501(c)(3) nonprofit status and donated its history, website, and experts network to support the development and expansion of The National Stepfamily Resource Center.<sup>202</sup>

Adopting SAA's vision, The National Stepfamily Resource Center's primary objective is serving as a clearinghouse of information, linking family science research on stepfamilies and best practices in work with couples and children in stepfamilies.

<http://familyfirst.com/stepfamily-association-of-america.html>

Stepfamily Foundation Inc.  
Jeannette Lofas, Ph.D., LCSW  
310 West 85th St., Suite 1B  
New York, NY 10024  
Phone: (212)877-3244  
Email: Stepfamily@aol.com

The Stepfamily Foundation provides counseling for blended families, including divorce counseling, remarriage counseling, and stepfamily certification seminars. Founded in 1975, it is a not-for-profit organization with a mission to research, counsel, and help make stepfamilies function well by "addressing the issues of: partnership, couple strength, discipline, roles, organization, conflict of loyalties, [and the ex-spouse]."<sup>203</sup> The Foundation also provides Certification Seminars for people interested in becoming certified stepfamily counselors or coaches.

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<sup>201</sup> *Id.*

<sup>202</sup> NAT'L STEPFAMILY RESOURCE CTR., *supra* note 179.

<sup>203</sup> See THE STEP FAM. FOUND., *supra* note 198.

## EXPERTS

*Adele Cornish*<sup>204</sup>

Adele Cornish is an author, speaker, International Blended Family Advisor, and founder of The Blended Family Support Network. She has [used] her social work background to extensively research and address the unique challenges blended families face...and to develop a program that currently teaches practical skills and strategies to couples worldwide, equipping them to overcome the common obstacles to blended family success. She has appeared on national television...and radio speaking about blended families, authored a book, written magazine feature articles, and regularly runs seminars on this topic.

Adele is part of a blended family. She is a biological mother of three boys and...a stepmother of two children for nineteen years. She is also a stepdaughter [who brings insight and compassion to the subject of stepfamilies. She and her husband run seminars and workshops for couples in blended families.] They also run training sessions for professionals (counselors, psychologists etc.) who work alongside blended families.<sup>205</sup>

She can be found on Twitter at @AdeleCornish.

*Ron Deal*

Ron Deal

Author, Speaker, <http://www.successfulstepfamilies.com/index.php>

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Twitter @RonLDeal

*Patricia Papernow, EdD*

Patricia Papernow, EdD

Psychologist, Hudson, MA

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<sup>204</sup> BLENDED FAMILY SUCCESS NETWORK, [http://www.blendedfamilyfocus.com/about\\_us/](http://www.blendedfamilyfocus.com/about_us/) (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>205</sup> *Id.*

Clinical Instructor in Psychology, Dept. of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School

Author, *Becoming a Stepfamily* (Taylor & Francis) and *Surviving and Thriving in Stepfamily Relationships* (Routledge, 2013).

ppapernow@gmail.com

A list of her professional publications is available on the web, including translations into Japanese and Italian.<sup>206</sup> Here is a selection:

The Remarriage Triangle: Working With Later-Life Recouplers And Their Grown Children. PSYCHOTHERAPY NETWORKER (January/February 2016 at 49).<sup>207</sup>

Therapy with Couples in Stepfamilies, in, Gurman, A. & Lebow, J. (eds.), CLINICAL HANDBOOK OF COUPLE THERAPY,, 5th ed. (New York: Guilford (2015)) at 467.

Providing evidence-based help to stepfamilies. 30 BROWN UNIVERSITY CHILD AND BEHAVIOR LETTER (March, 2014).

And her seminal work, *infra note 70, SURVIVING AND THRIVING IN STEPFAMILY RELATIONSHIPS: WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T*. (New York: Routledge 2013) (229 pages) ISBN: 9780415894371, LC: HQ 759.92.P353 2013.

Radio Appearances<sup>208</sup> include *On Point* with Tom Ashbrook, *Radio Times* with Marty Moss-Coane, *Family Matters* with Virginia Colin, *Voices in the Family* with Dr. Daniel Gottlieb, *Safe Space Radio* with Dr. Anne Hallward, and the *Mom Enough Radio Show*.

Our understanding of the word “family” is changing, just as our understanding of energy and matter changed with Einstein’s pronouncement of  $E=mc^2$ . Unlike Einstein’s formula, which periodically gets re-tested and is found yet again to hold true, there seems to be no new “right” formula for families. It can’t be, it seems, that the

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<sup>206</sup> Patricia Papernow, Professional Publications by Dr. Papernow, DR. PATRICIA PAPEROW, <http://www.stepfamilyrelationships.com/publications-by-dr-papernow.htm> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

<sup>207</sup> Patricia Papernow, Working with Later-Life Recouplers and their Grown Children, PSYCHOTHERAPY NETWORKER, (MAR. 11, 2016), <https://www.psychotherapy.networker.org/blog/details/756/the-remarriage-triangle>.

<sup>208</sup> Patricia Papernow, Radio Interviews with Dr. Papernow, DR. PATRICIA PAPERNOW, <http://www.stepfamilyrelationships.com/listen-to-radio-interviews-with-dr-papernow.html> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).

interactions of relatively few human beings—moms, dads, children, stepmoms, stepdads, and stepchildren—should prove to be more complex than the interactions of electrons, protons, neutrons, quarks, muons, neutrinos, positrons, Leptons, and antileptons to name a few sub-atomic particles.

But we have divorces, which of course generally occur under less than optimum circumstances; so we have a mix of ex-spouses and new spouse (particularly volatile if a new spouse led to a new divorce) into which we try to blend the children. Children who are strangers to one or more new adults and even, perhaps, to new siblings. Differing parenting styles come into play, where once children had to deal with mommy and daddy rules, they now have to deal with mommy and daddy rules, and stepmom's rules, and stepdad's rules. Ugh!

But there is good news. Despite all the evil ex-spouses, despite all the hurting—and often grieving children—despite all the despair when everything and everyone seem to be at odds; there is hope.

In time, things settle down. Some blends blend more smoothly than others, but there are strategies to help families in throes of battles to drop their weapons and begin to see that no one is the enemy and that it behooves anyone to try redouble efforts to get along or to at least stop fueling fires. My bride and I have seen this in our own family. It's been five years now and things have settled down.

Our oldest is now a practicing lawyer, still struggling with law school debt and the cost of living in New York, but on an upward trajectory and living the life he chooses. Our second oldest is touring the country as Patsy Cline while weighing whether to do this show or that, or direct another. Our next two—the step-twins, as we call them, born two weeks but two worlds apart—are moving along too. One left for Oklahoma to help his maternal grandmother out on the farm after his grandfather passed away earlier this year, and the other is a junior at Rollins College who, following in her mother's footsteps, is also a successful entrepreneur of a pet sitting service with thousands of followers on Pinterest. Another is finishing her freshman year with straight A's at Florida State and enjoys showing us around her town; her pizza shop, her bagel shop, and her Smoothie King. Our high school sophomore took up water polo and is set to graduate a year early next spring, while our baby-turned-teen this year continues with exceptional grades and proudly plays the French horn.

As our children have matured, so has the family. Things go more smoothly now as time passes and everyone has had a chance to take a breath and see that the world didn't come to an end. As one of my

daughters told my bride recently, “You know, we really were rough on you in the beginning. I’m sorry we didn’t treat you right.”

Society has noticed that more and more families are coming together in ways outside the traditional and we’ve begun to turn our attention to finding ways to help blended families live a more fulfilling life.

I hope, the books, articles, internet resources, experts, and associations identified herein help blended families find their way to calmer seas.

And don’t forget to celebrate National Step Family Day, September 16<sup>th</sup>!<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Larry James, National Step Family Day!, CELEBRATELOVE.COM, <http://www.celebratelove.com/stepfamilyday.htm> (last visited Oct. 27, 2016).