

PARENTAL STATUS: A NEW CONSTRUCT DESCRIBING  
ADOLESCENT PERCEPTIONS OF STEPFATHERS

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of Educational Counselling and Psychology;

Counselling Psychology Programme)

We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

September 2000

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## Abstract

This research investigated the effects of mothers' and stepfathers' parental behaviors on late adolescent adjustment and the moderating effects of stepfathers' parental status on the relationship between stepfathers' parental behaviors and late adolescent adjustment. In Study 1 a measure for parental status (PSI: The Parental Status Inventory) was developed. Parental status, as a social cognition, addresses the degree to which the stepparent is perceived as a parent by the stepchild, the stepparent, and/or the residential parent. Findings resulted in a 14-item scale with good reliability (Cronbach's alpha .97). The PSI was moderately associated with attachment and closeness to the stepparent but was not associated with peer attachments. The PSI had a low to moderate association with the age of the respondent at the time the stepfamily originated.

In Study 2, the effects of late adolescent perceptions of parental behaviors by mothers and stepfathers on late adolescent adjustment and the moderating effects of stepfathers' parental status on the relationship between his parenting behaviors and late adolescent adjustment were explored.

Results of a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses with interaction terms indicated that, of mothers' and stepfathers' parenting behaviors, only mothers' connection explained a significant amount of variance (10%) in female adaptive behaviors. The models explaining problem behavior in late adolescents did not show significant results for either females or males.

Additional findings were that parental status did not moderate the effects of stepfathers' connection, regulation or psychological control on late adolescent adaptive or problem behaviors for either females or males.

In summary, parental status did not moderate the variables in question. However, the evidence from this research suggests that the construct of parental

status is valid and that the PSI is a valid and reliable measure. Together the construct of parental status and the PSI have the potential to contribute to the development of knowledge in stepfamilies in theoretical, research and clinical settings.



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## Dedications

To Melanie,

This research project is as old as you are.

And in my time away from it,  
you've taught me a tremendous amount about parenting...  
the most important aspects of which  
can never be written down,  
and are only understood with the heart.

Love Mom

To my brother Mark,

who, in the last two years of this project,  
was transformed from a confirmed bachelor  
to the best stepfather a 3-year-old could ever hope for.

And to Chavah and Rachel,  
welcome to the family!

## CHAPTER 1

### Overview

The purpose of this study is to introduce the concept of parental status in the stepparent-stepchild relationship, and to investigate its impact on child socialization in stepfather families. The child socialization literature has consistently found parental connection and regulation to be highly predictive of children's positive psychosocial adjustment in nuclear families. However, the application of these dimensions of child socialization to the stepparent-stepchild relationship has been problematic, often resulting in conflicting and inconsistent results. Connection and regulation by the stepparent do not appear to have the same effects on the psychosocial adjustment of children in stepfamilies as do connection and regulation by the biological parent in either the stepfamily or in the nuclear family. In addition, attempts to further our knowledge of child socialization in stepfamilies appear to be surrounded by considerable conceptual and methodological confusion.

This study attempts to clarify the current confusion surrounding the study of child socialization in stepfamilies by introducing, developing and applying the construct of parental status in the stepparent-stepchild relationship. This research project attempts to a) define the construct of parental status in the stepparent-stepchild relationship, b) provide a theoretical foundation for this construct, c) create a psychometrically sound measure to assess parental status, d) investigate the effects of mothers' and stepfathers' parental behaviors on the psychosocial adjustment of children in stepfather families, and e) provide evidence to support parental status as a moderator of the effects<sup>1</sup> of parental

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this thesis, and in accordance with Baron & Kenny (1986), the term "effects" refers to a statistical prediction or association, and is not intended to infer a causal relationship between variables.

behaviors in the stepparent-stepchild relationship on the psychosocial adjustment of children in stepfamilies.

### Parent-child Socialization

Parental connection and regulation have a long history in the parent-child socialization literature (see Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson & Rollins, 1987; Rollins & Thomas, 1979 for reviews). In nuclear families, parental warmth (connection), alternatively defined as support, acceptance, or involvement, has been found to have a strong positive effect on self concept (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986), self-esteem (Avenevoli, Sessa & Steinberg, 1999; Barber & Thomas, 1986) personal and social competence (Amato, 1989; Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991), and school achievement (Avenevoli et al., 1999; Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg, Elman & Mounts, 1989). Although the dimension of connection is more salient for young children than adolescents (Amato, 1989), strong, positive effects have been found across all age groups, from infants to college students (Amato, 1989; Arnstein, 1980; Barber & Thomas, 1986; Baumrind, 1991; Davies & Kandel, 1981; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986; Kurdek & Fine, 1994).

The second dimension of child socialization, parental control, showed inconsistent and contradictory results early in the development of this literature (Barber, 1992; Rollins & Thomas, 1979). However, this concept has been refined to discriminate aversive from beneficial elements of parental control. Two dimensions of control have been identified: behavioral regulation and psychological control. Behavioral regulation is defined as supervision, monitoring, rule-setting and induction (control through explanation and negotiation). Behavioral regulation by parents has been found to predict higher levels of children's psychosocial competence (Kurdek & Fine, 1994) and higher school achievement (Steinberg et al., 1989). Psychological control is defined as interference in the development of autonomy or the extent to which the



socialization processes intrude on the child's development of an independent sense of identity (Barber, 1997a). Psychological control has been found to have negative effects on children's general competence (Amato, 1989) and school achievement (Steinberg et al., 1989).

In the literature, connection and regulation have been combined to create four parenting styles based on all combinations of high or low levels of each. The three parenting styles of authoritative (high connection, high regulation), permissive (high connection, low regulation), and authoritarian style (low connection, high regulation) originally articulated by Baumrind (1966, 1991), plus the fourth possibility, the neglectful style (low connection, low regulation), have received substantial attention from researchers (Baumrind, 1991; Dornbusch et al., 1985; Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts & Fraleigh, 1987; Kurdek & Fine, 1993b; Lamborn et al., 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). The authoritative style (high connection, high regulation) has been found to be associated with higher school achievement (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al. 1989), higher levels of adjustment (Avenevoli et al., 1999; Crosbie-Burnett & Giles-Sims, 1994), and lower levels of problem behavior (Dornbusch et al., 1985; Lamborn et al., 1991). In one study, Lamborn et al., (1991) compared the patterns of competence and adjustment across the four parenting styles. They found an association between authoritarian parenting and moderate to high levels of obedience but relatively poor self-concept. Permissive parenting (also called indulgent) was associated with a strong sense of self confidence but a higher frequency of substance abuse and school misconduct. The neglectful style was associated with the lowest levels of psychosocial competence and the highest levels of behavioral dysfunction.

Leung, Lau, and Lam(1998) explored authoritative and authoritarian parenting of Chinese, European American and Australian high school students.

They found authoritarian and not authoritative parenting to be associated with higher academic achievement for Chinese students. However, further investigation revealed that these influences were related to education levels and not cultural differences. Nevertheless, this research highlights the importance of considering different elements of the social contexts under investigation.

The third parent-child socialization dimension, psychological control, has more recently been included in the parenting styles research. Avenevoli et al. (1999) found that authoritative parenting (defined as higher connection, regulation and lower psychological control) was associated with higher adolescent adjustment. Neglectful parenting (lower connection, lower regulation and average psychological control) was associated with poor adjustment.

The parent-child socialization dimensions of connection and regulation, or their composite parenting style (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful) have recently been imported into the stepfamily literature, and, more specifically, to research on the stepparent-stepchild relationship. While the dimension of connection appears to function in a similar fashion in stepfamilies as in nuclear families, the dimension of regulation does not, and conflicting results have been found. Crosbie-Burnett and Giles-Sims (1994) found that for the children in the stepfamilies studied, levels of parental support differentiated levels of adolescent adjustment. However, differing levels of parental regulation were not associated with any differences in adjustment outcomes. In contrast, Kurdek and Fine (1993b, 1995) found patterns of regulation (i.e., supervision, acceptance and autonomy) to be significantly different in stepfamilies than nuclear families, and that differing levels of regulation had inverse effects on adjustment in children.

Similarly, Fine, Voydanoff and Donnelly (1993) found child well-being to be positively related to connection in (step)parent-child relationships. However, relations between parental regulation and child well-being varied for differing dimensions of well-being and in different types of stepfamilies. Within the stepfamilies studied, parental regulation had a positive effect within the biological parent-child relationship but a negative effect within the stepparent-stepchild relationship.

The research on parenting styles, composites of connection and regulation, also show inconsistent and confusing results. Some research shows different patterns of association between parenting styles and psychosocial adjustment for children in nuclear families than stepfamilies. Lamborn et al. (1991) found significant differences in the prevalence of internalized distress as a function of parenting style in first marriage families, but not in the stepfamilies studied. Barber and Lyons (1994) found permissive parenting to be related to higher self-esteem in remarried families but not in nuclear families.

On the other hand, other studies show *no differences* in patterns of association between parenting styles and psychosocial adjustment for children in nuclear families and stepfamilies. Dornbusch et al., (1987) found the children in both first and second marriage families to demonstrate the same significant differences in school performance according to parenting style. Steinberg et al., (1989) found no differences between stepfamilies and nuclear families when studying the influence of parenting styles on psychosocial maturity and academic success.

#### Methodological Problems

The confusion in this literature may be explained, at least in part, by three methodological problems: a) the lack of homogeneity within the category of stepparent-stepchild relationship (significant within group differences); b)

sampling procedures in which the adults are the respondents rather than the children; and c) assessment and statistical procedures in which the parenting style of the biological parent and stepparent are combined and averaged rather than considered independently.

First, the construct of 'stepparent' may be ambiguous, leading to operationalizations that are not reliable or valid in the growing literature on child socialization in stepfamilies. Although not systematically investigated, it has been mentioned in the research literature that there is a broad range of possible stepparent-stepchild relationships (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1994; Gross, 1987; Hetherington et al., 1989). Qualitative researchers have further described these differences and have clearly demonstrated that some stepparents are virtually indistinguishable from biological parents while others are relative newcomers to the family and are not considered 'parents' by anyone in the stepfamily household (Burgoyne & Clark, 1984; Levin, 1990; Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1994; Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan & Anderson, 1989).

The clinical literature confirms these findings. A wide variation in types of stepparent-stepchild relationships has been identified and developed (McGoldrick & Carter, 1989; Mills, 1984; Whiteside, 1989). While some stepparents are granted full parental status in the stepfamily, some are considered somewhat like a parent, and others are not considered parents at all (Levin, 1990; Mills, 1984; Whiteside, 1989).

To investigate all stepparent-stepchild relationships together means including stepparents that are considered to be parents with stepparents that are not considered to be parents, essentially parents and non-parents together in the same category. This results in a lack of homogeneity within the category that increases within group differences to a level that may reduce the likelihood of

finding significant between group differences or limit the power of any significant differences found.

Second, the predominance of reports of parents or stepparents in this literature may further confound the results. There is considerable evidence to suggest that children's and adolescent's reports are more reliable than those of the biological parent or stepparent (Amato, 1987, Barber, 1992, Brown, Green & Druckman, 1990, Crosbie-Burnett & Giles-Sims, 1994). Crosbie-Burnett and Giles-Sims (1994) found that biological parents' reports did not correlate with the other highly correlated outcome measures reported by the adolescents in the study. In a related discussion, Barber (1992) suggests that the child socialization dimensions do not include individual differences between children and therefore ignore the receptivity of the child to parental behavior. Children's experiences of being parented are not considered. Brown et al. (1990) provide evidence to suggest that, in stepfamilies, parental role behavior initiated by the stepparent is less important to stepfamily functioning than is the receptivity of the stepchild to that behavior. Clearly, children's experiences of stepparent relationships cannot be assumed to be synonymous with the reports of their biological parent or stepparent.

Third, researchers erroneously assume that there is no need to differentiate between the biological parent-child relationship and the stepparent-stepchild relationship. For example, in studies of the association between parenting styles and adolescent school performance (Lamborn et al., 1991), the family parenting style was developed by adding the scores of the two adults together and averaging them. Not surprisingly, no meaningful differences were found across family structures. Similarly, when studying the relation between adolescent adjustment and family regulation, Kurdek and Fine (1994) added scores for parents and stepparents on parenting dimensions then

averaged them to create the parenting style score. Differences or similarities across family structures were not reported. In a study of parenting style and school performance, Dornbusch et al. (1987) asked students to report on *parents' behaviors*. Respondents could not respond separately by biological parent or stepparent, nor were they asked to indicate if they considered their stepparent a parent or if they were including them in their answers. No differences were found across family structure.

In their report on the association between parental connection and regulation, and child well-being in stepfamilies, Fine et al. (1993) initially combined biological father-child relationships with stepfather-stepchild relationships and biological mother relationships with stepmother-stepchild relationships. However, when examining *stepmother* and *stepfather* families, results suggested that father-child relationships in *mother-stepfather families* were different than those in *father-stepmother families*. In other words, different results were found when fathers are *biological fathers* than when fathers are *stepfathers*. This same process was followed for the biological mother-child and the stepmother-stepchild relationships. Similarly, it was found that when mothers are biological mothers it is not the same as when mothers are stepmothers. This kind of grouping, without differentiating stepparents from biological parents, is indicative of the conceptual confusion that surrounds these categories and leads to serious doubt about their validity.

Moreover, when Fine et al. (1993) separated and compared biological and stepparent relationships, an inverse relationship was found in the effect of regulation in the parent-child relationship on other family relationships. A high level of regulation in the biological mother-child relationship had a positive effect whereas a high level of regulation in the stepfather-stepchild relationship had a negative effect. The effect of the regulation dimension

appeared to go in the opposite direction in these two types of 'parenting' relationships.

Although the empirical literature in this area is inconclusive and contains significant conceptual and methodological problems, there is a general consensus among clinicians that the stepparent-stepchild relationship is very sensitive to issues of regulation (Mills, 1984; Sager et al., 1983; Whiteside, 1989). Based on observations during years of clinical experience, Mills suggests that it is the 'precipitous assumption' of the authority of the parenting role by that stepparent that can create and escalate conflict in the stepfamily (Mills, 1984). Mills suggests that it is possible for stepparent-stepchild relationships to develop a 'parental' quality at which time aspects of parenting which include authority and discipline are more likely to have a beneficial effect. However, for children who are older at the formation of the stepfamily, authority and discipline may never be conducive to a positive stepparent-stepchild relationship (Mills, 1984; Whiteside, 1989). Regulation in the stepparent-stepchild relationship can, therefore, have a beneficial or aversive effect, depending on the degree to which the stepparent is considered a parent.

Equally, excessive attempts to connect in the stepparent-stepchild relationship have also been reported by clinicians to be problematic. Excessive connection may have an adverse effect on new relationships in the stepfamily because of the pressure to establish a cohesive family environment too quickly (Ganong & Coleman, 1994a). The push for cohesion can stress children (Kompara, 1980) and result in pseudomutuality or rebellion and withdrawal (Sager et al., 1983). The result of excessive bids for closeness can inhibit rather than promote cohesion in stepfamilies (McGoldrick & Carter, 1989; Mills, 1984; Visher & Visher, 1988).

To indiscriminately combine the categories of stepparent and biological parent, and to consider their sum and average to be indicative of actual relationships, seems highly speculative at best. Alternatively, to allow these decisions to be made to facilitate statistical procedures without considering the conceptual implications appears to be allowing convenience to supersede essential psychosocial dimensions.

Therefore, it would seem that the growing body of research literature on the relation between child socialization variables and psychosocial adjustment in stepfamilies is plagued by conceptual and methodological problems resulting in inconclusive and inconsistent results. The research in this area appears to be confused and, at times, illogical, leaving us with perhaps more questions than answers. What are the relevant dimensions of stepparent-stepchild relationships? How do they vary across stepfamily households? When should they be combined with biological parent-child relationships and when should they remain separate in either data collection or in data analysis?

#### Parental Status

In our efforts to bring child socialization theory and methods to our study of stepparent-stepchild relationships, one fundamental dimension has been overlooked. This is, quite simply, the degree to which the stepparent is considered a 'parent.' That adults in families are *parents* is inherent in the child socialization literature, alternately known as the *parent*-child socialization literature. *Parenting* styles are descriptions of how *parents* in families interact with their children. That adults in families are *parents* goes without question, so much so that the fact that many stepparents are, in fact, not considered to be parents at all by some stepchildren (Gross, 1987) or that some stepfamilies do not want the stepparent to *parent* seems to be consistently denied by this body of research. Yet, without acknowledging this fundamental aspect of the



relationship, how can we possibly develop our knowledge of positive *parenting* practices in stepfamilies?

Although not likely to be the only approach to answering the questions arising from this literature, it seems only logical that the parental status of a stepparent is a highly relevant dimension and that it may be a useful place to begin to 'unpack' the stepparent-stepchild relationship. By understanding that not all stepparents are parents, and that there is a range in degree to which the stepparent is considered a parent, we can begin to understand the variety of ways in which stepfamily households function. Stepparent-stepchild relationships can then be categorized in ways that respect these differences thereby increasing the validity and reliability of the stepparent-stepchild relationship categories. Lowering within group differences will add clarity and power to our analyses.

#### The Current Research

This research includes two studies which, when combined, explore parental status as a concept that may help clarify the seemingly contradictory and confusing literature on the relations between the child socialization variables (connection, regulation, psychological control) and psychosocial adjustment of children in stepfamilies. Specifically, parental status was tested for its moderating role in this association. Given that the extensive literature on parent-child socialization assumes the parental status of the adults in the family, it is only logical that a high level of parental status may be a necessary condition under which connection, regulation and psychological control effect children's psychosocial adjustment.

The first aspect of this study was to define the construct of parental status, provide a theoretical foundation for this construct, and to create a psychometrically sound measure to assess parental status. A thorough literature

review was conducted to explore the relevant theory, research and clinical writings. A measure was then developed in accordance with standard test construction protocols (Anastasi, 1988; Dawis, 1987; Green, 1981) (Study 1). Items were generated, reviewed, and a factor analysis conducted (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989). The resulting scale was assessed for convergent and discriminant validity by an investigation of its correlates with other established scales. It was also expected that there would be an inverse association between parental status and the age of the child at the beginning of the stepfamily, such that higher levels of parental status would be granted to stepparents who joined the family when the children were younger and that lower levels of parental status would be granted to stepparents who joined the family when children were older.

Parental status was initially defined as a social cognition that addresses the degree to which the stepparent is assumed to be a 'parent' by the stepchild, residential custodial parent, and the stepparent. Social cognition theory suggests that individuals make assumptions about how the world is, and that these assumptions serve to create internal representations that categorize objects and events (Baucom, Epstein, Sayers & Sher, 1989). These processes are "natural aspects of information processing that are necessary in order for individuals to understand their environments and make decisions about how they will interact with other people" (Baucom & Epstein, 1990, p. 47).

Applying social cognition theory to the concept of parental status would suggest that the degree to which family members assume the stepparent is a 'parent' would influence the way in which the stepparent-stepchild relationship works. The degree to which the stepparent is considered a 'parent' would impact on the way in which the stepparent and stepchild interact with each other and how these interactions are evaluated.

Although the perspectives of all family members regarding the parental status of the stepparent are important, the perspectives of the children have been chosen as a starting point. Further research in this area will be necessary to compare and contrast the perspectives of the biological parent, stepparent, and differences between siblings.

The second aspect of this study (Study 2) was an investigation of the effects of parental behaviors on child adjustment in stepfather families and an exploration of parental status as a moderator of these effects. Mothers' and stepfathers' parenting behaviors (connection, regulation, psychological control) were assessed independently for their effects on child psychosocial adjustment. Subsequently, parental status was investigated for its ability to moderate the effects of mothers' and stepfathers' parental behaviors on children's psychosocial adjustment.

Connection in the stepparent-stepchild relationship was expected to be positively associated with adjustment for children in stepfamilies. In addition, parental status may moderate the association between connection and psychosocial adjustment. As a parental relationship is more important to children than other adult, non-parental relationships (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; 1992), high parental status is expected to increase this association. Equally, a low level of connection (i.e., rejection) may be more damaging to children when it is within a relationship with an adult who is perceived to be a parent.

Parental status may also moderate the effects of high levels of connection, as suggested in the clinical literature (McGoldrick & Carter, 1989; Mills, 1984; Whiteside, 1989). If the stepparent is perceived as offering high levels of connection that exceed the degree of parental status, the child may withdraw or rebel, resulting in a less positive outcome than at relatively lower levels of connection.

Parental status was expected to moderate the association between regulation and adjustment such that, at high levels of parental status, regulation has a positive effect and, at low levels of parental status, regulation has a negative effect on psychosocial adjustment. A high level of parental status was expected to be the condition under which moderate to high levels of regulation are associated with positive outcomes, thereby mimicking the nuclear family model. In contrast, moderate to high levels of regulation under a condition of low parental status were expected to have a negative influence on adjustment as has been described in the clinical literature on stepfamily conflict (Mills, 1984, Whiteside, 1989).

Psychological control in the stepparent-stepchild relationship was expected to be negatively associated with adolescent adjustment. Parental status may moderate the association between psychological control and adjustment in much the same way as between connection and adjustment. Again, given that parental relationships are more important to children than other adult, non-parental relationships (Burhmester & Furman, 1986; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992), interference with the development of an independent identity may be more damaging when it is perceived to come from an adult who is perceived to have high parental status than one who does not. At the time of this writing, no studies have been found that have explored the impact of psychological control in stepparent-stepchild relationships.

### Research Predictions

Several research predictions are advanced. The research literature supporting these predictions is reviewed in Chapter 2.

Study 1. The construct of parental status was expected to be operationalized with an instrument with strong reliability and validity. It was expected that Parental status, as operationalized by this measure, would be found

to be associated with conceptually similar constructs and not associated with conceptually dissimilar constructs. It was also expected that parental status would have an inverse association with the age of the child at the beginning of the stepparent relationship.

Study 2. First, mother's parenting and stepfather's parenting were explored for their independent contribution to children's psychosocial adjustment in stepfather families. It was expected that the effects of mothers' parenting behaviors on adjustment would be stronger than that of stepfathers' parenting behaviors.

Second, following the model of Baron and Kenny (1986), parental status was explored for its ability to moderate the relations between child socialization variables (connection, regulation, psychological control) in the stepparent-stepchild relationship and children's psychosocial adjustment. Parental status would moderate (strengthen) the association between psychosocial adjustment and indices of both connection and psychological control. At high levels of parental status, these associations would be stronger; and at low levels of parental status, the associations would be weaker.

Moderation would be demonstrated if a significant interaction effect was found for connection  $\times$  parental status and/or for psychological control  $\times$  parental status in predicting adjustment (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Connection, psychological control and parental status may also contribute direct effects but this is not directly relevant to testing the moderator hypothesis.

Further, parental status would moderate (reverse) the association between regulation and adjustment. At high levels of parental status, the association would be positive; and at low levels, the associations would be negative. Again, moderation would be demonstrated if a significant interaction effect was found for regulation  $\times$  parental status in predicting adjustment (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Regulation and parental status may also contribute direct effects but this is not directly relevant to testing the moderator hypothesis.

### Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 1 provides the conceptual background to the problem and guides the reader to the statement of the problem. Research predications are stated.

Chapter 2 consists of the literature review. This chapter contains a review of the literature relevant to the research predictions presented. This includes theory, empirical research, and clinical findings.

Chapter 3 describes Study 1. This chapter includes the development of the Parental Status Inventory. It is determined if the Parental Status Inventory is found to be reliable and valid. The method, results and discussion are provided.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 describe Study 2. Chapter 4 reports the methods used to research the questions described in Chapter 2, now with the benefit of the Parental Status Inventory. Justification for the measures and methods is provided. Procedures, measures, the sample, and data analysis procedure are described.

Chapter 5 reports the process and results of the statistical analysis. This includes preliminary analyses, correlations, multiple regression analyses, and post hoc analyses. It is determined if the findings are supportive or not supportive of the research predictions. The findings are discussed in detail.

Chapter 6 summarizes and discusses the findings of Chapter 5. The conclusions drawn are presented. The limitations of the research are discussed along with possible generalizations permitted by the findings. Implications for theory, research, and clinical practice are explored.

Chapter 7 is the final chapter of the thesis. It provides a summary and discussion of the entire project. Limitations of the project are noted.

Implications for the development of theory, research and clinical practice are discussed.

## CHAPTER 2

## Literature Review

In Canada and the United States, the likelihood that adults and children will experience living in a stepfamily is substantial. Estimates suggest that in the U.S., 50 - 60% of first marriages end in divorce and that approximately 75% of those divorced will remarry (Norton & Miller, 1992). In 1990, 21% of children under 18 lived in a stepfamily household (Larson, 1992). This figure excludes children identified as residing with a single parent but whose parent is actually cohabiting (Bumpass & Raley, 1995). It also excludes those who live with a single parent, but whose nonresident parent has remarried or is cohabiting. Thus, all estimates regarding stepfamilies in the U.S. do not accurately reflect the proportion of these families in our communities.

Canadian demographic information suggests that 4 in 10 Canadians divorce (Statistics Canada, 1990), and that 65 - 75% of those divorced will remarry. Approximately 16% of Canadian children under 11 years of age live in sole parent families (Scott, 1996). Although only 4% of children under 11 are documented as living in a stepfamily, clearly this figure would increase if the age range included those 12 - 18 and if non legal unions were counted. Also, given that 65 - 75% of lone-parents will remarry, this percentage can only increase with time. In addition, these figures exclude those stepfamilies formed by cohabitation rather than actual marriage.

Importantly, estimates suggest that 60% of remarriages end in divorce (Norton & Miller, 1992). Thus, children can be exposed to a series of family structures, often over a short time. Clearly, stepfamilies play an important role in our communities and in the lives of many children. Because stepfamilies created by marriage and cohabitation are growing in number and these affect



children's lives, research must advance our understanding of what promotes stepfamily adjustment and stability.

#### Social Cognition Theory

Recent stepfamily research has utilized social cognition theory to further our understanding of relationships in stepfamilies (Fine & Kurdek, 1994a; 1994b), specifically stepparent-stepchild relationships (Fine, Coleman & Ganong, 1998, 1999). From this theoretical perspective, a new construct, entitled Parental Status, may be important to determining how stepparent-stepchild relationships affect child outcomes. Parental status is defined as a social cognition that addresses the degree to which the stepparent is perceived as parent by the stepchild, residential parent, and the stepparent.

From the perspective of social cognition theory, Heppner and Frazier (1992) describe the process of human inference, suggesting that cognitive structures and cognitive processes influence how we perceive our social environment. Cognitive structures include schemetas that organize the information in our environment. These cognitive structures focus our attention, thereby guiding what we select, remember and make inferences about from the vast amount of information in our daily environment. Cognitive structures also include self-schemas, defined as cognitive generalizations about the self. Self-schemas organize and guide the processing of information that relates to the self from the individual's social experience. Not surprisingly, self-schemas also have been found to influence perceptions of others (Heppner & Frasier, 1992).

In addition to cognitive structures, Heppner and Frasier (1992) describe cognitive processes that influence how we perceive our social environment. These processes assist us to decide which information to collect and to collect that information, combining and integrating the information in order to make necessary judgments (Heppner & Frasier, 1992). Within this category, a

heuristic can act as a 'short-cut' which can simplify a complex situation. Heppner and Frasier (1992) describe heuristics as "quick and useful ways of reducing the vast amount of available data to manageable size" (p. 162). The representativeness heuristic is useful when making judgments comparing something in the present environment to a familiar category.

From this perspective, parental status is a social cognition that may organize information in the social environment of the stepfamily. Parental status may act as a heuristic that reduces the amount of information in the stepfamily environment to a manageable size. More specifically, parental status may be a representativeness heuristic that allows stepfamily members to compare the stepparent's behavior to the category of parents in general.

Other scholars have further refined the domain of social cognition theory (Baucom et al., 1989). They suggest that individuals make assumptions about how the world is, and that these assumptions serve to create internal representations that categorize objects and events (Baucom et al., 1989). These "natural aspects of information processing are necessary in order for individuals to understand their environments and make decisions about how they will interact with other people" (Baucom & Epstein, 1990, p. 47). These authors suggest that social cognitions are necessary for people to create meaning in their social environments and to experience order and a sense of control.

Fine and Kurdek (1994a) applied the work of Baucom and Epstein to define five types of cognitions that affect stepfamily relationships. These five cognitions are: perceptions (what has occurred), attributions (why it occurred), expectations (what will occur), assumptions (what roles people play in the occurrence) and standards (what should have occurred). Further work in this area has suggested that ambiguities or differences in these cognitions may

influence adjustment in stepfamilies and represent an important area of investigation in future stepfamily research (Fine et al., 1998, 1999).

Within this theoretical framework, parental status is conceptualized as an assumption within the interpersonal relationship between stepparents and stepchildren. Assumptions refer to social cognitions that address how different people typically behave, how relationships generally work, and the way each individual sees her/himself in the target relationship (Fine & Kurdek, 1994a). Assumptions also may be influenced by stereotypes that stem from experiences with others and from the internalization of cultural stereotypes around certain roles (e.g., mothers are always nurturing, fathers have authority).

Applying social cognition theory to the concept of parental status suggests that the degree to which family members assume the stepparent is a parent influences the way in which the stepparent and stepchild see themselves and how they behave in relation to each other. The degree to which the stepparent is considered a parent would impact the way in which the stepparent and stepchild interact with each other and how these interactions are evaluated by stepchildren, stepparents and biological parents. In addition, the degree to which the stepparent is granted parental status is influenced by the stereotypes family members hold regarding their beliefs about the parental role. Their beliefs and stereotypes, in turn, may be influenced by family members' perceptions of the cultural norms for parental behavior. On one hand, a stepparent-stepchild relationship in which the stepparent is assumed to have high parental status may include high levels of emotional closeness and discipline behaviors. On the other hand, a stepparent-stepchild relationship in which the stepparent is assumed to have low parental status may be more distant and exclude parental nurturing and limit-setting.

Fine and Kurdek (1994a) further suggested that social cognitions can be relevant to individuals as well as clusters or groups of individuals within the stepfamily. For each person, social cognitions are conceptualized as individual psychological phenomena. When considering a cluster of family members or the entire family group, the consistency between the cognitions held by each member of the group is important also (Fine et al., 1998, 1999).

Although the perspectives of all family members regarding the parental status of the stepparent are important, the children's perspectives, specifically older adolescents, have been chosen as the focus of this research. Stepfamily research has largely ignored child and adolescent perspectives (Crosbie-Burnett & Skyles, 1989; Gross, 1987) even though evidence suggests that they conceptualize stepfamilies very differently than adults.

#### Adolescent Outcomes

The positive effects of parental support for late adolescents is well established (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987; Bell, Avery, Jenkins, Field & Schoenrock, 1985; Best, Hauser, & Allen, 1997; Buri, Murphy, Richtsmeier, Komar, 1992; Kenny, 1987, 1990). Armsden and Greenberg (1987) found parental attachment among first-year college students to be associated with well-being (self-esteem, life-satisfaction, affective status). These authors suggested that a secure attachment with parents may buffer late adolescents from possible negative effects of stressful life transitions (e.g., leaving for college). Bell et al. (1985) found that parental connection was positively associated with social competency (self-esteem, instrumentality, expressiveness, shyness, satisfaction in peer relationships) for late adolescents. Buri et al. (1992) found that parental nurturance was associated with higher levels of self-esteem for college students whether living at home or away from home. Best et al. (1997) investigated the effects of adolescent era (14 yrs) parental relationships on young adult (25 yrs)

competencies in an eleven-year longitudinal study. They found that parent-child relationships that are highly supportive and encourage autonomy predicted the highest levels of young adult competencies. Taken together, these results suggest that late adolescents benefit from the support of parents while they simultaneously develop their independence. These results further suggest that to assume that late adolescent independence takes place in the absence of parental support and connection is erroneous.

Kenny (1987, 1990) found that strong parental ties facilitated late adolescent transitions. Kenny (1990) found that parental attachment was strongly associated with self-reports of career maturity for college seniors. Further, among first-year college students in her sample, Kenny (1987) found that most students described their parents as a secure base, as encouraging independence, and remaining available as a source of support when needed. Furthermore, she suggested that "popular views and psychological theory regarding the need to diminish parental ties need to be revised." (Kenny, 1987, p. 27) Rather, she suggests that family ties across generations provide a healthy source of support. Arnstein (1986) echoes this position in describing the developmental task of late adolescents and their parents as "not to end the relationship altogether, rather, to reject certain aspects...to sustain other aspects, and to build in new qualities such as mutual respect between distinctive individuals who have separate as well as shared interests" (p. 168). Clearly, the developmental process has two distinct aspects, achieving separateness while maintaining connection.

Crosbie-Burnett and Skyles (1989) address the dual nature of late adolescent transitions for 18- 22 year old college students in stepfamilies. They pointed out that the perceptions of college-age stepchildren receive negligible research attention as they are no longer defined as children by census data

collection processes. Nevertheless, these authors suggested that college-age stepchildren may still be "structurally, psychologically, and financially dependent stepchildren in their stepfamilies" (p. 59), as they achieve increasingly more independent lives through college experiences.

Late adolescents, especially those involved in post-secondary education, may be particularly vulnerable to misinterpretations of late adolescent transitions. As they navigate the transition from high school to college or the work force, parental support and connection may make the difference between a college/university education or entering the unskilled labour force.

Unfortunately, the research on home-leaving in both Canada and the US suggests that late adolescents in stepfamilies may be substantially disadvantaged in this transitional process. Adolescents in stepfamilies have been consistently found to leave home earlier than in first-marriage families, possibly losing the necessary personal and financial support for post-secondary education and other positive transitions (Aquilino, 1991; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1989, 1998; Mitchell, Wister & Birch, 1989). Using information from an American national survey, Aquilino (1991) found that children who acquired a stepparent were more likely than children from first-marriage families to leave home early. Goldscheider and Goldscheider (1989) found that, for a nationally representative sample of seniors in American high schools, stepfamilies plan earlier residential autonomy for their children than do first-marriage families. In addition, Mitchell et al. (1989) studied data from a Canadian national survey and found that living in a stepfamily was associated with earlier home-leaving. Leaving home at an earlier age is likely to disadvantage adolescents because of possible loss of parental connection as a precursor to leaving and fewer opportunities to access post-secondary education because of financial insufficiency. Goldscheider and Goldscheider (1999) provided further support for

this concern in a study of 13, 017 adults of all ages. They found that the experience of having a stepparent not only accelerated home-leaving but also reduced the likelihood that young adults were leaving home for post-secondary education. Having a stepparent was found to increase the likelihood of leaving home to gain independence rather than for educational reasons and that leaving home for independence occurred at such a young age as to resemble running away from home.

Finally, late adolescence is an ideal age group for the study of parental status in the stepparent relationship. At this developmental stage, the widest possible range in length of stepparent relationships is available for study. For stepparent relationships, this means the longest period of time in which to develop parental status. For example, at 18, one could have been part of a stepparent-stepchild relationship for 17 years (since infancy) or for one year (since the preceding year). Given that parental status is likely to develop over time (Mills, 1984; Whiteside, 1989), the inclusion of stepparent relationships of long, moderate, and short duration is critical.

In summary, the parental status of the stepparent is defined as a social cognition (assumption) that influences the way that the stepparent and stepchild relate to each other and how they evaluate their interactions based on their own life experiences and internalized cultural stereotypes. The present study investigates late adolescent assumptions of parental status within the stepparent-stepchild relationship and the influence of this assumption on late adolescent adjustment. Late adolescents were chosen for three reasons including; a) the unique vulnerabilities of this developmental period; b) the dearth of information about late adolescents in stepfamilies; and c) the wide range of possible stepparent-stepchild relationships that this age group offers.

Adolescent Adjustment. Adolescent adjustment has generally been a primary focus in much of the child and adolescent outcome research. Typically, studies use self-reports and/or parent reports and, more infrequently, observational procedures. The areas of adjustment represented in this literature include:

1. Academic performance or achievement (Avenevoli, Sessa & Steinberg, 1999; Barber, Olsen & Shagle, 1997; Demo & Acock, 1996; Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, Fraleigh, 1987; Downey, 1995; Eccles, Early, Frasier, Belansky & McCarthy, 1997; Fine & Kurdek, 1992; Herman, Dornbusch, Herron, Herting, 1997; Lamborn, et al., 1991; Otto & Atkinson, 1997; Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn & Dornbusch, 1991).
2. Sense of general competence, alternatively defined as morale (Collins, Newman, MacKenry, 1995), self-confidence (Conger, Conger & Scaramella, 1997), self-esteem (Avenevoli et al., 1999; Barber & Lyons, 1994; Buri et al., 1992; Fine & Kurdek, 1992; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986), self-mastery (Fine & Kurdek, 1992), self-reliance (Lamborn et al., 1991) or socio-emotional adjustment (Demo & Acock, 1996),
3. Psychological distress defined as depression (Avenevoli et al., 1999; Barber & Lyons, 1994; Barber et al., 1997; Conger et al. 1997; Eccles et al. 1997; Garber, Robinson & Valentier, 1997; Steinberg et al., 1991), anxiety (Crosbie-Burnett & Giles-Sims, 1994), or internalized distress (Lamborn et al., 1991),
4. Antisocial or problem behavior such as substance use and delinquency (Avenevoli et al., 1999; Barber et al., 1997; Conger et al., 1997; Dornbusch et al., 1985; Eccles et al., 1997; Fine & Kurdek, 1992; Herman et al., 1997; Lamborn et al., 1991; Openshaw, Thomas & Rollins, 1983, 1984; Otto & Atkinson, 1997; Steinberg et al., 1991).



As children develop into young adults, many factors influence their adjustment. Although several factors are weakly associated with adolescent adjustment, evidence indicates that family processes have a powerful effect on adolescent outcomes. The study by Demo and Acock (1996) is one example of this literature. They examined the associations between adolescent adjustment (i.e., socio-emotional, academic performance, global well-being) and family structure, (first-married families, sole-parent families, stepfamilies), quality of mother-adolescent relationship (disagreements, supervision, support, interactions, aggression), economic resources (family income, mother's education), race, mother's depression, and adolescent gender. Higher levels of adjustment were found for adolescents who lived in first-marriage families in which levels of mother-adolescent support were high and mother-adolescent aggression and disagreement were low. Interparental conflict also was found to be associated with poorer adjustment and slightly lower well-being. Boy's academic performance was lower than that of girls, and they had substantially lower well-being. However, of all of these associations, these authors found that the most prominent pattern was the strong relation between adolescent well-being and mother-adolescent relations, such that mother-adolescent disagreement had the strongest negative effect on adolescent well-being. In addition, mother-adolescent disagreement also was strongly associated with poorer academic performance.

Avenevoli et al. (1999) investigated the relative effects of parenting styles over several ethnic, socio-economic, and family structure groups. These authors examined the associations between adolescent adjustment (academic achievement, self-esteem, psychological distress, delinquency, drug use) and parenting practices (connection, regulation, psychological control) in different family environments defined by family structure (intact, single-parent), socio-

economic status (working class, middle class) and ethnicity (African-American, European American, Asian American, Hispanic American). They found that the relation between adolescent adjustment and parenting styles was constant across all ecological niches. Authoritative parenting (higher connection, higher regulation, lower psychological control) was associated with higher levels of adolescent adjustment. Neglectful parenting (lower connection, lower regulation, average psychological control) was associated with poor academic achievement, low self-esteem, psychological distress, delinquency and drug use. These associations were found across all ethnic, socio-economic and family structure groups.

Leung et al. (1998) further explored cultural differences in the influence of parenting styles on academic achievement for 382 high school students in Hong Kong, the United States, and Australia. (Americans were of European descent.) The authoritative (high connection, high regulation) and authoritarian (low connection, high regulation) parenting styles were each divided into parenting practices that related to academic achievement or general living. The resulting four parenting styles (general authoritative, academic authoritative, general authoritarian, academic authoritarian) were then investigated for their influences on academic achievement. Results suggested that, in contrast to previous research, general authoritarian parenting was associated with higher level of academic achievement for Chinese students but not for the Americans or Australians. Conversely, general authoritative parenting was not associated with higher academic achievement for the Chinese students but was for the Americans or Australians. Lower academic achievement was associated with academic authoritarian parenting for all groups.

However, when the demographic variable of parent education and divorce were explored, important differences were found. For the students whose

parents had high school education or less, general authoritarian parenting was associated with academic achievement for all groups. In contrast, this association was not found for students whose parents had attended college. Levels of education varied widely between the three groups. Of the Chinese students, only 4.2% of fathers and no mothers had college education. For the Americans, over 70% of both fathers and mothers had attended college. Similarly, for the Australians, 53.7% of the fathers and 32.8% of the mothers had college education. Therefore, the differences found for the Chinese students may be related more to educational than cultural differences. No differences in the influence of parenting practices on academic adjustment were found between students whose parents were divorced and those whose parents were not divorced.

Simons and Chao (1996) investigated the relationship between "inept" parenting practices (i.e., hostility, little monitoring, inconsistent discipline) and delinquency in divorced families. Inept parenting was related to delinquent behaviors both directly and indirectly through deviant peer group involvement. Poor parenting by mothers and fathers was related to boys' delinquent behaviors, whereas for girls only mother's poor parenting was related to delinquent behaviors.

Adolescent adjustment and family structure. Given the prevalence of stepfamilies within our communities, adolescent adjustment in stepfamilies is an important area of study. A 1984 review of this research conducted by Ganong and Coleman found that parental remarriage was not related to problem behavior or negative attitudes toward self and others in stepchildren. In general, no differences were found across different family structures, although these early studies were methodologically flawed.

A later review (Ganong & Coleman, 1993) used meta-analytic techniques to determine the magnitude of effects of stepfamily life on child and adolescent self-esteem or behavior problems compared to children in first-marriage families or sole-parent families. They compared 24 studies and examined 57 effects sizes that included children ranging in age from grade school to college students. When compared to children from first-marriage families, stepchildren had more internalizing behavior problems and more behavioral difficulties, although the effects sizes of these differences were small (most effects were less than .20, except for internalizing behaviors at .30). When stepchildren were compared to children and adolescents in sole-parent families, no differences were found. They concluded that, overall, stepchildren did not differ substantially, as compared to children in other family structures. They further concluded that more studies that simply compare children across family structures were not needed because they provide little meaningful information about child and adolescent outcomes in stepfamilies. Some studies indicate that children and adolescents from stepfamilies have an increased risk for developing behavioral problems such as substance abuse, difficulties developing social competency, and internalizing problems than their first-marriage counterparts (Amato & Keith, 1991; Bray, 1999; Bray & Hetherington, 1993). Nevertheless, the general conclusion is that the majority of children adjust to living in a stepfamily and function within the normal range.

More sophisticated and recent studies have attempted to elucidate which aspects of family living make a difference in outcomes for stepchildren. Fine and Kurdek (1992) examined adolescent adjustment in 60 stepfather and 58 stepmother families. They found that adolescent adjustment (grades, health, drug use, self-esteem) was strongly related to family process variables (connection, regulation, conflict, order and interest). Stepfamily complexity

(children from a previous relationship for both adults) did not help to explain variations in outcomes. Further, adolescents living with stepfathers had higher self-esteem than those living with stepmothers, but the effect size was small. These authors concluded that adolescent adjustment was far more strongly influenced by family processes than by either family structure or sex of stepparent.

Importantly, finding small effect sizes does not mean that adolescents in stepfamilies are not affected differently or are not more vulnerable to developing adjustment difficulties. Simons and Chao (1996) confront the issue of effect sizes in adolescent outcomes in their research on the moderating effects of parenting on conduct problems for adolescents whose parents have divorced. While these authors stress that most children in divorced families do not develop adjustment problems and that the majority of children show healthy development, differences that result in small effect sizes may still be relevant. They argued that, although the differences are often not large, it has been clearly demonstrated that divorce puts children at risk of poorer patterns of adjustment. Further, a difference could represent a two or three fold increase in the incidence of a particular outcome and still be considered a small effect because of the low base rates of adjustment problems in the general population.

The increased risk to children is confirmed in a later study by Bray (1999). In a longitudinal study of children and adolescents in first marriage, divorced, and remarried families, he found that 10% of children in first marriage families had clinically significant levels of behavioral problems. Notably, this was true for twice as many children (20%) whose parents had divorced and/or remarried.

Other researchers (Demo & Acock, 1996) echoed this conclusion. They examined the effects of family structure and family processes on adolescent well-being. Their study of 12-to 18 -year-olds in four family structures (i.e., first-

marriage, divorced sole-mother, stepfather, and continuously sole-mother families) found that mother-adolescent relations (i.e., mother adolescent-disagreement, supervision, parental support, mother-adolescent interaction, and mother-adolescent aggression) were much stronger predictors of adolescent adjustment (i.e., socio-emotional, academic performance, global well-being) than was family structure. While all aspects of mother-adolescent relations were associated with adjustment outcomes in expected directions, mother-adolescent disagreement was the strongest predictor of adjustment in all categories. Nevertheless, these researchers clearly acknowledged that children who experienced the divorce of their parents and lived in a stepfamily were more vulnerable to adjustment difficulties.

The gestalt of the research reviewed here suggests that the majority of adolescents in stepfamilies do not develop adjustment problems. However, this does not negate the possibility that children and adolescents in stepfamilies may be at greater risk for developing such problems. Amato (1994) clarified this apparent contradiction by arguing that a different picture is created depending on whether the focus is on the differences between stepfamilies and first-marriage families, or whether the focus is on the overlap between them (i.e., that although stepchildren may be a greater risk of developing problems, many stepchildren have higher levels of adjustment than children in first-marriage families).

Moreover, the literature reviewed here suggests that family processes may exert a stronger influence on adolescent adjustment than does family structure per se. Adolescent adjustment was consistently found to be (a) higher in families in which there were positive parenting practices and (b) lower in families in which there was mother-adolescent disagreement or inept parenting. Thus,

strong, positive parenting may be able to buffer children from the negative effects of family disruption.

Family Processes in Stepfamilies. What does strong, positive parenting mean in the stepfamily? Stepfamilies by definition include an adult who is not biologically related to at least one of the children and is considered a stepparent. A key question is to determine the degree to which adolescent adjustment is influenced by stepparenting practices as opposed to parenting by the biological parent.

Evidence suggests that the stepparent relationship may be substantially different than that of the biological parent. Reporting on the findings of three longitudinal studies of child and adolescent outcomes in first-marriage families, divorced families and stepfamilies, Hetherington and Jodl (1994) found that stepfathers reported less closeness and connection and fewer attempts to engage in behavioral regulation than did fathers in first-marriage families. Stepfathers often were less emotionally involved with their stepchildren than were biological parents. Biological parents also were more willing to set limits for their children and to criticize them for unacceptable behavior such as having an untidy room, poor personal hygiene, and not doing their homework than were stepparents.

Evidence also suggests that children and adolescents report differences between biological parents and stepparents. Primary-aged children report that stepfathers provide less connection, regulation and punishment than biological fathers (Amato, 1987). College-aged students echo these sentiments, perceiving stepparents more negatively than biological parents (Fine, 1986). After reviewing the data from the National Survey of Children, Furstenberg (1987) found that "there are huge disparities in children's feelings toward step and

biological parents. Parents and their non-biological children alike report less intimacy" (p. 54).

Not all studies find stepparenting to be different from parenting by biological parents. For examples, Gross (1987) found that of the 60 16- to 18-year-olds interviewed, 41% considered their stepparent to be one of their parents. Although some of these students further clarified that their stepparent was not exactly like their biological parent, clearly the stepparent played an important role in their emotional and family life. This is consistent with the findings of Fine et al. (1998) from a study of 40 stepfamilies with at least one child between 10 and 19 years. Fully 28% of the children labeled their stepparent as their 'parent', as opposed to 'stepparent', 'friend' or 'other'. Similarly, other stepfamily researchers acknowledge that some stepparents and stepchildren experience their relationship as if it were a blood tie (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1994; Ganong & Coleman, 1994a; 1994b).

It would seem inappropriate to assume that biological parents and stepparents make the same contribution to parenting in a stepfamily household. At the same time, it may be equally erroneous to assume that stepparents' contributions are insignificant. Rather, there may be a wide range of possible stepparent relationships that need to be recognized in conceptualizing parenting practices within stepfamily households. However, few researchers to date have examined parenting behaviors by stepparents and biological parents in stepfamilies. Moreover, aspects of the stepfamily context may moderate the effects of their parenting practices on adolescent adjustment; yet, these too remain unexplored.

#### Parenting Behaviors

Within the child socialization literature, the study of the varied dimensions of parent-child relationships has a long history (see Barber, 1997a;



Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Peterson & Rollins, 1987; Rollins & Thomas, 1979 for reviews). Although exact conceptualizations have differed, the general dimensions of parental connection and regulation endure over the six decades of this literature (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Most recently, Barber (1997a) consolidated this literature and proposed that three dimensions of the parent-child relationship (connection, regulation, and autonomy) are critical to healthy development in children.

Connection. Parental connection, alternatively conceptualized as warmth, attachment, involvement, support, or acceptance, is well-documented to have positive effects on child development (Barber, 1997a). The positive effects of parental connection are noted in the research on self-concept (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986), self-esteem (Barber & Thomas, 1986), self-confidence (Conger et al., 1997), personal and social competence (Amato, 1989; Lamborn et al., 1991), and school achievement (Eccles et al., 1997; Herman et al., 1997; Lamborn et al., 1991; Otto & Atkinson, 1997; Steinberg et al., 1989). Although the dimension of support appears to be more salient for young children than for adolescents (Amato, 1989), strong, positive effects on child and adolescent adjustment are found across all age groups from infants to college students (Amato, 1989; Arnstein, 1980; Barber & Thomas, 1986; Baumrind, 1991; Bell et al., 1985; Best et al., 1997; Buri et al., 1992; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986; Kurdek & Fine, 1994).

The strong, positive effects of indicators of parental connection are further supported by the equally substantial research that demonstrates the inverse relationship between such connection and negative child outcomes. Lower levels of parental connection are consistently found to be associated with child depression (Fauber, Forehand, Thomas & Wierson, 1990), delinquency, and substance use (Barber, 1996; Barber et al., 1994; Eccles et al., 1997; Herman et al.,

1997; Kurdek & Fine, 1994; Lamborn et al., 1991; Litchfield, Thomas, & Li, 1997; Otto & Atkinson, 1997).

Regulation. The second element of the child socialization literature, regulation, is defined as control, supervision, monitoring, and rule-setting. Recent research has demonstrated that higher levels of behavioral regulation of adolescents have been associated with higher levels of psycho-social competence (Kurdek & Fine, 1994) and lower levels of depression (Faubert et al., 1990), delinquency, and substance use (Barber et al., 1994; Barber, 1996; Eccles et al., 1997; Herman et al., 1997; Kurdek & Fine, 1994; Lamborn et al., 1991; Litchfield et al., 1997; Otto & Atkinson, 1997). Barber (1997a) suggests that behavioral regulation is an important element of socialization for adolescents that encourages them to self-regulate and thus, to engage in less impulsive behavior, less risk taking, and less antisocial behavior.

Psychological control. The third element of parenting, psychological control, is defined as parental interference in a child's development of an independent identity or the extent to which socialization processes intrudes on the child's development of an independent sense of identity. The reverse, psychological autonomy, is defined as the encouragement of the development of an independent sense of self (Barber, 1997a). Psychological control has received the least attention by scholars of the three parental socialization dimensions described here. Nevertheless, recent research has included psychological control, along with connection and behavioral regulation, in studies of parent-child relationships (Barber et al., 1997; Eccles et al., 1997; Faubert et al., 1990; Steinberg et al., 1989; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch & Darling, 1992). Overall, results suggest that parental intrusion into a child's development of an independent sense of self may be a significant predictor of problem behavior.

Combining parenting dimensions. Much of the parenting behavior literature addresses parenting styles that emphasize the combinations of high and low levels of connection and regulation (see the early work of Baumrind, 1966). Using combinations of levels of connection and regulation, three parenting styles have been distinguished: authoritative (high connection, high regulation), authoritarian (low connection, high regulation) and permissive (high connection, low regulation). The authoritative style (high connection, high regulation) is associated with higher school achievement (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1989; Steinberg et al., 1992), higher levels of adjustment (i.e., lower levels of anxiety, psycho-social, psychosomatic problems) (Crosbie-Burnett & Giles-Sims, 1994), and lower levels of problem behavior (Dornbusch et al., 1985; Lamborn et al., 1991). Further, authoritative parenting is associated with higher levels of adolescent adjustment and lower levels of adolescent depression and delinquent behavior across ethnic groups and family structures (Steinberg et al., 1991).

Extension of Baumrind's work has occurred. Lamborn et al. (1991) investigated the associations between parenting styles and patterns of competence in adolescents. Although Baumrind's (1966) original conceptualization included only three parenting styles, these authors included a fourth option, neglectful parenting (low connection, low regulation). Thus they included all possible combinations of high and low scores on each of the dimensions of parental connection and regulation. When comparing the patterns of competence and adjustment across these four parenting styles, Lamborn et al. (1991) found an association between authoritarian parenting and moderate to high levels of obedience but relatively poor self-concept. Permissive parenting (also called indulgent) was associated with a strong sense of self-confidence but a higher frequency of substance abuse and school

misconduct. The neglectful style was associated with the lowest levels of psychosocial competence and the highest levels of behavioral dysfunction.

Avenevoli et al. (1999) further extended Baumrind's work by adding the component of psychological autonomy to the two original concepts of connection and regulation. They also explored parenting styles across different family environments (ethnicity, socio-economic status, family structure). As described earlier, in this study authoritative parenting was defined as higher levels of connection and regulation and lower levels of psychological control. Neglectful parenting was defined as low connection, low regulation, neutral psychological control. Findings were consistent with previous research that suggests that the authoritative parenting style (including lower levels of psychological control) is associated with higher adolescent adjustment across ecological niches. Neglectful parenting was associated with poor adjustment in all types of family environments.

Parenting Behaviors in Stepfamilies. The extensive literature on parent-child socialization has provided a strong research foundation that culminated in the identification of three important dimensions of parent-child relationships: connection, regulation, and psychological control. Nevertheless, two limitations in this research are of particular relevance to the study of stepfamilies in general and stepparent-stepchild relationships in particular. First, this research has been criticized for the limited cultural context within which it has developed. Grotevant (1997) pointed out that little is known about these connections in families other than the two-parent, nuclear family model in which both adults are the biological parents of the children. By definition, a stepfamily household includes one adult who is a biological parent to the child(ren) and another adult who has no biological connection to resident children.

A second limitation in the parent-child relationship literature is that individual differences among children have been largely ignored (Barber, 1992; Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Darling and Steinberg (1993) suggested that the willingness of the child to be socialized by the parent may be an important moderator of the effect of parental behaviors on child outcomes. This may be especially relevant in stepfamilies. In fact Brown et al., (1990) suggested that the receptivity of the stepchild may be more predictive of positive relationship development than are the initiation attempts made by stepparents. Some research shows that stepchildren often reject behaviors from stepparents found to enhance relations between parents and children (Vuchinich, Hetherington, Vuchinich & Clingempeel, 1991).

Research on stepfamilies clearly indicates that children in stepfamilies report a wide range of possible stepparent-stepchild relationships (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1994; Fine et al., 1998, 1999; Ganong & Coleman, 1994a; Gross, 1987). Some children perceive their stepparent to be like a parent (i.e., high parental status), whereas others do not consider their stepparent to be a parent at all (i.e., low parental status) (Gamache, 1997). One of the implicit yet basic assumptions of the parent-child socialization literature is that the adult is a *parent* to the child(ren). Given that the degree to which the children in stepfamilies perceive their stepparent as a parent may vary considerably, the degree to which children are receptive to *parenting* by the stepparent also may differ from child to child. In other words, parental connection, regulation and autonomy may be experienced differently depending on whether the child assumes the stepparent has high, moderate or low parental status. However, to date child perceptions of stepparents remains an unexplored moderator of the effects of stepparenting behaviors on child outcomes.

Two forces are encouraging the convergence of the research on parent-child socialization and the research on stepfamily relations. Scholars argue that the well-established literature on parent-child socialization must expand to include families in diverse contexts (see as an example, Barber, 1997b). Recent efforts include comparisons of the effects of parenting across family structures by examining first-marriage families, divorced families, and stepfamilies (Avenevoli et al., 1999; Demo & Acock, 1996; Dornbusch et al., 1987; Downey, 1995; Thomas, McLanahan & Curtin, 1992; Steinberg et al., 1991). In addition, stepfamily researchers have begun to explore the dimensions of parent-child socialization in order to increase our understanding of the psychosocial adjustment of children and adolescents within stepfamilies (Anderson, Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1999; Bulcroft, Carmody & Bulcroft, 1998; Crosbie-Burnett & Giles-Sims, 1994; Fine & Kurdek, 1992; Fine et al., 1993; Kurdek & Fine, 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1995). Rather than pursuing more research comparing child outcomes in different family structures, scholars recommend that research should address why some stepfamilies were able to develop successfully and others were not (e.g., Ganong & Coleman, 1993).

Clearly, studies that examine the effects of parenting across diverse family structures increases the complexity of research designs and analyses. Nevertheless, some interesting findings have emerged from such studies. As noted earlier, many studies show family structure has little direct effect on child and adolescent outcomes (Avenevoli et al., 1999; Demo & Acock, 1996; Dornbusch et al. 1987; Steinberg et al., 1989, 1991). For example, Dornbusch et al. (1987) found that authoritative parenting was associated with higher academic achievement for high school students in both first-marriage and second-marriage families. Also, Steinberg et al. (1989) explored psychosocial maturity as a mediator of the relationship between parenting styles and academic success. They found no

differences in patterns of influence between stepfamilies and first-marriage families for the 10- to 16-year olds studied. Steinberg et al. (1991) explored the effect of authoritative parenting in intact and non-intact families and found authoritative parenting was associated with higher levels of adolescent adjustment in both structures. Most recently, Avenevoli et al., (1999) also found authoritative parenting (including lower psychological control) associated with higher levels of adolescent adjustment in intact and sole-parent families. Further, family structure was not found to moderate the effect of authoritative parenting on adolescent adjustment. Taken together, this research suggests that children and adolescents in first marriage families, sole-parent families and stepfamilies who experience their parents as highly connected, high in behavioral regulation and low in psychological control are more likely to achieve higher levels of adjustment and academic success.

Stepfamily researchers have recently begun to utilize the parent-child socialization variables of parental connection and regulation to further our understanding of parenting practices within stepfamilies (Crosbie-Burnett & Giles-Sims, 1994; Kurdek & Fine, 1993). For example, Fine et al. (1993) compared parent reports of parenting practices of stepparents and biological parents (connection; regulation) in stepfather families ( $N = 448$ ), stepmother families ( $N = 76$ ) and stepfamilies with both stepmother and stepfather ( $N = 41$ ) all with a target child under 19 years of age. They found that biological parents perceived their relationship with their children more positively than did stepparents. Stepfathers also were found to engage less in parenting behaviors, whether they were positive or negative, suggesting that they are less involved in parenting children in general. However, there were no child adjustment differences across family types. Given that the research reviewed to this point suggests that parenting practices influence child outcomes, and that children experience

stepparents as less involved in parenting than biological parents, then perhaps it is the biological parent's parenting that is responsible for the effects of 'parenting' on children and that the stepparent's contribution has relatively little effect on children's adjustment. In other words, this research suggests that the biological parent-child relationship may be the most important factor in determining child outcomes in all family structures.

Further, Fine et al. (1993) reported that, as in first-marriage families, parental connection was associated with child well-being (i.e., quality of life, psychological maladjustment, behavioral problems), and there were different effects of parental regulation for different types of stepfamilies. Results indicated that *paternal* regulation in stepfather families (i.e., regulation by stepfathers in stepfather families) was disruptive to the relationships between biological mothers and their children. Conversely, *paternal* regulation in stepmother families (i.e., regulation by fathers in stepmother families) was positively related to stepmother-stepchild relationships. These authors concluded that, at least in the early stages of stepfamily development, parental regulation by stepfathers may have a negative effect on the family environment. This study focused exclusively on parent reports so children's perceptions were not included.

Other research shows that stepparents hold a different structural position in the family than biological parents (Kurdek & Fine, 1995; Thomson et al., 1992), and this difference in position appears to influence parental connection and communication. Thomas et al. (1992) used parent reports from a national survey to study parent-child relationships in first-marriage families, mother and father-headed sole-parent families, and stepfather and stepmother families with children aged 5 to 18 years. They found that stepparents and cohabiting male partners reported less frequent positive responses to children and stepmothers



reported less frequent negative responses to children compared to biological parents. These findings suggest that stepparents were generally less involved in parenting practices rather than more negatively involved with the children. These authors suggest that stepparents may hold a different structural position in the family than biological parents.

Kurdek and Fine (1995) studied reports of parental connection, regulation and autonomy in first-marriage families and stepfather families from adolescents with an older sibling. They found that first-marriage families were more hierarchically organized in terms of which family member is involved in parent-child socialization than were stepfather families. In first-marriage families, mothers were reported to provided more connection, regulation and autonomy than fathers, who provided more of all three dimensions of parenting than did an older sibling. However, this pattern did not emerge in the stepfamilies studied. Mean scores for mothers and stepfathers parenting behaviors did not differ from each other and both were higher than those for siblings. On average, mothers showed higher connection than stepfathers or siblings, who were similar to each other. Kurdek and Fine (1995) concluded that marital transitions may involve the redistribution of authority and influence within the family.

Anderson et al. (1999) compared monitoring of mothers and stepfathers in non-divorced and stepfamily families (N = 202) with a target child of 9 - 13 years. The children perceived mothers as better monitors than biological fathers and stepfathers. Further, when stepfathers were poor monitors in the first few months of remarriage, rates of externalizing behaviors among children increased over time. However, when stepfathers were good monitors in the first few months of remarriage, children did not show higher levels of externalizing problems later. Thus, even though stepfathers may be perceived as less effective

monitors, their parenting behaviors may have an important effect on child behaviors.

Crosbie-Burnett and Giles-Sims (1994) studied adolescent adjustment ( $N = 80$ ) in stepfather, stepmother and stepfamily households with both stepfathers and stepmothers. Biological parent reports of adolescent adjustment (psychosomatic and psychosocial problems), adolescent self-reports of adjustment (anxiety, family happiness, quality of stepparent relationship, problems with stepparent discipline) and family processes (stepparent connection, stepparent regulation) were studied in an effort to identify the stepparenting style that best predicted adolescent adjustment.

Four stepparenting styles were designated from scores on indicators of stepparent connection and regulation (i.e., authoritative, authoritarian, supportive, disengaged). For the stepfamilies studied, 19% of stepparents were defined as engaging in authoritarian parenting, 21% in authoritative parenting, 33% in supportive parenting, and 28% in disengaged parenting. Regarding stepfather families, roughly one-quarter were found in each category (22% authoritarian, 22% authoritative, 29% supportive, 28% disengaged). Regarding stepmother families, none were found to be authoritarian, and 18% were found to be authoritative. However, over half were found to be supportive (55%). Like stepfathers, roughly one-quarter (27%) were found to be disengaged.

The highest levels of adolescent adjustment were associated with the supportive stepparent style (high connection, low regulation). The lowest level of adjustment was found for the disengaged stepparenting style (low connection, low regulation) stepparenting style. Unexpectedly, the only differences were related to connection rather than regulation dimensions. However, this may be related to coding procedures of stepparent regulation described above. The level of stepparent regulation was calculated by separating stepparents who were

perceived to discipline alone or with the biological parent (high regulation) from stepparent who did not participate in discipline at all (low regulation). The latter category may be more accurately labeled as no regulation. Perhaps differences in outcome would have been detected if stepparents that disciplined with the biological parent had been categorized as low regulation and grouped with those that do not discipline at all or if these stepparents had been placed in a middle category.

Although the results are preliminary and the sample size is small Crosbie-Burnett and Giles-Sims (1994) findings suggest that the effects of stepparenting practices on adolescent adjustment may differ from those of biological parents. However, this study tells us little about what factors may be influencing these differences. The authors suggest that there is a 'best' model for stepparenting. However, it seems more likely that there is no *best* stepparenting model, but rather a range of models that are more appropriate in different contexts.

The research reviewed here suggests that the strong effects of authoritative parenting transcend family structure. In general, children and adolescents achieve higher levels of adjustment in families in which there is high levels of connection, high levels of behavioral regulation, and opportunities for autonomy (absence of psychological control). However, due to methodological problems in this literature, differences in the effects of parenting practices by stepparents and biological parents are rarely examined. When stepparenting has been compared to parenting by biological parents, significant differences are found. Such differences suggest family processes are different in stepfamilies and that as yet undefined contextual variables within the stepfamily household can influence the effect of stepparenting on adolescent outcomes.

Limitations of this research. In spite of the strong empirical evidence reported above, there are several important limitations in this research that may obscure important information on the effect of parenting practices on adolescent outcomes in stepfamilies. The four limitations are: (a) categories of family structures, (b) the operationalization of parenting styles, (c) statistical procedures, and (d) parent vs. child reports.

Studies have categorized family structures with general groups of intact and non-intact (Steinberg et al., 1989, 1991), which may obscure important information about stepfamilies. When stepfamilies and sole-parent families are combined as a non-intact group, it is impossible to determine the effects of stepparents and/or stepparent-stepchild relations on child outcomes. Equally, differences between stepfamilies and first-marriage families may be obscured by the presence of the sole-parent family included with stepfamilies in the non-intact category. Other studies categorize families as one-parent or two-parent families (e.g., Barber, 1996). This procedure implicitly treats stepparents as biological parents, thereby masking differences between them. Still other studies combine all stepfamilies as a group (Henry & Lovelace, 1995). This can obscure differences between different types of stepfamilies, given that stepmothers are generally more supportive and less authoritarian than stepfathers (Crosbie-Burnett & Giles-Sims, 1994; Thomas et al., 1992).

The operationalization of parenting styles also may limit the information obtained from stepfamilies. For example, the Parenting Styles Index (Dornbusch et al., 1987; Steinberg et al., 1991) includes questions that assess parental connection and regulation. However, some questions refer to family practices rather than parenting practices (e.g., "How often does your family do something fun together?") Given that adolescents in stepfamilies frequently do not include

the stepparent as a family member, it is impossible to determine whether the stepparent relationship is included their response.

The referent in other questions is to "parents" rather than to specific parents such as (step)mothers or (step)fathers (e.g., "How much do your parents try to know where you go at night?") Again, given that some adolescents in stepfamilies consider their stepparent as a parent (i.e., high in parental status) and other do not (i.e., low in parental status), it is difficult to know to whom the adolescent is referring when answering the questions.

A third limitation has to do with statistical procedures that prevent stepfamily researchers from gleaning important information from the results. It is not uncommon for (step)mothers and (step)fathers to be combined and averaged (Steinberg et al., 1989, 1991). This procedure follows the convention used with first-marriage families in which mother's and father's parenting styles are assumed to converge (Baumrind, 1991). However, in stepfamilies, there is evidence to suggest that this is unlikely in many cases (Furstenberg, 1987). When scores are combined, the independent effects of each (step)parent are lost.

Finally, research that uses parent reports may not provide information that is indicative of child outcomes. Although parent reports are useful for understanding adult perspectives in stepfamilies, low correlations have been found between parent reports and child outcomes (Amato, 1987; Barber, 1992; Brown et al., 1990; Collins et al., 1995; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986).

Further, weak associations have been found between parent and child reports of parenting behaviors (Schwartz, Barton-Henry, & Pruzinsky, 1985). In a study of 680 individuals from 170 families, parental self-reports were found to exaggerate parental connection and regulation. Although Schwartz et al. (1985) found that late adolescent students rated mothers and fathers as more similar in

their parenting than did independent raters, students and siblings were found to be the most valid raters. Mothers and fathers were found to be the least valid.

Despite these limitations, these studies have made a strong statement regarding the effects of parental connection, regulation, and autonomy on adolescent adjustment across family structures. The parent-child socialization literature is well-established and over six decades has clearly shown that parenting practices are important to healthy child development. Furthermore, these dimensions of parenting also have been found to have an effect across family structures. Although there are many methodological problems in the parent-child socialization research with stepfamilies, further efforts to refine this area of study has potential for increasing our understanding of family process in stepfamilies.

Gender effects. Findings indicate that the sex of the stepchild has little effect on child outcomes in the parent-child research (which generally has focused on first-marriage families). Girls and boys appear to have experiences that are similar (Barber et al., 1997; Herman et al., 1997; Barber & Thomas, 1986; Bell et al., 1985). When gender differences are found, they are slight. For example, Eccles et al. (1997) found girls to be slightly more advantaged by parental support than were boys. Herman et al. (1997) found that regulation appeared to be more important for boys than girls. These findings echo those of previous research (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986) that suggested that the self-esteem of girls was more strongly influenced by parental connection and participation, whereas the self-esteem of boys was more strongly influenced by the regulation/autonomy aspect of parental behavior.

Other findings (Fine & Kurdek, 1992) show girls to have more health problems but better grades than boys. In a three-year longitudinal study, Conger et al. (1997) found girls and boys showed similar levels of internalizing

and externalized problems in grade five. Three years later in grade eight, girls demonstrated more internalizing and boys more externalizing problem behaviors. In addition, girls seemed more responsive to their parents' current parenting behaviors, whereas boys appeared to be affected early and not as influenced by current parenting.

Parent-child socialization research that has included stepfamilies has resulted in similar findings. Many studies found no significant gender effects on the influence of parenting practices on adolescent outcomes (Amato, 1987; Collins et al., 1995; Crosbie-Burnett & Giles-Sims, 1994; Downey, 1995; Fine et al., 1993) with one exception. Lamborn et al. (1991) found significant sex differences. For the 14 to 18 year olds in this study, girls had greater self-reliance, higher grades and higher levels of distress than did boys. Boys had higher levels of delinquency. No interaction effects between family structure and gender of adolescent were found in the prediction of adolescent outcomes.

Regarding the dimensions of parenting behavior, Kurdek and Fine (1993b) found that boys perceived fathers providing more connection than regulation and mothers as providing more regulation than connection. The reverse was true for girls, who saw mothers as equally likely to provide connection and regulation, but saw fathers as more likely to provide regulation than connection. Stepfathers were perceived by boys as equally likely to provide connection as regulation, whereas girls perceived stepfathers as more likely to provide regulation than connection, similar to their perceptions of biological fathers.

In summary, the research reviewed here suggests that parenting practices in nuclear families and stepfamilies influence the adjustment of both girls and boys in similar ways. At the same time, there appear to be some differences between sexes both concerning which dimension of parenting has

the strongest effect, whether it is enacted by the biological parent or stepparent and which aspect of adjustment is affected.

Other influences. Other demographic characteristics may influence the effects of parenting styles in different contexts, including parent education, socioeconomic status (e.g., family income), and race. Overall, findings are inconsistent regarding the influence of these factors. Such inconsistencies may be due to sampling and other methodological differences across studies.

Parent education is well-studied in the literature on parenting styles and child outcomes, although results are inconsistent. Regarding parenting styles, parents with higher education are more likely to practice authoritative parenting (Dornbusch et al., 1987). Regarding child outcomes, Downey (1995) found that parent education explained a significant amount of variance in the school performance of adolescence from diverse family structures. On the other hand, other scholars (Fine & Kurdek, 1992; Steinberg et al., 1991) found no effect for parent education on adolescent adjustment (i.e., grades, drug use, self-esteem).

Family income, as an indicator of socio-economic status, also is a frequently studied construct in the literature and higher income is generally associated with more positive outcomes. Eccles et al. (1997) found that family income had a direct positive effect on adolescent school achievement but not on academic alienation, depression, or behavior problems. Demo and Acock (1996) found that adolescents in first-marriage families had the highest level of family income as well as the highest level of adolescent adjustment (i.e., socio-emotional, academic performance, global well-being). Interestingly, the positive effect of higher levels of income on adjustment did not show up in stepfamilies, where adolescent adjustment was found to be lower than in high income, sole-parent families.



Race and ethnicity also has been the focus of some research in this area. In general, authoritative parenting is associated with more positive outcomes for all ethnic groups (Avenevoli et al., 1999; Dornbusch et al., 1987; Lamborn et al., 1991). Specifically, Dornbusch et al. (1987) found that, whereas the positive effects of authoritative parenting were found for all racial groups, the authoritative parenting style was most strongly associated with positive outcomes for White children. However, Asian adolescents reported higher levels of authoritarian parenting but still had higher grades suggesting a different effect for Asian when compared to White students. Authoritarian styles were more frequently used in Asian, Black and Hispanic families.

Few studies have included the effect of all these demographic characteristics on adolescent school performance. One exception is the study by Downey (1995) that examined a number of demographic characteristics in a sample of stepfamilies. Results suggested that when examined together, the demographic variables of race, parent education and family income explained a substantial amount, although not all, of the variation in school performance for adolescents in stepfamilies.

In summary, gender and other demographic characteristics may exert direct effects on adolescent adjustment, and in some cases, may moderate the effects of parenting practices on adolescent adjustment. As such, these characteristics also may have an impact on parental status. Therefore, for the purposes of the present study, effects of gender and other demographic characteristics must be taken into consideration.

Further, other factors may influence the effects of parent-child socialization dimensions on child outcomes. Here, parental status is proposed to be a key factor in further explaining parenting practices and child outcomes in stepfamilies.

### Parental Status

As stated earlier, the purpose of the present research is to explore a new construct, entitled Parental Status. Parental status is defined as a social cognition that addresses the degree to which the stepparent is perceived as a parent by the stepchild, residential parent, and the stepparent. Parental status may be important in determining how stepparent-stepchild relationships affect child and adolescent outcomes.

Several authors within the parent-child socialization literature have suggested that the effects of parental behaviors may be moderated by many, as yet unidentified and unexplored, contextual variables such as family structure (Avenevoli et al., 1999; Barber, 1992; Barber & Lyons, 1994; Darling & Steinberg, 1993), social cognitions (Fine et al., 1998, 1999) or individual differences such as the receptivity of the adolescent to parental influence (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). Parental status may be one aspect of stepfamily living that influences children's and adolescents' receptivity to parental behaviors of the stepparent.

Further, many authors have stated that the research literature on family processes is based heavily on the norm of the nuclear family model (Ganong & Coleman, 1994a; Gamache, 1997; Grotevant, 1997; Levin, 1990). As the stepfamily remains "uninstitutionalized" (Cherlin, 1978; Cherlin & Furstenburg, 1994) appropriate social structures are not in place to validate and support it and the nuclear family model remains the cultural standard by default. Continued use of the "nuclear family map" (Ganong & Coleman, 1994a; Levin, 1993) masks unique characteristics of the stepfamily and encourages misrepresentations of the stepfamily in the stepfamily literature.

One of the implicit definitions of the nuclear family model is that it includes two parents; two adults who are jointly and equally responsible for the

parenting practices that socialize children. While it has been acknowledged that the mother may be more involved in child rearing (Thomas et al., 1992), it is common practice to consider parental connection or parental regulation as that which the adolescent perceives as coming from her/his parents together (Amato, 1989, 1990; Bell et al., 1985; Buri et al., 1992; Fauber et al., 1990; Litchfield et al., 1997). In fact, Baumrind (1991b) found ratings of mothers and fathers to be identical in 76% of the children studied. Consequently, questions are frequently answered in reference to one's parents (rather than in reference to one's mother or one's father), or about what happens at home (an indicator of the joint effort of both mother and father).

However, research practices that consider stepparents to be identical to biological parents are not useful for increasing our understanding of stepfamily processes. It is well documented, in both parent and child reports, that children and adolescents do not perceive their stepparents as identical to their biological parents. Child and parent reports suggest that stepparents are less authoritative and more disengaged in parenting behaviors than are biological parents (Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992), and have less positive relations with their stepchildren than do biological parents (Fine et al., 1993). Relationships between stepchildren and stepparents are generally found to be more disruptive and conflictual (Barber & Lyons, 1994; Hetherington & Clingempeel, 1992; Kurdek & Fine, 1993b), more negative (Bray et al., 1993; Fine et al., 1993, Pruett, Calsyn & Jensen, 1993), less warm (Kurdek & Fine, 1993b), and less supportive (Fine et al., 1993; Pruett et al., 1993) than are parent-child relationships in biological families. Although much of this research has been criticized as originating from a deficit-comparison approach (Gamache, 1997; Ganong & Coleman, 1984), where stepfamilies are considered to provide deficit environments for children, clearly these family relationships are not identical.

To assume that stepparents function exactly like biological parents, or that the effects of their behaviors would be expected to be identical to that of biological parents, is erroneous. However, and perhaps more importantly, to assume that there is a *best* stepparenting style (Crosbie-Burnett & Giles-Sims, 1994) also may be misleading. In fact, reviews of the empirical literature suggest that not all stepparent relationships are the same. A wide range of stepparent relationships have been found (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1994; Fine et al., 1998, 1999; Hetherington et al., 1989) some of which are described as extremely "parent-like," whereas others are not. The extent to which the stepparent is perceived to be or desired to be a parent appears to be a recurring theme around which stepfamily life is organized (Burgoyne & Clark, 1984; Erera-Weatherley, 1996; Gross, 1987; Levin, 1990).

Stepfamily members may organize their family relationships around different themes. Levin (1990) and Burgoyne and Clark (1984) report that the stepfamilies they studied seemed to use the goals of the stepfamily as the organizing feature. The families in both studies saw themselves as attempting to either recreate the nuclear family, to consciously avoid it, or to wait and see what happened without a conscious attempt to either replicate or avoid the nuclear family. On one hand, some families, the "Not Really a Stepfamily" group, saw themselves so much like a nuclear family that many stepfamily issues were not relevant to their family life (Burgoyne & Clark, 1984). On the other hand, other families, the "Innovation" group (Levin, 1990) were consciously working against recreating the nuclear family.

However, even though the theme of attraction, aversion, or indifference to the nuclear family model was articulated, it appeared that one way in which this theme was expressed was by the type of stepparent-stepchild relationship that existed or was desired, specifically, whether or not, or to what degree the

stepparent acted as a parent to the children. For example, Levin (1990) suggested that those that sought to recreate the nuclear family granted the stepparent full parental status while those that sought to create a family outside the nuclear family model did not. A member of the latter group reported, "The child has two parents and do [sic] not need another one" (p. 11). Equally, the "Largely Successful Conscious Pursuit of an Ordinary Family Life Together" group described by Burgoyne and Clark (1984) seemed to see the stepparent relationship as an expression of the attitudes behind the organization of the family. The authors reported that "in their efforts to reconstitute an ordinary family life for their children, parents consciously attempt to adopt as full and normal a parental role as possible" (p. 193).

The extent to which the stepparent is seen to be or desired to be a parent appears to be a recurring theme around which stepfamily members organize stepfamily life (Burgoyne & Clark, 1984; Erera-Wetherley, 1996; Gross, 1987; Levin, 1990). Erera-Weatherly (1996) focused on attitudes towards the stepparent-stepchild relationship and found a typology of five stepchild-stepparent relationship styles (biological parent, "super good step-mom", detached, uncertain, friendship style). The parental status of the stepparent seemed to be a central feature. For example, as in the study by Burgoyne and Clark, some stepchild-stepparent relationship were described by these adults as "biological". One adult reports, "I feel toward her daughters exactly the way I feel toward my [own] children" (Erera-Weatherly, 1996).

The importance of parental status of biological parents and stepparents is further demonstrated in a study by Gross (1987). This study explored the extent to which 16-18 year olds constructed their relationships with the adults in their family according to the parental status of the stepparent, the residential biological parent, and the nonresidential biological parent. She found two

dichotomous elements operating simultaneously: the inclusion or exclusion of the stepparent and the inclusion or exclusion of the nonresidential biological parent as parents. The inclusion of the residential biological parent as a parent was constant. The results suggested four mutually exclusive and exhaustive typologies: retention, reduction, substitution, and augmentation. In the retention group, the biological parents were retained and the stepparent not included as a parent. In the reduction group, neither the stepparent nor the nonresidential biological parent were included. For these teens, there was only one parent, the residential, biological parent. The other biological parent had lost their parental status. In the two remaining groups (substitution and augmentation), the stepparent was considered as a parent. In the 'substitution' group, the stepparent was perceived as a substitute for the nonresidential biological parent. These children had two adults with full parental status, one biological and one step, synonymous with the adult members in the household. In the augmentation group, the stepparent was included with the two biological parents. These adolescents granted parental status to three adults.

The Gross study clearly demonstrates that to assume that a stepparent is a parent is not accurate, although, to assume the stepparent is not a parent is equally misleading. Fully 58% of the adolescents did not consider the stepparent as a parent. On the other hand, 41% of the adolescents in this study did consider their stepparent as a parent. This study suggested that neither assumption is appropriate.

In addition, although the typology presented two dichotomous choices, the anecdotal information reported suggested that stepparents can be considered parents without having full parental status in all situations. One adolescent from the group in which the stepparent had been substituted for the nonresidential biological parent stated, "I really care about him, but I could never be as close to

him as to my mother...", "...sometimes he takes on the father role, at other times he doesn't" (Gross, 1987, p. 211).

Fine et al. (1998, 1999) further explored the perceptions stepfamily members hold of stepparents using the multi-dimensional, cognitive-developmental model described by Fine and Kurdek (1994a). Forty stepfamilies completed self-report questionnaires relating to their perceptions of the stepparent role (the ideal role, the actual role, clarity of the stepparent role), as well as mental health symptoms, life satisfaction, satisfaction with stepparent, closeness of the stepparent-stepchild relationship, perceived success of the stepparent, marital satisfaction and family strengths (Fine et al., 1998).

Family members were asked to choose a label to describe the ideal role and the actual role of the stepparent in the family from four possibilities: (a) parent, (b) stepparent, (c) friend and (d) other. When describing the role they see their stepparent actually play, ten (28%) of the children chose 'parent' and another ten (28%) chose 'stepparent'. Together these two groups make up 56% of the sample. Nine children (25%) chose 'friend' and seven (19%) chose 'other'.

Parents and stepparents were more likely than children to choose both the 'parent' and 'stepparent' category. The 'parent' category was chosen by 15 (38%) parents and 19 (48%) stepparents. The 'stepparent' category was chosen by 12 (31%) parents and 10 (25%) stepparents. Together these two categories included 69% of the parents and 73% of the stepparents. The 'friend' category was chosen by 3 (8%) parents and 4 (10%) stepparents. The 'other' category was chosen by 9 (23%) parents and 7 (18%) stepparents.

Stepfamily members who describe the stepparent as a parent, support the stepparent as a parent or parental figure in the family. However, this included roughly one-third of the children and adults only. Another one-quarter to one-third of the participants described the stepparent as 'stepparent'. The use of the

'stepparent' term to describe the stepparent is problematic. While it seems reasonable to assume that for some respondents, this choice indicates some type of parental figure, it does not help us to understand to what extent this is true. Furthermore, beyond not being a 'parent' or a 'friend', the term 'stepparent' does not add to our understanding of the respondents cognitions about the stepparent. The use of the term 'stepparent' to label cognitions about stepparents therefore renders the responses of this substantial proportion of the sample uninterpretable in terms of parental status.

Nevertheless, other aspects of Fine, Ganong and Coleman's (1998) study shed light on cognitions in stepfamilies that are relevant to this discussion. Each participant rated their experience of role clarity, the degree to which they felt doubt or confidence related to the stepparent role. Stepchildren and parents were found to have greater role clarity than stepparents. However, stepparents' role clarity correlated with parents' role clarity, whereas the children's role clarity did not correlate with either of the adults' ratings. This research suggests that individual family members may experience substantially different levels of doubt or confidence related to the stepparent role in the family, with children having the least doubt.

The association between these social cognitions and adjustment also was studied. Contrary to expectations, measures of adjustment were not related to consistency of perceptions or to the level of role clarity. Similarly, stepchildren's role clarity and stepparent-stepchild role discrepancies were unrelated to adjustment. Consistent with research hypotheses, greater family consensus about the stepparent role was related to fewer mental health symptoms for stepparents, stepchildren's reports of closeness to the stepparent, parents' perceptions of the successful functioning of the stepparent, and the stepparents' perceptions of family strengths.



The ambiguous nature of the term 'stepparent' notwithstanding, Fine et al. (1998) confirms the wide range of possibilities for understanding the way in which stepfamily members perceive stepparents and the stepparent role. As in previous research, many stepparents are perceived to be parents, while others are not. Some stepparents appear to be somewhere in between. Further, the discrepancy between family member's perceptions of the stepparent role has been shown to be associated with some aspects of individual, relational, and family adjustment.

Although far from definitive, these efforts at describing stepfamilies demonstrate the diversity in the stepparent relationship described by stepfamily members and raise fundamental questions concerning the basic assumptions of stepchild-stepparent relationships. In contrast to the nuclear family model, there seems to be a range of stepparent relationships in stepfamilies based on the degree to which the stepparent is granted full, partial, or no parental status. The degree to which the stepchild-stepparent relationship is perceived as parental appears to be a central, organizing feature of the stepchild-stepparent relationship and of the stepfamily itself.

Gamache (1997) proposed that stepfamily researchers consider the parental status of the stepparent (i.e., the degree to which the stepparent is perceived as a parent) when investigating stepparent-stepchild relationships on dimensions derived from parent-child relationships in first-marriage families. Failure to do so implicitly assumes that all stepparents have full parental status and ignores the experiences unique to stepfamily life. This is of particular concern to children and adolescents who may not consider their stepparent to be a parent. Similarly, concern may surface for children who consider their stepparent to be somewhat like a parent but not completely like a parent. Gamache (1997) further suggested that the construct of parental status allows

variability in the degree to which the steprelationship is experienced as parental without assuming that more is better and less is deficient. It avoids the implicit assumption of a parental relationship yet does not exclude the possibility of this relationship being granted full parental status. Furthermore, the degree of parental status can change, increasing or even decreasing over time or in different circumstances.

The term "social parent" has been used in the literature to describe the stepparent that functions as "parent" (Burgoyne & Clark, 1984; Marsiglio, 1992). Marsiglio (1992) uses this term to differentiate stepparent relationships from blood or biological parent relationships. However, the term social parent carries an implicit limitation. While we are willing to call stepparents social parents we are probably not willing to call biological parents social parents. Parental status is a more neutral term. Relationships with both the biological parents and stepparents can include it as it suggests a psychological relationship rather than a paraphrase of the presence or absence of the biological relationship. Equally, reports from children and adolescents in stepfamilies do not make this distinction. While the amount of parental status in the stepchild-stepparent relationship may vary, the parental quality of the relationship seems to be the same according to the stepfamily members involved in the studies reported.

Factors that influence parental status. Although the construct of parental status has not been explicitly or systematically dealt with, a number of factors have been identified that may contribute to the development of parental status in the relationship between stepparent and stepchild. In their review of stepfamily literature, Cherlin and Furstenburg (1994) listed four factors: the age of the child at the beginning of the steprelationship, the frequency of contact with the same sex biological parent, the quality of the relationship between the stepparent and the biological parent in the household, and the child's temperament. Others

have explored typologies of stepfamily relationships and have suggested additional factors. Gross (1987) found the age of the child at separation and remarriage, time since remarriage, visitation with and additional children to, the nonresidential parent, and sex of the child as contributing factors. Erera-Wetherley (1996) focused on the expectations and behaviors of the stepparent, the stepchild, the spouse, and the nonresidential parent. Levin (1990) examined attitudes towards the nuclear family, finding that those who sought to recreate the nuclear family created steprelationships that included parental status. Those whose goal was to avoid creating another nuclear family did not see the stepparent as any type of parental figure. Burgoyne and Clark (1984) found that the principal contributor to the type of relationship that developed between the stepparent and stepchild was the stage in the family life cycle at the time of the divorce and remarriage. When the marital transitions took place early in the family life cycle, that is when children were younger, there was a greater likelihood that the stepparent relationship would develop high parental status.

The studies reviewed above (Burgoyne and Clark, 1984; Erera-Wetherley, 1996; Gross, 1987; Levin, 1990) have attempted to create typologies to describe different types of stepfamilies. Stepfamilies were found to differ and were segregated into discrete categories. The construct of parental status however, is hypothesized to be a continuous variable that varies in degree but not in quality.

These initial attempts to describe and discuss the degree of parental status in the stepparent-stepchild relationship have generated many factors worthy of further exploration. However, the single factor that has garnered consistent support and virtually no contradictory evidence is the age of the child at the time the stepparent enters the family. The effect of the age of the child at the beginning of the stepparent-stepchild relationship on the degree of parental

status in this relationship has received some attention in the clinical literature but scant systematic study from researchers.

One empirical study was found in which the influence of the age of the children at the beginning of the steprelationship was investigated for its influence on the "parentness" of the relationship. In a unique research design, Marsiglio (1992) examined stepfathers' perceptions of the "father-like" quality of their relationship with their stepchild. Using data from an American national survey, responses of 195 stepfathers were studied. The experience of stepfathering seems to include varying degrees of parental status as perceived by the stepfather. The age of the stepchild at the beginning of the steprelationship was found to be associated with the degree to which the stepfathers considered themselves as parents to their stepchildren. "Fatherliness" among stepfathers was more likely to be found in relationships with children who were younger at the time the stepfather entered the family.

Although the degree to which stepparents are considered parents has received little attention by researchers, clinicians have addressed this issue more thoroughly. Of the models described in the clinical literature, those proposed by Whiteside (1989) and Mills (1984) discuss the influence of the age of the child when the stepparent enters the stepfamily on the type of relationship that can be reasonably expected to develop between the stepparent and stepchild. In his proposed model for stepfamily development, Mills (1984) suggested that the initial age of the child acts as an indicator for the time frame necessary for the development of stepparent relationships to resemble those of biological parents. He further suggested that steprelationships involving younger children can develop into parent-like relationships once the stepparent has shared a significant period of time with the child. Mills suggested a significant period of time as roughly defined by the age of the child at the time the

stepfamily forms (e.g., 3 years for a 3 year old, 6 for a 6 year old, etc). In other words, the stepparent must achieve half of the mutual history of the child and biological parent to fill a parental role. Stepparent relationships that begin when the child is two or three would be expected to develop into relationships with a high degree of parental status. Mills further suggested that high parental status is not likely to develop when the children are adolescents at the time the steprelationship begins.

Whiteside (1989) also addressed the impact of the age of the child when the steprelationship begins as critical in establishing reasonable expectations for the stepchild-stepparent relationship. Whiteside proposed a link between the age of the child and the stage of the remarried family at the time of the formation of the stepfamily. Four developmental stages are suggested for the child (Preschool, 0-5 yrs.; Middle, 6-12 yrs.; Adolescence, 13-17 yrs.; and Adult 18 + yrs.), and three developmental stages for the remarried family (Early, 0-2 yrs.; Middle, 3-5 yrs.; and Later (6 + yrs.)). The developmental stage of the child at the beginning of the process plays an important role in determining the type of relationship that can reasonably be expected to form. Whiteside (1989) suggested that preschool children can form strong bonds with a nurturing stepparent and that it is in this situation that "a role approximating that of a biological parent has the best chance of success" (p. 148). By the time these children are in the early years of elementary school, they will have known their stepparent for nearly half their lives and are likely to consider the stepparent as a permanent and important member of the family. However, if the child is an adolescent at the time of the formation of the stepfamily, the expectation of creating a stepparent relationship that is high in parental status that includes parental regulation may be problematic. "In this combination of age and family stage,

there should be no expectation that the stepparent will be able to assume an effective authoritative position directly in relation to the child" (p. 153).

Although there is a paucity of research that systematically investigates the influence of the age of the child at the beginning of the stepparent relationship for its effect on the type of relationship that develops, some researchers have acknowledged this possibility in their research designs (Bray, 1992; Hetherington, 1987). Bray (1992) acknowledged the developmental status of the child at the beginning of the steprelationship in a study comparing marital and family processes, children's behavioral adjustment, and the relationship between family process and children's psychosocial adjustment in clinical and non-clinical stepfather families. The age of the child at the time the steprelationship began was limited, in part, to create a more homogeneous sample. Twenty-four stepfather families that had been married at least one year participated. Each family contained a target child between 6 and 11 years at the time of the study. Children in the clinical stepfather families were found to have more behavior problems than the children in the non-clinical stepfamilies. Child-to-parent interactions were found to be more negative and less positive in stepfather families in which children demonstrated more behavior problems.

Examining the sample more closely, the children were 10 years of age or younger at the time of remarriage. According to Whiteside (1989) at least two developmental stages have been grouped together. According to Mills (1984) and Whiteside (1989), probable types of relationships between the children who were older at the beginning of the stepfamily (i.e., 7 to 10 years) and their stepparents would not include relationships high in parental status.

Hetherington (1987) suggests that children who are younger when the stepfamily begins eventually accept a warm and involved stepparent while children 9-15 years of age are most resistant. However, if we consider the degree

of parental status as a variable influenced by the age of the children when the steprelationship begins, it may be that for the 9-15-year-old group, the problem is not the *step* but rather the *parent*. If we agree that a parent-like relationship is not recommended for this age group, then perhaps it is the parental model that is at fault. Younger children seem able to accept another parent or parental figure, thereby remaining within the nuclear family model and not appearing resistant. Again, perhaps the *step* is not the critical factor but the *parent*. Perhaps younger children would establish a parental type of relationship with any warm involved adult, such as a live-in aunt, uncle or older cousin.

Two areas of the child development literature may inform this discussion: attachment theory and theories of social-personality development. As extensive discussions of these theories is beyond the scope of this literature review, a brief overview will be provided.

Bowlby's (1982) theory of attachment integrates theories and research on mother-infant relationships from diverse disciplines to offer one of the best supported theories of socioemotional development available. Attachment theory suggests that within the first two years of life, infants establish strong bonds with a primary figure, usually the mother, through which they experience a pervasive sense of security. Attachment behaviors obtain and maintain proximity to the attachment figure. While attachments appear very strong in the first few years of life, it appears that they are somewhat reduced after the pre-school years (Parkes & Hinde, 1982).

Attachment theory would suggest that for the stepparent to develop a bond with the stepchild that includes a high degree of parental status, their relationship must begin early in the child's life, at a time when primary attachments are being formed. Attachments appear to be hierarchically organized in that infants can develop more than one attachment figure,

although, the secondary attachment figures do not replace the primary attachment figure (Ainsworth, 1982). While the relationship with the stepfather does not replace the mother-infant bond in stepfather families, a second adult in the home who is committed to the children can positively influence children's development (Weiss, 1982).

Attachment theory would also suggest that children develop attachment styles in the mother-infant relationship that have enduring qualities (Weiss, 1982). Subsequent relationships, i.e. with the stepparent, may include the same relationship style, be it secure or insecure, as had developed in the first relationship. Children who have had secure early attachments may be better able to build strong bonds with stepparents.

The work of Furman and Buhrmester (Buhrmester & Furman, 1986; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; 1992) on children's changing perspectives on social relationships may also shed light on the development of parental status in the stepparent relationship. These authors build on the theories of Sullivan and Weiss to investigate the changes in children's social relationships during childhood. From Sullivan's theory of Social-Personality Development these authors focused on the central theme of the interpersonal situation (Buhrmester & Furman, 1986) which suggested five developmental stages and critical relationships within normal social-personality development. While parents fulfill these roles in the early years, same-sexed friends, and eventually romantic partners provide the social context for these emerging needs. Weiss' (1974) theory of social provisions further refines Sullivan's theory by specifying which types of social support children seek in their social networks. Age was found to play a significant role in determining which relationships children selected to provide different social provisions (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). Children looked to parents for basic social needs in their early years, then



branched out to include friends and romantic partners. While parental figures are not rejected in the later years, these results suggested that children do not seek out additional adults with whom to establish close relationships as they get older, but increasingly look to peers as providers of basic social provisions.

Stepfamily researchers are in a unique position to explore familial relationships between children and adults (i.e., stepparents) that begin at different points along the course of the child's development. The theory and research from the child development literature reviewed here suggests that the social needs of the child when the stepparent relationship begins and the subsequent stages of the child's social development that occur while the stepparent and stepchild participate in family life together will have a significant impact on the type of relationship that is developed.

The literature discussed to this point strongly supports the age of the child at the beginning of the steprelationship as an important factor influencing the development of parental status in the stepparent-stepchild relationship. The younger the child at the beginning of the relationship, the more likely it is that the stepparent relationship will develop a high level of parental status. The older the child at the beginning of the stepparent relationship, the less likely the stepparent relationship will attain full parent status.

Given that the parent-child socialization literature assumes that adults in the household are parents of the children and that children in stepfamilies may or may not perceive the stepparent as a parent, the parental status of the stepparent may be an important influence on adolescents' perceptions of parental behaviors by stepparents. Thus, the effects of stepparenting behaviors for stepparents high in parental status may mimic those of biological parents. However, the effects of stepparenting behaviors for stepparents low in parental status cannot be assumed to be identical to those of the biological parent.

Therefore, the parental status of the stepparent may be a key factor moderating the effects of the parent-child socialization processes on adolescent adjustment in stepfamilies.

### Research Questions

This research project consists of two steps. The first step includes defining the construct of parental status, providing a theoretical foundation, and creating a psychometrically sound measure (Study 1). The second step consists of an exploration of the effects of mothers' and stepfathers' parenting behaviors on late adolescent adjustment and testing parental status as a moderator of the effects of the relationship between stepfathers' parenting behaviors and late adolescent adjustment (Study 2).

Study 1: Establishing the construct of parental status and developing a measure of parental status. No pre-existing construct or measure of parental status was found in the literature reviewed. Therefore, in accordance with the principles of establishing construct validity as described by Cronbach and Meehl (1952), parental status was defined and a theoretical foundation provided in the preceding section. The literature reviewed here provides the beginning of the nomological net, the interlocking system of related theories and ideas that support the construct of parental status.

The next task is to develop a psychometrically sound measure of parental status. The measure will be developed in accordance with standard test construction protocols (Anastasi, 1988; Dawis, 1987; Green, 1981). Items will be generated, reviewed, and a factor analysis conducted (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989).

The resulting scale will be assessed for convergent and discriminate validity by an investigation of its correlates with other established scales. Ascertaining theory-driven correlates will give the construct concrete definition (Cronbach & Meehl, 1952). Parental status is expected to be positively

associated with measures of warmth and closeness in the stepparent relationship and not associated with peer attachments.

Further, parental status is expected to be inversely associated with the age of the child when the stepfamily began. Parental status is expected to be higher when the child was younger at the formation of the stepfamily, and lower when the child was older at the time the stepfamily was formed.

Study 2; Exploring the moderating effects of parental status on the relationship between stepfathers' parental behaviors and late adolescent adjustment. This study seeks to investigate the effects of mothers' and stepfathers' parental behaviors on late adolescent adaptive and problem behaviors. Further, this study proposes that whether or not or to what degree the stepchild perceives the stepparent as a parent is an important moderator of the effect of the stepparents' parental behaviors on late adolescent adjustment.

The parent-child socialization literature has identified the three dimensions of parental connection, regulation, and psychological autonomy as critical to the healthy development of children. Yet, children and adolescents in stepfamilies have indicated that they do not perceive all stepparents as parents. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that parental behaviors by stepparents have the same effects as parenting by the biological parent.

Two questions guide this portion of the study.

1. What are the effects of late adolescent perceptions of parental behaviors (i.e., connection, regulation, and psychological control) by biological mothers and stepfathers in stepfather families on late adolescent adjustment (i.e., adaptive functioning, problem behaviors)?

Mother's parenting is predicted to have positive effects on late adolescent adjustment. Higher levels of mother's connection, regulation and lower levels of psychological control are expected to be positively associated with late adolescent

adjustment. Similarly, stepfather's connection is expected to be positively associated with late adolescent adjustment, but to a lesser degree than mother's connection. In a parallel fashion, stepfather's psychological control is expected to have a negative effect on late adolescent adjustment but to a lesser degree than mothers' psychological control. Stepfather's regulation is expected to have inconsistent effects on late adolescent adjustment.

2. Do late adolescent perceptions of stepfathers' parental status moderate the relationship between late adolescent perceptions of stepfathers' parental behavior and late adolescent adjustment?

Parental status of the stepparent is expected to moderate the effect of their parenting behaviors on late adolescent adjustment. Regarding connection and psychological control, higher levels of parental status are expected to strengthen both the positive effects of stepparent connection and the negative effects of stepparent psychological control on late adolescent adjustment.

However, regarding regulation, the moderating effect of parental status is expected to produce a cross-over type of interaction effect. Parental status is expected to strengthen the positive effect of regulation at high levels of parental status but to reverse this association at low levels of parental status. At high levels of parental status, high levels of regulation are expected to be associated with high levels of late adolescent adjustment and low levels of regulation are expected to be associated with low levels of late adolescent adjustment. In other words, at high levels of parental status, the effects of stepfathers' parenting behaviors are expected to mimic the effects of mothers' parenting behaviors. However, at low levels of parental status, an inverse association between regulation and adjustment is expected: high levels of regulation are expected to be associated with low levels of late adolescent adjustment.

## CHAPTER 3

## Study 1: Development of the Parental Status Inventory

This research introduces a new construct, Parental Status. Parental status refers to the degree to which the stepparent is considered to be a parent to a stepchild. A thorough review of the extant literature was conducted and, although some work exists on related issues, no measure of parental status in the stepparent-stepchild relationship was found. Thus, the first task in this research was to develop a measure of parental status. Once a psychometrically sound measure was constructed, the second step in this research could be undertaken.

## Construction of Parental Status Inventory

The first step in developing the Parental Status Inventory (PSI) was to generate a series of possible items. (See appendix A.) Four sources were examined: (a) pre-existing items from the research literature were identified; (b) the qualitative literature on stepfamilies was reviewed for topics that stepfamily members reported as relevant to parental status; (c) other items were generated by the author as a result of professional experience as a family therapist and experience growing up in a stepfamily; and (d) experts who evaluated the list of potential items suggested additional items.

Pre-existing items in the literature on family membership (Crosbie-Burnett, 1989; Levin, 1990; Furstenberg, 1987) were reviewed. Four items were taken from the Stepfamily Adjustment Scale<sup>1</sup> (Crosbie-Burnett, 1989) and several items were contributed by M. Fine (Mark Fine, personal communication, 1997)

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<sup>1</sup> The four items of the Stepfamily Adjustment Scale, Family membership subscale: I have accepted my stepfather as a member of my family. My stepfather should be invited to my relatives parties, weddings, etc. In our household, my stepfather is treated as an outsider. I see my stepfather as an outsider.

regarding how the respondents refer to a stepparent.<sup>2</sup> Research on adolescents in stepfamilies (Gross, 1987) included anecdotal reports suggesting adolescents saw their stepfamily households as either one-parent households or two-parent households, depending on the degree to which the stepparent was viewed as a parent. Research by Marsiglio (1992) suggested that how the extended family viewed the stepparent may be relevant to the parental status of a stepparent. Questions based on the observations of these scholars were generated for the list of potential items. These items addressed the degree to which the stepfather is included as a parent in the household and whether the stepfather should be included as a relative.

A review of the qualitative literature on stepfamily experiences resulted in additional items being generated. Burgoyne and Clark (1984) reported that some stepfamilies were uncomfortable with perceived social stigma around divorce and remarriage and had chosen to hide their stepfamily status in social situations. Thus, some items were generated regarding the comfort with which respondents let friends, neighbors and others in the community know that a 'parent' was a stepparent.

Another source of items was the professional and personal experiences of the author. As a family therapist and facilitator of groups for adults in stepfamilies for seven years, the author has benefited from hearing about stepfamily life. Also, previous research (Gamache, 1992) with late adolescents in stepfamilies provided additional insight into late adolescents' perspectives of stepparent relationships. Having grown up in a stepfamily herself, the author's personal experience also was a source of potential items and focused on the introductions of one's stepparent, selection of greeting cards to avoid

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<sup>2</sup> Fine, M. (personal communication, 1997) What do you call your stepfather? (Dad, by his first name, a nickname, nothing, other (specify \_\_\_\_\_). What do you call your stepfather when you introduce him to someone else? (As my Dad, by his first name, by a nickname, as my parent, as nothing, I do not introduce him, other (specify \_\_\_\_\_)).

inappropriate naming of the stepparent, social gatherings and celebrations for fathers or mothers and sons or daughters that may highlight the tenor of the steprelationship, and fluctuations in status depending on the presence/absence of their spouse/partner (the biological parent).

A list of potential items was assembled and two decisions made regarding the instructions. First, the referent 'stepfather' was removed from the items. Since the point of the inventory is to determine the parental status of the stepparent, the term 'stepparent' itself means little or nothing in this context. Respondents were instructed to describe their relationship with "the man who is your mother's husband or partner." Items used the pronoun "him" when referring to the stepfather. Second, because the parental status of the stepparent may exist only in the context of the respondent's life with their mother, it was not reasonable to assess whether the parental status of the stepparent transferred over into the biological father's life. Therefore, respondents were instructed not to consider "situations that include your biological father or his extended family." Thus, possible ambiguities in these two areas were eliminated.

#### Initial Review of Potential Items

Establishing the content validity (Green, 1981) of the 32 initial items started by soliciting expert opinion of individuals including clinicians who are members of a stepfamily (N = 19) and adolescents and late adolescents who are members of a stepfamily (N = 15). (See Appendix A.)

The clinicians (12 female, 7 male) agreed to evaluate the list of items. Their age ranged from 36 to 56 years (M = 45.8, SD = 5.63). Nine were biological parents in their stepfamily of 2 - 20 years in duration (M = 11.7, SD = 7.87). Ten were stepparents, in families of 3 - 20 years in duration (M = 12.1, SD = 6.54). Three were adult stepchildren, one was a step-daughter-in-law, two were

stepgrandmothers, and one was a biological father, stepfather, and stepgrandfather. Their time living in a stepfather family ranged from 0 - 20 years ( $M = 6.37$ ,  $SD = 7.74$ ).

As counsellors, therapists, and other mental health professionals, their professional clinical experience ranged from 1 to 25 years, ( $M = 12.4$ ,  $SD = 7.68$ ). They had worked with stepfamilies from 1 - 25 years ( $M = 12.1$ ,  $SD = 8.01$ ). In terms of education, four held doctorates in psychology, nine held Master's degrees in psychology, one held an MSW, one held a diploma in Child and Adolescent Care.

The 15 adolescents and young adults who added their expertise to this project were the children or stepchildren of the clinicians. Parental consent was obtained for minors. Ten females and 5 males evaluated the potential items. Their age ranged from 12 to 30 years ( $M = 21$ ,  $SD = 5.6$ ). They had been members of a stepfamily as a minor (under 19 years) from 2 to 17 years ( $M = 8$ ;  $SD = 4.8$ ). They had been in the stepfamily as an adult child (over 19 years) from 3 to 11 years ( $M = 3.47$ ,  $SD = 3.87$ ). Total years in a stepfamily ranged from 2 - 23 years ( $M = 13$ ,  $SD = 6.55$ ).

Both groups ( $N = 33$ ) were asked to address four questions:

1. Which 10 items best represent the construct of parental status and which 10 items seem the poorest?
2. Do the items cover the domain?
3. What additional items should be included?
4. What additional comments could be offered (e.g., confusing questions, suggestions for improving items).

Scores for each item were calculated (Worst = 0, Not chosen = 2, Best = 4). Item scores ranged from 6 to 66. Although most items were not assessed identically by both groups, there was evidence of convergence. For example, in



the top 10 items for each group, 7 of 10 were the same. In the top 15, 12 were the same. Similarly, of the least popular items, 7 of 10 and 12 of 15 were common between the two groups. Of the 12 of 15 least popular items, none appeared to be merit further investigation therefore all 12 were removed from the inventory. Then, the suggestions for improving the remaining items were considered and incorporated when appropriate. Also, four additional items were suggested and subsequently added to the inventory<sup>3</sup>. This resulted in a 25-item inventory. (See Appendix C.)

For the inventory itself, respondents were presented with 25 statements. Percentage scores from 0 to 100 in increments of 10 are to the right of each statement. Participants were instructed to circle the percentage that reflects the degree to which the statement accurately reflects their perceptions of their relationship with the man who is their mother's husband or partner. Percentages were chosen over a Likert scale to allow participants to use common language when describing parental status. Thus, PSI scores can fit easily within regular conversations in clinical and parent education settings. PSI scores were determined by calculating by the mean score of the 25 items.

### Study 1

Design. A correlational field study was conducted to investigate the reliability and validity of the PSI. A sample of convenience was used. Paper and pencil measures were selected to measure various constructs to explore the reliability and validity of the PSI.

Sample. Study 1 was conducted at two sites. Participants were recruited locally through a research raffle for 2 prizes of \$50 or two tickets to a Vancouver Grizzlies basketball game. The study was advertised in campus newspapers and

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<sup>3</sup> The following items were suggested by the expert reviewers. I consider him to be one of my parents. He and I are just like father and daughter/father and son. I consider him to be a father to me. I consider him to be a parental figure in my life.

through notices posted on campus bulletin boards. Most Canadian participants were students at either The University of British Columbia or Langara College. Participants also were recruited at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), where students were offered course credit for participating in this study as part of their program in Human Development and Family Studies. (See Table 1.) UNCG was chosen as a sample of convenience. The collection of American data was designed to enhance generalizability.

The participants were asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire and then, two weeks later, to complete another very short questionnaire. The Canadian participants received their research packages in the mail and returned the completed questionnaires through the mail using the stamped envelopes provided. The American participants picked up and returned questionnaires in their academic department. (See Appendix C.) Information on response rates were not collected in either location.

The sample included 159 late adolescents, 60 (38 %) Canadians, residing in BC and 99 (62 %) Americans (123 female, 36 male), ranging in age from 17 to 28 years ( $M = 21$ ,  $SD = 3.16$ ). The sample is best described as predominantly white, American, female students (see Table 1). Thirteen (8%) consider themselves of aboriginal heritage, 27 (16.7%) were black, 94 (58%) were Caucasian or white, 1 (.6%) was Indian /Pakistani, four (2.5%) were Latin American, six (3.7%) were North Asian (Chinese, Japanese), 2 (1.2 %) were South Asian (Vietnamese), six (3.7%) were other.

One hundred and eleven respondents (68.5%) were full time students in a post-secondary institution. Fourteen (8.6%) were part-time students while 35 (21.6%) were not students at all.

Table 1

**Demographic Characteristics of Sample in Study 1**

Characteristic	Canadian		American		Total	
	<u>n</u> = 60		<u>n</u> = 99		<u>N</u> = 159	
	n	%	n	%	N	%
Sex						
Female	44	73	79	80	123	77
Male	16	26	20	20	36	23
Race/Ethnicity						
Aboriginal	5	8	8	9	13	8
Black	0	0	27	29	27	17
Caucasian	42	72	52	55	94	58
Indian	1	2	0	0	1	1
Latin American	1	2	3	3	5	3
North Asian	6	10	0	0	6	4
South Asian	0	0	2	2	2	1
Other	3	5	2	2	6	4
Student Status						
Full time	36	60	72	74	111	66
Part time	8	13	6	6	14	9
Not a student	15	25	20	20	35	22
End of parental marriage						
Divorce	53	90	96	97	151	93
Death	6	10	3	3	10	6
Custody during childhood						
Full time with Mom; Little or no contact with Dad	17	29	34	35	52	32
Full time with Mom; Regular contact with Dad	15	26	18	18	34	21
75% time with Mom; 25% time with Dad	13	22	28	29	41	25
50% with each Mom and Dad	4	7	9	9	13	8
25% time with Mom; 75% time with Dad	4	7	3	3	7	4

Table 1 con't...

Table 1

**Demographic Characteristics of Sample in Study 1 (continued)**

Characteristic	Canadian		American		Total	
Regular contact with Mom; Full time with Dad	4	7	6	6	10	6
Little or no contact with Mom; Full time with Dad	1	2	0	0	1	1
Stepfather also biological father	38	63	54	55	93	57
Stepfather's children in residence						
Full time	12	20	13	13	23	14
Part time	9	16	14	14	25	15
Common child for couple	14	23	22	22	37	23
Age of young adult						
Mean	21.43		20.89		20.99	
SD	3.62		2.05		3.16	
Age at parental separation						
Mean	7.88		6.96		7.26	
SD	5.95		4.70		5.20	
Age at remarriage						
Mean	11.88		11.54		11.70	
SD	6.34		4.97		5.48	
Time between parental separation and remarriage						
Mean	4.57		4.85		4.77	
SD	4.04		3.88		3.94	
Time in stepfather family						
Mean	9.90		8.63		9.06	
SD	5.82		5.29		5.52	
Time in residence with stepfather						
Mean	7.70		7.51		7.53	
SD	6.90		5.33		5.92	

For most respondents, their parents marriage ended in divorce (151, 93.2%). For ten (6.2 %), death had ended the parental marriage. The length of time between their biological parents' final separation (or death) and their mother's commitment or remarriage ranged from 0 to 17 years ( $M = 4.77$ ,  $SD = 3.94$ ). During this time, respondents indicated that their mother had been involved in no other relationships (94, 58%), one other relationship (29, 17.9%), two (18, 11.1%), three (11, 6.8%) or four (5, 3.1%) relationships.

The age of the respondents at the time of their biological parents' separation varied from 0 (unborn) to 22 years ( $M = 7.26$  yrs,  $SD = 5.20$ ). The age of the respondent stepfamily formation ranged from 1 to 24 years ( $M = 11.7$ ,  $SD = 5.48$ ).

The custody arrangements during their childhood varied from 100% of the time with Mom and little or no contact with Dad, to 100% of the time with Dad and little or no contact with Mom. Fifty-two (32.1%) lived full time with Mom with little or no contact with Dad. Thirty-four (21%) lived full time with Mom with regular visits with Dad. Forty-one (24%) lived full time with Mom and spent a regular part of each week or two-week period with Dad. Thirteen (8%) lived equally with each parent. Seven (4.3%) lived full time with Dad and spent a regular part of each week or two-week period with Mom. Ten (6.2%) lived full time with Dad with regular visits with Mom. One (0.6%) lived full time with Dad with little or no contact with Mom. Time since remarriage ranged from 1 to 23 years ( $M = 9$  yrs,  $SD = 5.52$ ). Time in living with Mom and Stepdad ranged from 0 to 23 years ( $M = 7.53$  yrs,  $SD = 5.92$ ).

For 93 respondents (57.4%), their stepfather had children from a previous relationship, for 68 (42%) he did not. In 25 cases (15.4%), his children lived with the respondent full-time, in 23 (14.2 %) cases, they lived part-time with the respondent. A common child had been born to the mother and stepfather in 37

cases (22.8%). For 56 respondents (34.6%), biological Dad had also had children in a subsequent relationship.

Measures. Correlations between the Parental Status Inventory and related but conceptually different scales provide some evidence for its validity. (See Appendix C.)

The Parental Status Inventory (PSI). The PSI is a 25-item inventory that attempts to measure the degree to which the respondents consider their stepparent to be a parent. Respondents rate their stepparent on an 11-point scale ranging from 0% to 100%, in increments of 10%. Sample items for the scale include: "I think of him as my father" and "He and I are just like father and son/daughter."

The Inventory of Parental and Peer Attachment (IPPA; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). The IPPA - Parent (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) is a 28-item scale that measures the degree of mutual trust, quality of communication, and extent of anger and alienation in relationships with mother and father. The IPPA - Parent was developed in order to assess the positive and negative affective and cognitive dimensions of adolescents' relationship with their parents. Three-week test-retest reliabilities were .93 (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). Cronbach's alpha was not reported. Results suggest that scores on the IPPA - Parent are related to family self-concept ( $r = .78$ ) and social self-concept ( $r = .46$ ) as described in the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (Fitts, 1965). Moderate associations have also been found with various subscales of the Family Environment Scale (Moos, 1974), e.g., cohesion ( $r = .56$ ), expressiveness ( $r = .52$ ), conflict ( $r = -.36$ ), and organization ( $r = .38$ ).

Although the IPPA assesses parent-child relationships, information on family structure is not available, therefore, we cannot know if respondents from stepfamilies respond differently from those in first-marriage families. However,

more importantly for this study, is that the questions ask about "parents" in the plural form. Therefore, it was necessary to change the wording from parents to stepparent to direct the respondent to consider only the stepparent when answering the questions.

IPPA-Peer (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) is a 25-item scale that measures the degree of mutual trust, quality of communication, and extent of anger and alienation in relationships with peers and was developed simultaneously with the IPPA-Parent. Loading patterns from the factor analysis used to develop the IPPA suggested the appropriateness of separating items assessing parent attachment from items assessing peer attachment. Three-week test-retest reliabilities for the IPPA-Peer were .86. Cronbach's alpha was not reported. Results suggest that the IPPA-Peer is associated with social self-concept ( $r = .57$ ) as described by the Tennessee Self Concept Scale (Fitts, 1962) but has low or insignificant associations with the subscales of the Family Environment Scale (Moos, 1974). The strongest association was with expressiveness ( $r = .25$ ).

For both of the IPPA scales, respondents rate their parents or peers on a 5-point scale 1 = *Almost always or always true* through 5 = *Almost never or never true*. Sample items for the Parent scale include: "respect my feelings" and "encourage me to talk about my difficulties". Sample items for the Peer scale include "are fairly easy to talk to" and "understand me".

The Closeness to Parent Scale (Bowerman & Irish, 1962) measures a child's perceived closeness to a parent or parent-substitute. The Closeness to Parent scale is a 5-item questionnaire used in assessing feelings held by children for their parents. The scale was first developed by Bowerman and Irish (1962), who used it as part of a battery of instruments. Reliability and validity data are not reported. Stepfamily researchers (Coleman & Ganong, 1984; Ganong & Coleman, 1987) have adapted these 5 items from the original scale and added additional

items of their own. The core of the instrument, however, has remained the original 5-item scale.

Respondents rate their stepparent on a 3-point scale 1 = *Hardly ever* through 3 = *Most of the time*. Sample items include "Do you ever talk over you personal matters with him?" and "Do you ever feel that he neglects you and your wishes."

The relationship between the PSI and social desirability also was examined using the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR) (Paulhus, 1988). The BIDR is a 40-item inventory that includes self-deceptive positivity (SDE) and impression management (IM). The self-deception items address exaggerated perceptions of one's positive cognitive attributes or overconfidence in one's judgment. The impression management items address systematic overreporting of performances of desirable behaviors and underreporting of undesirable behaviors. Paulhus (1991) reports values of coefficient alpha from .68 to .80 for the SDE and from .75 to .86 for the IM scale. Test-retest correlations over a 5-week period were .69 and .65 for the SDE and the IM scale, respectively. Paulhus (1991) further reports that the sum of all 40 BIDR items correlates at .71 with the Marlowe-Crowne Scale and .80 with the Multidimensional Social Desirability Inventory.

### Results

A principal components analysis was conducted on the 25 items proposed for the Parental Status Inventory. An Oblimin rotation was used because of the expected correlation between components. A three factor solution was described in 11 iterations (see Table 2). The first factor addressed parental status most directly. The second factor addressed the social profile of the stepparent relationship. The third factor addressed family membership.



**Table 2****Factor Loadings of Parental Status Inventory (25-item)**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Factor 1</b>	<b>Factor 2</b>	<b>Factor 3</b>
1. I think of him as my father	<u>.92</u>	.06	-.05
2. I am comfortable when someone else refers to him as my father/Dad	<u>.78</u>	.08	-.16
3. I think of myself as his daughter/son	<u>.89</u>	.05	-.10
4. In my family, he is treated as an outsider*	-.01	-.07	<u>-.73</u>
5. I refer to him as my father/Dad	<u>.99</u>	-.03	.15
6. It is comfortable for me to acknowledge him on Father's Day	.46	.05	-.53
7. I consider him to be one of my parents	.60	.08	-.44
8. He introduces me as his son/daughter	<u>.83</u>	-.07	.03
9. I consider him a member of my family	.13	.00	<u>-.83</u>
10. I feel he should be invited to my relatives' parties, weddings, etc.	-.03	.00	<u>-.86</u>
11. I introduce my mother and him as 'my parents'	<u>.62</u>	.06	-.33
12. I consider him an outsider*	.04	-.08	<u>-.76</u>
13. He and I are just like father and son/daughter	<u>.89</u>	.04	-.10
14. I feel he should be included in a family picture	.12	.02	<u>-.80</u>
15. I consider him to be a parental figure in my life	.54	.06	-.48

Table 2 con't...

Table 2

**Factor Loadings of Parental Status Inventory (25-item) (continued)**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Factor 1</b>	<b>Factor 2</b>	<b>Factor 3</b>
16. I am comfortable letting the neighbors my family has contact with know that he and I are not biologically related	.01	<u>.92</u>	.11
17. I introduce him as 'my father' or 'my Dad'	<u>.97</u>	-.01	.10
18. I would feel comfortable if he and I were to attend a father-daughter/son function alone together, i.e., banquet, baseball game, bar-b-que	<u>.66</u>	.03	-.29
19. I introduce him as 'my mother's husband' or 'my mother's partner' *	<u>.57</u>	-.14	-.23
20. I am comfortable letting my friends know that he and I are not biologically related	-.03	<u>.92</u>	.06
21. I consider us to be related	.49	.07	-.47
22. When I think of my mother's house, I consider him and my mother to be parents to the same degree	<u>.74</u>	.09	-.15
23. I consider him to be a father to me	<u>.89</u>	.07	-.12
24. I address him by his first name*	<u>.86</u>	-.19	.28
25. If I were choosing a greeting card for him, the inclusion of the word 'father' or 'Dad' in the inscription would prevent me from choosing the card*	<u>.65</u>	-.01	-.18
Eigenvalue	<b>15.64</b>	2.09	1.43
Cronbach's Alpha	<b>.97</b>	.83	.90

Note. \* Indicated reverse scored items.

The objective of this pilot study was to create an inventory for assessing the social cognition of parental status. Therefore, only those items that loaded on the parental status factor at .5 or higher and with a span of at least .2 between factor loadings were included. These criteria result in a factor structure that is clear, with various factors clearly distinguished from each other.

The second factor included only two items which referred to the degree which neighbors and family knew the stepparent was not biologically related to the respondent. The five items on the third factor referred to the degree to which the respondent perceived the stepfather to be part of the family. Thus, the first factor was retained. The resulting inventory assessing parental status included 14 items.

An additional analysis was performed to address any possible discrepancies between the two data collection sites. Given the geographical distance between British Columbia and North Carolina and the two cultures represented, significant differences in factor loadings might result.

Tabachnick and Fidell (1989) proposed a procedure for assessing differences between two groups in factor analysis. First the total sample is divided by country, then similar procedures are applied to each group. A preliminary review determines if additional statistical analyses are warranted. This review consists of answering three questions:

1. Did both groups generate the same number of factors?
2. Do the same variables load highly on the different factors for the two groups?
3. Could you reasonably use the same labels to name factors for both groups?

If all three questions are answered in the affirmative, it is unnecessary to proceed to statistical comparisons (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989, p. 642).

All questions were answered in the affirmative. The Canadian and American groups were examined separately, again using a principal components analysis for correlated factors. (See Appendix D.) In general, the same variables loaded highly on the same factors. There were a few minor exceptions. Although items 7, 11, and 18 loaded highly on the parental status factor for both groups, they also loaded on the family factor for the Canadians but not for the Americans. Further, the family factor had a slightly higher eigenvalue than the social profile factor for the Canadians, but not for the Americans. Comrey and Lee (1992) point out that the valence (i.e., positive or negative) may vary across factors and that this is not relevant to interpreting the second and third factors. The absolute value of the factor loadings are all that is noteworthy (Lloyd Bond, personal communication, 2000). Finally, the same labels could be used to name the factors for both groups. Therefore, no further statistical analysis was conducted to compare the two groups. The two groups were combined for all subsequent analyses.

Reliability was assessed in two ways. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated on the 14 items and produced an initial reliability coefficient of .97. Also, participants completed the Parental Status Inventory two to three weeks after completing the initial pilot package. Cronbach's alpha on the PSI for the second assessment was .98 ( $M = 45.95$ ,  $SD = 36.69$ ,  $N=127$ ). A comparison of the PSI Time 1 and the Time 2 resulted in an extremely high test-retest reliability correlation ( $r=.95$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $N=121$ ), suggesting a high degree of stability over time<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> The test-retest questionnaire was included in the original package rather than being sent out separately 2 weeks later. Therefore, the high test-retest reliability correlation may be due, in part, to some participants completing the retest at the same time as the original test. However, participants seemed genuinely interested in the study and may have been willing to follow instructions.

Before completing the PSI, participants also were asked to respond to a global question that asked them to rate the parental status of their stepfather as low, moderate or high. (See Appendix C for the precise wording of the Global Parental Status Question.) A high correlation was found between the PSI and the global parental status question ( $r = .86, p < .001, N = 156$ ), thus supporting the construct validity of the PSI. Further, a one-way Anova confirmed that there were significant differences between groups indicating low, moderate, and high parental status,  $F(2,148) = 228.86, p < .001$ . A Scheffe post-hoc test ( $p < .05$ ) demonstrated that the mean of each of the three groups was significantly different on the PSI. (See Table 3.) These findings support the range of possibilities for parental status, and thus provides additional support for the construct validity of the PSI.

Assessment of validity was determined by comparison of PSI responses with three scales: the Inventory of Parental and Peer Attachment (IPPA, Armsden & Greenberg, 1987), and Closeness to Parent (Bowerman & Irish, 1962). (See Table 4). A moderate to high correlation was found between PSI and the IPPA-Parent Scale ( $r = -.70, P < .01, N = 159$ )<sup>5</sup>. This suggests that parental status is related to but is not identical to attachment to the parent.

Given that the IPPA-Parent was not specifically designed for stepparents and that a slight modification to the scale was necessary, an additional scale previously used for stepparents and other parental figures was added to strengthen the test for convergent validity. Closeness to Parent (Bowerman & Irish, 1962) measures a child's perceived closeness to a parent or parent-substitute. A moderate to high correlation also was found between the PSI and

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<sup>5</sup> For the IPPA-Parent and IPPA-Peer, low scores indicate high levels of attachment, whereas for the Closeness to Parent Scale and the PSI, high scores indicate high levels of closeness or parental status. Therefore, the correlation between the IPPA-Parent and both the Closeness Scale and the PSI are in the negative direction.

**Table 3**

**Means, Standard Deviations, and N for Low, Moderate, and High Global Parental Status Ratings (N=151)**

<b>Rating</b>	<b><u>M</u></b>	<b><u>SD</u></b>	<b><u>n</u></b>
Low	7.56	11.50	44
Moderate	35.78	23.03	54
High	85.22	17.35	53

**Table 4**

**Zero-order Correlations Among Measures in Study 1 (N=159)**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
1. PSI	-----			
2. Parental attachment	-.70*	-----		
3. Peer attachment	-.06	.11	-----	
4. Closeness	.71*	-.76*	-.09	-----
<b><u>M</u></b>	45.66	3.50	2.45	1.93
<b><u>SD</u></b>	36.87	.58	.37	.42

Note. \* $p < .01$ .

the Closeness to Parent Scale ( $r = .71$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $N = 154$ ). Again, this suggests that parental status is related to but not identical to closeness to parent. These findings support the convergent validity of the PSI. Further, the nomological net (Cronbach & Meehl, 1952) of hypothesized construct relationships described earlier, has been given concrete support by these analyses.

Also, the IPPA-Parent Scale and the Closeness Scale correlated to a moderate to high degree ( $r = -.76$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $N = 161$ ). This suggests that the three constructs of parental status, attachment to parent, and closeness to parent are related but not identical to each other when applied to stepparents.

The IPPA-Peer section of the IPPA was used to support the discriminant validity of the PSI. Loading patterns from the factor analysis suggested the appropriateness of separating items assessing parent attachment from items assessing peer attachment. Findings support discriminant validity of the PSI ( $r = -.06$ ,  $p = .214$ ,  $N = 154$ ).

The age of the child at the beginning of the stepfamily was hypothesized to be associated with parental status. Thus, additional support for the validity of the PSI was provided by the moderate inverse correlation between the PSI and the age of the respondent at the beginning of their stepfamily ( $r = -.44$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $N = 159$ ). Respondents who were younger at the beginning of the stepparent relationship reported higher levels of parental status as expected.

Thus, findings help elaborate the nomological net foundational to the construct of parental status (Cronbach & Meehl, 1952). Ascertaining theory-driven correlates provides concrete definition to a new construct. Parental status has been found to be moderately associated with established measures of parental attachment and closeness to parent and not associated with an established measure of peer attachment. Further, parental status has been found

to be moderately associated with the age of the respondent when the stepfamily began. Thus, all hypothesized correlates were found in the expected directions.

The relationship between the PSI and social desirability was examined using the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR) (Paulhus, 1988). Results further support the validity of the PSI. The low correlation of the PSI and the Impression Management scale ( $M = 83.87$ ,  $SD = 24.31$ ) support the lack of association between these two constructs ( $r = .04$ ,  $p = .33$ ). Similarly, the Self Deception subscale ( $M = 93.42$ ,  $SD = 14.57$ ) also was poorly associated with the PSI ( $r = .18$ ,  $p = .01$ ) supporting the conceptual separateness of these two constructs.

No significant differences in PSI (14-item) scores were found between the female ( $M = 45.20$ ,  $SD = 37.03$ ) and male respondents ( $M = 42.80$ ,  $SD = 36.36$ ),  $F(1, 157) = .11$ ,  $p = .73$ , NS). Equally, no significant differences were demonstrated between the Canadian ( $M = 41.22$ ,  $SD = 36.82$ ) and American ( $M = 46.00$ ,  $SD = 36.62$ ) respondents, ( $F(1, 150) = .90$ ,  $p = .41$ , NS).

### Discussion

An initial focus in the present research was the development of a measure to assess the construct of parental status, the Parental Status Inventory (PSI). Parental status is defined as a social cognition that addresses the degree to which the stepparent is perceived as a parent by the stepchild, the stepparent, and/or the residential parent. This study assessed the perceptions of late adolescents regarding the parental status of their stepfathers in stepfather families.

A review of the literature found no pre-existing measure of parental status. Possible items were generated from four sources, including the research literature, qualitative descriptions of stepfamily members, the author's professional experience as a family therapist and stepchild, and suggestions from experts. An initial pool of items were then reviewed by two groups of experts, clinicians as well as adolescents and late adolescents -- all members of a



stepfamily. Based on their evaluations, additional items were generated, other items were removed, and still others were reworded. This process resulted in a 25-item inventory.

A pilot-study was conducted at two sites, the lower mainland of British Columbia, Canada, and The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA. In total 159 ( 123 female, 36 male) late adolescents participated. The pilot-study included the 25-item PSI and a demographic questionnaire, asking about age (now and at parental separation, divorce, and remarriage), custody while a minor, current family living arrangements, etc. The pilot-study also included several other measures designed to explore the validity of the PSI including measures to assess parental attachment and closeness (IPPA, Armsden & Greenberg, 1987 and Bowerman & Irish, 1962 respectively) as well as social desirability (Paulhus, 1988).

The results of the pilot-study strongly supported the construct of parental status and the reliability and validity of the PSI. The 25-items included three factors. One factor included only two items addressing the social profile of the stepparent relationship and was considered to be remote from the parental status construct. Of the remaining two factors, one was more central to the parental status construct. The other addressed family membership. Further, these three factors were examined separately for Canadians and Americans and were found to meet all the requirements for a combined sample (i.e., both groups generated the same number of factors, the same variables loaded on each factor, the same labels could be used to name factors for both groups) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989). Therefore, data from the two samples were combined. The items loading on the second and third factors were removed, leaving a 14-item inventory.

Further analysis showed that the respondents' scores on the PSI were consistent over a 2-3 week period. Also, PSI scores were highly correlated with

the global ratings of stepfathers' parental status (low, medium, high) provided by the participants. Further analysis showed that the three resulting groups had significant differences in PSI scores. The mean PSI score for these three groups were 8, 36 and 85, respectively.

Further support for the construct validity of the PSI was found in comparisons with other scales: The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) and Closeness to Parent (Bowerman & Irish, 1962). The PSI was moderately or strongly associated with parental attachment and closeness to parent. No association was found between the PSI and peer attachments, thus supporting the discriminant validity of the PSI.

Finally, the PSI had a low to moderate association with the age of the respondent at the time the stepfamily originated and duration in stepfamily residence. Respondents who were younger when the stepfamily began and resided longer in the stepfamily residence reported higher levels of parental status.

Thus, all associations were as hypothesized and in the expected directions, thereby bringing the abstract foundation of theories and ideas regarding parental status into concrete definition. The hypothesized nomological net, or network of associations regarding parental status was supported.

Convergence or divergence with past literature. The results from this study suggest that parental status is a viable construct in the study of stepfather families. Consistent with the empirical literature that seeks to address the broad range of stepparent relationships (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1994; Fine et al., 1998, 1999; Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan, & Anderson, 1989), parental status can vary from low to high. By defining parental status, an important dimension of stepparent relationships is clearly articulated. Further, the construct was operationalized with the PSI, and its measurement was found to be reliable and

valid, providing a tool for assessing stepparent relations across the range of possible stepparent relationships.

This study is consistent with Fine et al. (1998, 1999) who found that 28% of stepchildren studied chose the label of "parent" to describe their stepparent. In this study, 35% of stepchildren described their stepfather as high in parental status (mean PSI score of 85.22).

As expected (Burgoyne & Clark, 1984; Cherlin & Furstenburg, 1994; Erera-Wetherley, 1996; Gross, 1987; Hetherington, 1987; Levin, 1990), parental status is affected by the age of the child when the stepfamily began. Such age is also reflected in duration of residence in the stepfamily.

Clinical speculation about the degree to which stepparents are considered parents (Mills, 1984; Whiteside, 1989) also is supported by the findings from this research. These authors suggested that younger children may develop relationships with stepparents that resemble those of biological parents, whereas adolescents are less likely to do so. The findings here validate these hunches.

Limitations. This study identified, defined, and developed a measure of the construct of parental status that was found to be reliable and valid. However, several limitations are noted. First, these results are based on a small, select sample of 159 late adolescents. Greater support for the PSI could be garnered from subsequent studies with larger samples. Myers and Well (1991) state that the larger the sample, the more representative it is of the population. However, in this study, for a larger sample to be more representative, it would also need to include late adolescents of different segments of the population than the white, female college students who made up the majority of participants in this study. Further, correlation coefficients tend to be less reliable when estimated from small samples (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989). Although sample sizes of 100-200 are

considered adequate in many cases, overall, the larger the sample size, the more reliable the correlations.

Second, this sample was exclusively made up of volunteers. Borg and Gall (1983) suggest that volunteers have characteristics that may influence research. Females tend to volunteer more than males. This was evident in this study in that more females than males participated. In addition, volunteers have a higher need for social approval and are more social. Therefore, this sample may have been more interested in their stepfather's approval and more social than the general population of stepchildren, perhaps leading to slightly higher parental status scores than in the general population.

Third, this sample was mainly white, middle class and female. Empirical evidence from additional male respondents, other ethnic groups and other social classes would further strengthen the utility of the PSI. Given that the PSI is new, it has yet to be tested with other populations. However, research on parenting styles suggests that while there are many similarities between the experiences of girls and boys and between different ethnic groups when it comes to family life, there are also some differences (Dornbusch et al., 1987). Therefore, additional research with both genders and other ethnic groups would broaden our understanding of parental status.

Fourth, this sample consisted primarily of post-secondary students. Data from other groups of late adolescents, such as those who are not students but are in the work force or unemployed would serve to extend our knowledge of parental status. Given that late adolescents in stepfamilies leave home earlier than those in first marriage families (Aquilino, 1991; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1989, 1999; Mitchell et al., 1989) and that home-leaving for stepchildren is more likely to be motivated by the desire for independence than for educational reasons (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999), late adolescents

from stepfamilies who are currently in the work force or unemployed may have different perceptions of parental status than those who are students.

Fifth, the PSI was developed with a population of mainly late adolescent post-secondary students. Although the questions on the PSI were reviewed by stepfamily members of various ages, data were not collected from school-age children. As experiences of parental relationships change over time (Amato, 1989), it would seem reasonable that perceptions of parental status also may change and develop over time. Cognitions associated with similar levels of parental status may be different for children of different ages. For example, what a 5-year old associates with high parental status may be different than what a 15-year old associates with parental status.

Lastly, in this study the PSI was completed by only one member of the stepfamily. Fine et al. (1998, 1999) showed that discrepancies between stepfamily members regarding their perception of the stepparent role can be related to some aspects of adjustment. Stepparents were found to have different perceptions than parents. Thus, parental status may need to be evaluated separately for stepparents and biological parents. Further, parental status may need to be evaluated separately for each stepparent-stepchild relationship. It may be that two stepchildren, 6 and 11, in a stepfamily that began 3 years ago, may perceive parental status uniquely. The 6-year old may grant the stepparent higher parental status than the 11-year old. Therefore, parental status cannot be assumed to be the same for all children, but rather assessed on a child-by-child basis.

## CHAPTER 4

### Study 2: Methods

With the development of the PSI complete, the research questions described in Chapter 2 could be addressed. This section of the project attempted to explore the effects of late adolescent perceptions of mothers' and stepfathers' parenting behaviors on late adolescent adjustment and, further, to investigate the moderating effects of late adolescent perceptions of stepfather's parental status on the relationship between stepfather's parental behaviors and late adolescent adjustment.

#### Design

A correlational field study was conducted utilizing paper and pencil measures with a sample of convenience. (See Appendix F for the complete research package). The dependent variables were adaptive and problem behaviors of late adolescents. The independent variables were late adolescent perceptions of mothers' and stepfathers' parenting behaviors (connection, regulation, psychological autonomy). Parental status was explored as a moderating variable of the relationship between stepfathers' parenting behaviors and late adolescent adjustment.

#### Sample

The study was conducted at two sites. There was no duplication of participants. Local participants were recruited again, this time through advertisements in campus newspapers and notices posted on bulletin boards at the University of British Columbia and Langara College. An advertisement was also printed in the Vancouver Sun in conjunction with an article on the author. Participants were paid \$10 for their participation. Participants were recruited at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, where students were offered

course credit for participating in this study. Unfortunately, the number of students from North Carolina who chose to participate was too few to include in the analysis and was dropped from the study.

Several criteria restricted the sample. First, the age limits were 17 to 23 years, thereby restricting the sample to late adolescents of "college age" in accordance with the developmental literature in this area. (See chapter 2.) Also, it was a requirement that the respondent's biological mother was currently married or in a committed common-law relationship with a man who was not the respondent's biological father. Therefore, late adolescents in stepmother families were not included. Stepfamilies formed by same-sex couples were not included. Equally, late adolescents who had been adopted were screened out. Finally, late adolescents whose mother and stepfather had terminated their relationship were not included.

The final sample includes 156 Canadians and is best described as White female (see Table 5). The sample consisted of 156 late adolescents, 100 female, 56 male, ranging in age from 17 to 23 years ( $M = 22.69$ ,  $SD = 1.69$ ). Six (3.8%) consider themselves of Aboriginal heritage, 11 (7.1%) were Asian, two (1.35%) were Black, 121 (77.65%) were Caucasian or White, five (3.2%) were Latin American, and eleven (7.1%) were other. The large proportion of White students in this sample supports this research as the measures of parenting behaviors have largely been developed with White samples.

One hundred and twenty-two respondents (78.2%) were full time students in a post-secondary institution. Twenty (12.8%) were part-time students while 14 (9.0%) were not students at all. The large proportion of students in this sample is advantageous in that these late adolescents may be more dependent on their parents than those who are in the work force. Thus, they may be more influenced by the quality of the relationships with their (step)parents.

Table 5

**Demographic Characteristics of Sample in Study 2**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Total <u>N</u> = 156 frequency</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
Sex		
Female	100	64.1
Male	56	35.9
Race/Ethnicity		
Aboriginal	6	3.8
Black	2	1.4
Caucasian	121	77.7
Latin American	5	3.2
Asian	11	7.1
Other	11	7.1
Student Status		
Full time	122	78.2
Part time	22	12.8
Not a student	14	9.0
End of parental marriage		
Divorce	140	89.7
Death	16	10.3
Custody during childhood		
Full time with Mom; Little or no contact with Dad	53	34
Full time with Mom; Regular contact with Dad	46	29.5
75% time with Mom; 25% time with Dad	34	21.8
50% with each Mom and Dad	11	7.1
25% time with Mom; 75% time with Dad	3	1.9

Table 5 con't...



Table 5

**Demographic Characteristics of Sample in Study 2 (continued)**

Characteristic	n	%
Regular contact with Mom; Full time with Dad	3	1.9
Little or no contact with Mom; Full time with Dad	4	2.6
Stepfather also biological father	83	53.2
Stepfather's children in residence		
Full time	16	10.3
Part time	16	10.3
Common child for couple	28	17.9
Age of young adult		
Mean		22.69
SD		1.69
Age at parental separation		
Mean		8.05
SD		5.95
Age at remarriage		
Mean		12.64
SD		5.03
Time between parental separation and remarriage		
Mean		5.17
SD		4.33
Time in stepfather family		
Mean		7.65
SD		4.99
Time in residence with stepfather		
Mean		6.13
SD		5.43

For most respondents, their parents' marriage ended in divorce (140, 89.7%). For sixteen (10.3 %), death ended the parental marriage. This is consistent with the stepfamily literature which finds stepfamilies are predominantly formed following divorce rather than the death of a spouse.

The age of the respondents at the time of their biological parents' separation varied from 0 (unborn) to 19 ( $M = 8.05$  yrs,  $SD = 4.90$ ). The age of the respondent at the beginning of the stepfamily ranged from 1 to 23 ( $M = 12.64$ ,  $SD = 5.03$ ). This wide range of experiences supports strong variability in parental status; which has been shown to be associated with the age of the child at the beginning of the stepfamily.

The custody arrangements during their childhood varied from 100% of the time with Mom and little or no contact with Dad, to 100% of the time with Dad and little or no contact with Mom. Respondents overwhelmingly spent the majority of their family time with mothers rather than fathers. The majority of respondents lived full time with Mom with either little or no contact with Dad (34%), with regular visits with Dad (29.5%) or spent a regular part of each week or two-week period with Dad (21.8%), for a total of 85.3% of respondents living primarily with their mother. Time since remarriage ranged from 1 to 20 years ( $M = 7.65$  yrs,  $SD = 4.99$ ). Time in living with Mom and Stepdad ranged from 0 to 21 yrs ( $M = 6.14$  yrs,  $SD = 5.42$ ). This sample includes respondents who have spent the majority of their family living with their mothers and/or stepfathers. As such, this is a suitable sample in which to utilize measures assessing relationships with mothers and stepfathers.

## Measures

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of late adolescent perceptions of mother's and stepfather's parenting behaviors on late adolescent adaptive and problem behaviors and the moderating effects of parental status on the relationship between stepfather's parenting behaviors and late adolescent adjustment. For this study, 3 aspects of parenting behaviors were considered critical: (a) connection, (b) regulation, and (c) psychological control.

Late Adolescent Adjustment. Adolescent adjustment, (including adaptive and problem behaviors), was measured by the Young Adult Self Report (YASR, Achenbach, 1997). Although a newly released measure, the YASR extends the assessment tradition of the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL/4-18) and Youth Self Report (YSR) (Achenbach, 1991) to late adolescents and young adults (18-30 years). The YASR takes about 10 - 15 minutes to complete. The scale consists of 119 items that are scored 0 = not true, 1 = somewhat or sometimes true, and 2 = very true or often true. The first questions address relationships with friends and family, and include some open-ended questions that describe illnesses, disabilities, handicaps, concerns, and the best things about the respondent. In addition, sixteen of these items also allow short descriptions of the problem to ensure that the problem is scored properly. The YASR addresses functioning in several areas: friends (4 items), education (5 items), job (7 items), family (3 items) and spouse (7 items), and problem behaviors such as anxiety and depression (17 items), and delinquency (9 items). (See Appendix F.)

Many outcome measures have been utilized in the parenting literature to assess a wide variety of constructs. The YASR is the preferred measure for this study. Other measures found in this literature are limited in their usefulness for a number of reasons. Measures were not selected on the basis of: (a) age inappropriateness; (b) parents reports were used rather than adolescent reports;

(c) constructs operationalized with a few items from a national or state-wide survey; (d) non-standardized measures used with no psychometric information; (e) tests were unavailable; (f) the construct was limited when compared to the YASR; (g) authors assembled a patchwork of measures; and (h) constructs measured a sense of self rather than behaviors.

Achenbach (1997) provides detailed information addressing the reliability and validity issues of the YASR. Cronbach's alpha for the adaptive scores are not available, given that the number of relevant subscales varies according to whether or not the respondent has a job, a spouse, or is attending school. Cronbach's alpha for the Problem scores were .96 for females and males. Test-retest reliability of the YASR over a 1 week interval was .84. The long-term correlation over 39 months (on average) was .58. Content validity is supported by findings that for all problems, adaptive functioning, and substance use, all but one item discriminated between adult clinical populations and general populations (referred, non-referred). The items of the YASR also have been tested individually for their ability to discriminate referred from non-referred adults. In addition, numerous gender differences were found. Therefore, gender-specific norms were created.

Construct validity is supported with evidence of association with other measures of psychopathology. In American and Dutch samples, there was a significant association between the YASR scales and the Youth Self Report (ages 11-18) and the CBCL (ages 4-18) on corresponding problem scales. Significant associations also were found between the YASR and the DSM-III-R Global Assessment of Functioning (GAF) scale and the DSM-III-R diagnoses in American and Dutch samples. The YASR also exceeded the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ; Goldberg, 1992) and equaled the Symptom Checklist (SCL-90; Derogatis,

1977) in identifying psychopathology among Dutch adults. It also has been significantly correlated with most MMPI-2 scales among Turkish adults.

For the purposes of this study, the YASR will be used to measure two aspects of the adolescent adjustment: Adaptive Functioning and Problem Behaviors. To create a global estimate of Adaptive Functioning, the t-scores of all the adaptive functioning scales are averaged to obtain a mean adaptive t-score. Sample items include "I get along well with other students," "I work well with others," "Compared with others, how well do you get along with your mother," and "I like my spouse's or partner's friends." Since not all respondents will have scores for adaptive functioning at work, with a spouse, or at school, only those scales that are appropriate to each respondent are included in its estimate.

To create a global estimate of Problem Behaviors, scores on all items on the problem scale are summed. Sample items include: "I feel lonely," "I cry a lot," "I would rather be alone," "I try to get a lot of attention," "I have a hot temper," "I steal," "I feel dizzy," "I hear sounds or voices other people think aren't there," and "I can't concentrate."

Connection. Parental connection was measured by the 10-item Acceptance subscale from the Child Report of Parent Behavior Inventory (CRPBI) (Schaefer, 1965; Schluderman & Schluderman, 1988). (See Appendix F). Items address warmth, affection, and feelings of specialness in relationship with the parent. Respondents rated their mother and stepfather on a 3-point scale from not at all like her/him (1) to very much like her/him, (3), describing how well a series of statements describe each of their mother and stepfather. Sample items include: "Makes me feel better after talking over my worries with her/him" and "Enjoys doing things with me.". Alpha coefficients for this sample were .93 and .94 for mothers and stepfathers respectively.

The Acceptance Scale of the CRPBI-30 is the best choice for this research. The CRPBI, of which the Acceptance scale is one of three dimensions, is a well-established instrument frequently used in parent-child socialization research (Barber, 1986; Barber & Olsen, 1997; Fauber et al., 1990; Garber et al., 1997; Schwartz et al., 1985; Steinberg et al., 1989). The CRPBI was developed with college students and has become a standard in this research (Schaefer, 1965). In addition, the psychometric properties of the CRPBI are strong and have been further refined over time (CRPBI-260, Schaefer, 1965; CRBPI-108, Schluderman & Schluderman, 1970; CRPBI-30, Schluderman & Schluderman, 1988). The 10-item version has been chosen for this study as there seems to be no added benefit to using the longer version, and longer versions extend the research package unnecessarily.

Schluderman and Schluderman (1988) report that factor analysis of the 10-item Acceptance scale describing the mother showed that all items loaded significantly on a single principal-axes factor (loadings ranged from .61 to .77) with an eigenvalue of 5.16 accounting for 96% of the common variance. Similarly, the items describing the father also loaded on the same factor (loadings ranged from .67 to .79 with an eigen value of 5.16 accounting for 96% of the common variance. Test-retest (one month) scores were  $r = .84$  for mothers and  $r = .89$  for fathers. Alpha coefficients of the test and test-retest data were .75 for mothers and .73 for fathers (Time 1) and .74 for mothers and .76 for fathers (Time 2). The acceptance scale correlates with Olson's Family Satisfaction Scale at  $r = .46$  for mothers and  $r = .47$  for fathers (Schluderman & Schluderman, 1988).

Regulation. Parental regulation was measured by the 5-item parental monitoring questions from the work of Dornbusch and Steinberg (as in Brown, Monts, Lamborn, & Steinberg, 1993; Lamborn et al., 1991). (See Appendix F). Items address respondents perceptions of monitoring behaviors of the parent.

Responses range from doesn't know, (1) to knows a lot (3). Sample questions are "How much does s/he really know ...where you go at night," "... how you spend your money," and "...what you do with your free time.". Alpha coefficients for this sample were .87 and .84 for mothers and stepfathers respectively.

The monitoring scale to measure parental regulation described above is the best choice for this study. Although it is brief and the exact origins of the items were not located at the time of this writing, this collection of questions is both reliable and valid (Barber et al, 1994; Barber, 1996; Brown et al., 1993; Herman et al., 1997; Lamborn et al., 1991). Further, it has the strongest association with adolescent adjustment of all the scales used to date to operationalize parental regulation (Barber et al., 1994; Barber, 1996).

Barber (1994) conducted a factor analysis of items and scales (Firm/Lax Control) from the CRPBI (Schluderman & Schluderman, 1988), the Colorado Self-Report of Family Functioning and these five monitoring questions. The five monitoring questions loaded on a discrete factor (loadings .81, .79, .79, .78, .68) from other aspects of control being studied (i.e., parental intrusion, unrestricted autonomy, enmeshed parenting, laissez-faire parenting, love withdrawal) for students in grades 5 to 10. Eigenvalue of 3.58, explained 36.2% of the variance. In later research, Barber (1996) used these five question to operationalize parental regulation. Cornbach's alpha for the full sample ( $N = 875$ ) of grade 5 to 10 students was .81 for males and .80 for females.

Psychological control. Parental control was measured by the 8-item Psychological Control Scale - Youth Self-Report (PCS-YSR) (Barber, 1996). (See Appendix F). Parental psychological control is defined as interference in the child's development of an independent sense of self. Items address the respondents perceptions of being interrupted, emotionally controlled, and blamed by the parent. Respondents answer using a Likert-type scale from not

like her (him) (1), to (3) a lot like her (him). Sample questions include "Is always trying to change how I feel or think about things," "Often interrupts me," and "Will avoid looking at me when I have disappointed her (him)." Alpha coefficients for this sample were .83 and .87 for mothers and stepfathers respectively.

The development of the PCS-YSR began with the CRPBI (Schaefer, 1965; Schluderman & Schluderman 1970, 1988), as it is the only existing parent-child assessment instrument that includes a specific measure of psychological control (Barber, 1996). Schluderman and Schluderman (1988) found the PCS to be correlated with Olson's Family Satisfaction Scale at  $r = -.37$  for mother's reports and  $r = -.37$  for father's reports.

The PCS-YSR is the culmination of continuous development by Barber and associates to define a measure of psychological control that is generalizable across diverse populations (Barber, 1996). Barber (1996) reported that factor loadings for sons reporting on mothers ranged from .59 to .75, for daughters reporting on mothers from .60 to .74, for sons reporting on fathers from .59 to .69 and for daughters reporting on fathers from .62 to .74. Eigen values ranged from 2.68 to 2.98 for the four groups which each explained 45 to 50% of the variance. Barber (1996) reported Cronbach's alphas for daughters/sons reporting on mothers/fathers ranging from .80 to .83 across the four groups.

As mentioned earlier, the CRPBI (Schaefer, 1965; Schluderman & Schluderman 1970, 1988) is the only scale to include psychological control or the interference with psychological autonomy. As such, there are no alternatives. The work of Barber and associates refined the earlier measure and stands as the most current and focused measure of psychological control available (Barber et al., 1994).



Parental status. The parental status of the stepparent was measured by the Parental Status Inventory (PSI). (See Appendix F). (For a detailed description of the development of the PSI, factor analysis, reliability and validity tests, see chapter 3.) The PSI was developed for this study to assess the parental status of the stepparent (whether or not or to what degree the respondent perceives the stepparent to be a parent). Respondents answer by choosing a percentage from 0% to 100%, in increasing increments of 10% (i.e., 0%, 10%, 20%, etc.). Sample questions include "I think of him as my father," "I think of myself as his daughter/son," and "When I think of my mother's house, I consider him and my mother to be parents to the same degree". The alpha coefficient for this sample was .95.

Briefly, the PSI was developed on a sample of 158 young adults, ranging in age from 17 to 28. A principal components analysis found three factors, parental status, family membership and social profile. Only the items measuring parental status were retained. The criteria were that each item must load at .5 or higher on the parental status factor, and the difference between the primary and secondary loadings must be greater or equal to .2. Fourteen items met these criteria. Cronbach's alpha was .97 and test-retest reliability (2-3 weeks) was .95.

Convergent validity was supported by comparisons with the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987), Parent subscale and the Closeness to Stepparent Scale (Bowerman & Irish, 1962). The PSI correlated at  $r = -.70$  with the IPPA-Parent, a scale that assigns low scores to stronger attachments. The PSI was correlated with the Closeness to Stepparent Scale at  $r = .71$ . Discriminant validity was supported by comparisons with the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment, Peer subscale ( $r = -.06$ ).

### Data Analysis Procedure

Prior to testing the primary research questions, preliminary analyses were first conducted to verify the psychometric adequacy of the measures employed. Next, preliminary analyses examined the zero order correlations among the six variables considered in this study. This allowed an examination of the association between the three parental behaviors, parental status, and the two outcome variables (adaptive and problem behaviors).

Ultimately, hierarchical multiple regression was used to investigate the effects of mothers' and stepfathers' three parenting behaviors on late adolescent adaptive and problem behaviors, with parental status considered as a possible moderator of these relationships (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Jaccard, Turrissi & Wan, 1990). Moderator variables are generally introduced when there is an unexpectedly weak or inconsistent relation between independent and dependent variables.

The moderator hypothesis is supported when significant main effects for the interaction term are found. Although there may be significant main effects for the independent variables, these are not directly relevant to testing the moderator hypothesis. Also, it is desirable that the moderator variable be uncorrelated with both the independent and dependent variables to provide a clearly interpretable interaction term.

In all regression equations, independent variables were entered in blocks. The demographic characteristics (race, parent's education) were entered in the first block. In the next block, mother's parenting (i.e., connection, monitoring, psychological control) was entered as a block (Block 2). Then, the independent variables regarding stepfather's parenting (i.e., connection, monitoring, psychological control) and his parental status were entered as a block (Block 3).

Lastly, the interaction terms including parental status and each of stepfather's parenting behaviors (PSI x Connection, PSI x Monitoring, PSI x Psychological Control) were entered as a block (Block 4). The beta value of the three interaction terms relative to each other indicates which of the three contribute to explaining the variance in either outcome.

This entire process was repeated four times, once for each dependent variable (adaptive function, problem behaviors) and once for both females and males. Rather than including sex in the first block as a control variable, separate regressions were conducted for females and males to examine difference between these two groups.

## CHAPTER 5

## Study 2: Results

Two questions guided this study. First, what are the effects of late adolescent perceptions of parental behaviors (i.e., connection, behavioral regulation, psychological control) by biological mothers and stepfathers in stepfather families on late adolescent adjustment (i.e., adaptive and problem behaviors)? Second, do late adolescent's perceptions of the parental status of the stepfather moderate the relationship between late adolescent perceptions of stepfather parental behaviors and late adolescent adjustment?

Data Analysis Procedure

Prior to testing the primary research questions, preliminary analyses were conducted to verify the psychometric adequacy of the measures employed. Next, preliminary analyses examined the zero order correlations among the six variables considered in this study. This allowed an examination of the association between the three parental behaviors, parental status, and the two outcome variables (adaptive and problem behaviors). The correlations also were necessary to assess parental status as an interaction term (see below). Baron and Kenny (1986) suggested that it is preferable that the moderator variable be uncorrelated with the independent and dependent variables to provide a clearly interpretable result.

Ultimately, hierarchical multiple regression was used to investigate the effects of mothers' and stepfathers' three parenting behaviors on late adolescent adaptive and problem behaviors, with parental status considered as a possible moderator of these relationships (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Jaccard, Turrisi & Wan, 1990). Moderator variables are generally introduced when there is an unexpectedly weak or inconsistent relation between independent and dependent

variables. In general terms, Baron and Kenny (1986) describe a moderator as a qualitative or quantitative variable that influences the direction and/or strength of the relation between an independent and dependent variable.

Baron and Kenny (1986) suggest that a moderator can be represented as "an interaction between a focal independent variable and a factor that specifies the appropriate conditions for its operation" (p. 1174). The moderator hypothesis is supported when significant main effects for the interaction term are found. Although there may be significant main effects for the independent variables, these are not directly relevant to testing the moderator hypothesis. Also, it is desirable that the moderator variable be uncorrelated with both the independent and dependent variables to provide a clearly interpretable interaction term.

In all regression equations, the demographic characteristics (race, parent's education) were entered in the first block. In the next block, mother's parenting (i.e., connection, monitoring, psychological control) was entered as a block (Block 2). A significant change in the  $F$  indicates a significant effect for the variables over and above that from the variables in Block 1. The beta values of the three variables relative to each other indicated which, if any of the parent behavior variables were significant. Then, the independent variables regarding stepfather's parenting (i.e., connection, monitoring, psychological control) and his parental status were entered as a block (Block 3). Similarly, a significant change in the  $F$  score from block 2 to block 3 indicate a significant effect for these variables, with the beta values showing which, if any of the stepparent variables were associated with the outcomes.

Lastly, the interaction terms including parental status and each of stepfather's parenting behaviors (PSI x Connection, PSI x Monitoring, PSI x Psychological Control) were entered as a block (Block 4). A significant change in the  $F$ -value indicates a significant moderating effect (i.e., interaction effect).

The beta value of the three interaction terms relative to each other indicates which of the three contribute to explaining the variance in either outcome.

As recommended by Jaccard et al. (1990), to create the interaction terms, all stepfather's parenting scores and parental status scores were centered (subtracting the mean of X from their respective scores). Next, the products of parental status and each stepfathers' parenting behavior were created (i.e., stepfathers' connection X parental status, stepfathers' behavioral regulation X parental status, stepfathers' psychological control X parental status). These three interaction terms were then entered in the equation.

This entire process was repeated four times. Regressions were conducted once for each dependent variable (adaptive function, problem behaviors) and once for both females and males.

#### Preliminary Analyses

Internal reliabilities of all scales were calculated to verify the psychometric adequacy of the measures employed. Regarding the PSI, Cronbach's alpha was .95. This high alpha coefficient suggests that the PSI is reliable and internally consistent for this sample and that no further factor analysis is warranted.

Regarding parenting behaviors, alpha coefficients for all measures were high. For connection, alpha coefficients were .93 and .94 for mother and stepfathers respectively. Regarding regulation, Cronbach's alpha were .87 and .84 for mother and stepfathers respectively. For psychological control, alpha coefficients were .83 and .87 for mothers and stepfathers respectively. Similarly, these high alpha coefficients suggest that the parenting measures are reliable and internally consistent for this sample and that no further factor analyses are warranted.

Regarding adaptive behaviors, Achenbach (1997) suggests that internal consistency coefficients for the adaptive subscales may not be stable because each scale has so few items (friends, 4 items; education, 5 items; job, 7 items; family, 3 items; spouse, 7 items). The sum of all the items cannot be used to measure adaptive behaviors because not all respondents are students, are employed, or are married. Achenbach explains that alpha reflects the mean of the correlations between all possible sets of half the items in a scale. With so few items in each subscale, split halves of scales provide less stable measures than the split halves of larger scales. As such, they are not reported in the YASR manual, nor were they calculated for this study. .

For problem behaviors, alpha coefficients were calculated for the entire scale. Since respondents answer all questions for the problem scale, there is no need to assess internal consistency separately for each subscale as in the case of adaptive behavior. Total problem scores can be calculated by summing the scores of all problem responses (Achenbach, 1997). For the YASR problem behavior scale, Cronbach's alpha = .92.

Therefore, the internal consistency of all measure was demonstrated, with the exception of adaptive behaviors. For all other measures, psychometric adequacy was verified.

In addition to investigating the research questions that guided this study, Study 2 represents the first use of the PSI and, as such is an opportunity to observe how the PSI functions with a second group of respondents.

The Cronbach's alpha for the two groups were compared and found to be very similar at .97 (Study 1) and .95 (Study 2). Although the mean-item score in Study 1 was slightly higher than in Study 2 (44.64 and 37.25 respectively), the standard deviations for the two groups were similar (44.64 and 31.26 respectively).

Based on theory, prior research, and clinical hunches, it was expected that higher levels of parental status would be evident in stepfamilies that began when the child was younger. Consistent with this hypothesis, results of Study 1 indicated a moderate, inverse association with the age of the respondent at the beginning of the stepfamily ( $r = -.44$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $N = 159$ ). This association was replicated in Study 2 in which these correlations were low-moderate and in the same direction ( $r = -.42$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $N = 154$ ). Thus, as predicted, parental status is higher in relationships that began when the respondent was younger.

Further support for this hypothesis comes from the significant relations observed between PSI scores and time in the stepfamily residence. In Study 1, the correlation between PSI scores and time in the stepfamily residence was .53 ( $p < .01$ ,  $N = 159$ ). In the final sample, this correlation was .51 ( $p < .01$ ,  $N = 154$ ). Parental status is higher for respondents who have spent more time living in the stepfamily residence.

In summary, the reliability and validity of the PSI were supported in both Study 1 and Study 2. Statistical properties and associations with demographic characteristics were found to be consistent between the two datasets.

#### Zero-order Correlations

Zero-order correlations were conducted to examine the association between all variables of interest in the study. Compliance with the assumptions of moderation as defined by Baron and Kenny (1986) also was determined. Again, these authors suggest that the moderator variable be uncorrelated with both the independent and dependent variables to provide a clearly interpretable interaction term. Table 6 presents the correlations among the measures considered in this study separately for females and males.



Table 6

**Zero-order Correlations Among Variables, Means and Standard Deviations for Females (n=100) and Males (n=56)**

Subscale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Mothers' connection	-	.61**	-.57*	.26**	.11	-.21*	.26**	.32**	-.18
2. Mothers' behavioral regulation	.69**	-	-.21*	.23*	.45**	-.12	.22*	.26**	-.22*
3. Mothers' psychological control	-.35**	-.18	-	-.14	-.05	.27**	-.08	-.24*	.23*
4. Stepfathers' connection	.49**	.23	-.08	-	.52**	-.51**	.63**	.12	-.25*
5. Stepfathers' behavioral regulation	.41**	.53**	-.07	.50**	-	-.15	.46**	.07	-.10
6. Stepfathers' psychological control	-.24	.01	.28*	-.49**	-.08	-	-.31**	-.14	.22*
7. Parental status	.24	.12	-.12	.61**	.34**	-.28*	-	.04	-.12
8. Adaptive behaviors	.36**	.18	-.37**	.20	.16	-.25	.00	-	-.37**
9. Problem behaviors	-.15	.01	.35*	-.10	.16	.17	-.12	-.54**	-
<u>M (females)</u>	24.16	11.65	9.00	18.64	9.11	11.56	37.93	47.63	51.57
SD	5.63	3.01	2.97	6.02	2.78	4.09	32.35	2.73	25.82
<u>M (males)</u>	23.57	9.98	9.27	16.71	7.67	11.87	36.95	45.84	48.78
SD	5.60	2.85	3.06	5.68	2.43	4.02	30.17	3.00	24.12

Note. Correlations for females on upper panel. Correlations for males on lower panel.

\*p < .05    \*\*p < .01

Parenting behaviors and late adolescent outcomes. The scores on the parenting behaviors measures appear to be consistent with the literature, although exact comparisons with a similar age group living in stepfamilies could not be made. Schluderman and Schluderman (1988) provide information on 17 - 18 year old college student reports of mother's and father's connection. This study separates reports of mother's from those of father's but family structure is not reported. Regarding reports of mothers, similar scale means and standard deviations were found in both studies. Female reports of mother's connection were found to be 25.03 (SD = 4.93) in the earlier study and 24.15 (SD = 5.69) in this study. Male reports of mother's connection also were similar between the two studies; mean = 24.17 (SD = 4.67) in Schluderman and Schluderman and mean = 23.71 (SD = 5.55) in this study. These results support the use of this measure with the sample in the current study.

Again, females and males reported lower levels of connection with stepfathers in this study than that with (step)fathers in the earlier study. Schluderman and Schluderman (1988) report scale means for (step)father's connection of 21.55 (SD = 5.92) for females and 20.49 (SD = 5.05) for males. In contrast, in this study, stepfather's mean connection score was reported to be 18.66 (SD = 6.05) for females and 16.82 (SD = 5.68) for males. As expected, late adolescents perceived their relationship with their stepfather to be similar to those in the earlier study, but slightly lower in connection. Thus, although family structure was not reported for the earlier study, these results suggest that these measures can be used with this sample.

The behavioral regulation and psychological control scales could not be compared with that of other studies with similar age groups as none could be found in the literature. Similar measures that do appear in the literature are not identical and therefore, cannot be compared.

Adolescent outcomes were measured using the Young Adult Self Report (YASR) (Achenbach, 1997). This measure is built upon a strong empirical tradition (see chapter 4 for a full description) but has yet to be used extensively. However, a comparison can be made between the scores from the current sample and those of samples used in the development of the measure.

This sample was found to have similar YASR adaptive scores as those reported by Achenbach (1997) for non-referred samples. In this study, mean adaptive scores were 47.63 ( $SD = 2.73$ ) for females and 45.84 ( $SD = 3.00$ ) for males compared well with those reported by Achenbach (mean adaptive scores of 48.5,  $SD = 4.5$  for females and 48.1,  $SD = 4.5$  for males). Problem scores were higher in this sample than for the non-referred samples reported in Achenbach (1997), although the standard deviations are similar. Mean problem scores in this study were 51.57 ( $SD = 25.82$ ) for females and 48.78 ( $SD = 24.12$ ) for males. Achenbach reported mean problem scores for females of 39.9 ( $SD = 25.94$ ) and 37.4 ( $SD = 23.0$ ) for males for non-referred samples. Thus, findings support the use of the YASR in the current study.

Regarding the associations between parenting behaviors in this study, low to moderate associations were found between mothers' different parenting behaviors (i.e., connection, behavioral regulation, psychological control) as expected, ranging from  $-.21$  to  $.61$  for females and  $-.18$  to  $.69$  for males. Both females and males reported similar patterns in which connection and behavioral regulation were most strongly associated ( $r = .61$  for females,  $r = .69$  for males) and behavioral regulation and psychological control were weakly associated ( $r = -.21$  for females,  $r = -.18$  for males). Connection and psychological control also were moderately correlated for females ( $r = -.57$ ) and males ( $r = -.35$ ). All correlations were in the expected direction. This suggests that late adolescent relationships with mothers that are perceived as higher in connection are also

perceived as higher in regulation but lower in psychological control, especially for females.

Similar patterns of association were found for stepfathers' parenting behaviors. Again, female and male reports were similar and showed the strongest association between connection and behavioral regulation ( $r = .52$ ,  $r = .50$ , respectively). Non-significant associations were found between behavioral regulation and psychological control for both females and males. Stepfathers' connection also was moderately associated with psychological control ( $r = -.51$  for females,  $r = -.49$  for males). All correlations were in the expected direction. Similarly, late adolescent relationships with mothers that are perceived as higher in connection are also perceived as higher in regulation. Also, when higher levels of connection are perceived in the late adolescent's relationship with their stepfather, psychological control is lower.

The associations between parenting behaviors were as expected and support the use of these measures in this study. Although no research could be found that utilized these parenting measures in stepfather families, these results support the use of these measures in the current study.

Regarding adjustment, adaptive and problem behaviors were found to be inversely associated for both females and males ( $r = -.37$ ,  $p < .01$  and  $r = -.54$ ,  $p < .01$  respectively). Thus, late adolescents who report higher levels of adaptive behavior also report lower levels of problem behaviors and vice versa.

As can be seen in Table 6, the associations between parenting behaviors and adaptive and problem behavior outcomes were generally weak or non-significant. Overall, results obtained from female and male reports were similar, but varied in magnitude. Regarding females, the strongest association was a low-moderate, positive correlation between mothers' connection and adaptive behaviors ( $r = .32$ ). Correlations were low for the remaining five associations

between parenting behavior and the dependent variable combinations, ranging from  $r = .28$  to  $-.18$ . Female reports of stepfathers' parenting also were weakly associated with the dependent variables, and only two were significantly correlated: stepfathers' connection and problem behavior ( $r = -.25$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and stepfathers' psychological control and problem behavior ( $r = .22$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Regarding males, reports of mother's parenting showed more consistent but low correlations between mother's connection and adaptive behaviors ( $r = .36$ ), mothers' psychological control and adaptive behaviors ( $r = -.37$ ), and mothers' psychological control and problem behaviors ( $r = .34$ ). The remaining three combinations (behavioral regulation and adaptive behaviors and connection and behavioral regulation with problem behaviors) were all non-significant. Furthermore, no significant associations were found between the six possible combinations of male reports of stepfathers' parenting and the dependent measures.

It was unexpected that the associations between parenting behaviors and adolescent outcomes would be so low. However, regarding the current analysis, strong associations between independent and dependent variables are not necessary for testing a moderator. Baron and Kenny (1986) suggest that, although there may be significant main effects for the independent variables, these are not directly relevant for testing the moderator hypothesis. Thus, the findings are sufficient for the proposed analysis.

Mother's and stepfather's parenting. Patterns of association between mothers' and stepfathers' parenting were similar for females and males. Significant associations were found for all comparisons across mothers' and stepfathers' parenting behaviors within the same category of parenting behavior. For example, the strongest association was between mothers' and stepfathers' behavioral regulation ( $r = .45$  for females,  $r = .53$  for males).

Significant associations were found for connection ( $r = .26$  for females and  $r = .49$  for males) and psychological control ( $r = .27$  for females and  $r = .28$  for males). Thus, late adolescents who perceive their mothers as high in connection and regulation are more likely to perceive their stepfathers in the same way. This association was not found to the same degree for psychological control.

Significant associations also were found between different aspects of mother's and stepfather's parenting behaviors. For females, significant associations were found for mothers' connection and stepfathers' psychological control ( $r = -.21$ ) as well as mothers' behavioral regulation and stepfathers' connection ( $r = .24$ ). For males, mothers' connection and stepfathers' behavioral regulation were significantly associated ( $r = .41$ ). For both females and males, three other comparisons were non-significant (mothers' behavioral regulation and stepfathers' psychological control, mothers' psychological control and both stepfathers' connection and stepfathers' behavioral regulation). Thus, late adolescents who perceive their mother as higher in connection are slightly more likely to perceive their stepfather as lower in psychological control. Males who perceive their mother as higher in connection are more likely to perceive their stepfathers as higher in regulation.

The associations between the parenting behavior measures raises questions regarding multicollinearity in the multiple regression analysis. Tabachnick and Fidell (1989) suggest that ideally, independent variables are not highly correlated. However, they acknowledge that most multiple regression programs have default values for tolerance that guard against the inclusion of multicollinear variables. Variables that exceed the multicollinearity tolerance are excluded from the regression. Thus, variables in this study that exceeded this tolerance were excluded from the regression analysis. In this study, the

interaction term created from stepfather's parental status and psychological control was excluded from the regression.

The PSI and parenting behaviors. In this study, associations between parental status and mother's and stepfather's parenting behaviors were examined. As expected, stepfather's parental status was not strongly associated with mother's parenting behaviors. Only three of six possible correlations between the PSI and mothers' parenting behaviors for females and males were significant, and all correlations were low with the exception of male PSI scores and mother's connection which is low-moderate. For females, both mother's connection and behavioral regulation were positively associated with the PSI ( $r = .26$  and  $r = .22$  respectively). For males, only mother's connection was positively associated ( $r = .24$ ).

In contrast, correlations between stepfathers' parenting behaviors and the PSI were moderately to highly correlated and significant in all six possible cases and in the expected directions. For females and males, the highest correlations were observed between the PSI and stepfathers' connection ( $r = .63$  for females) and males ( $r = .61$  for males).

PSI and late adolescent outcomes. The associations between the PSI and adaptive and problem behaviors were explored to confirm compliance with the assumptions of a moderator analysis as defined by Baron and Kenny (1986). For females, PSI was not associated with problem behaviors ( $r = -.12$ ,  $p = n.s.$ ), or with adaptive behaviors ( $r = .04$ ). Similarly for males, PSI was not significantly associated with either dependent measure ( $r = .00$ ,  $p = n.s.$  for adaptive behaviors;  $r = -.12$ ,  $p = n.s.$  for problem behaviors). Following Baron and Kenny (1986) the absence of moderate or strong associations between PSI and the dependent measures satisfy the conditions required to create an interaction term that can be interpreted clearly.

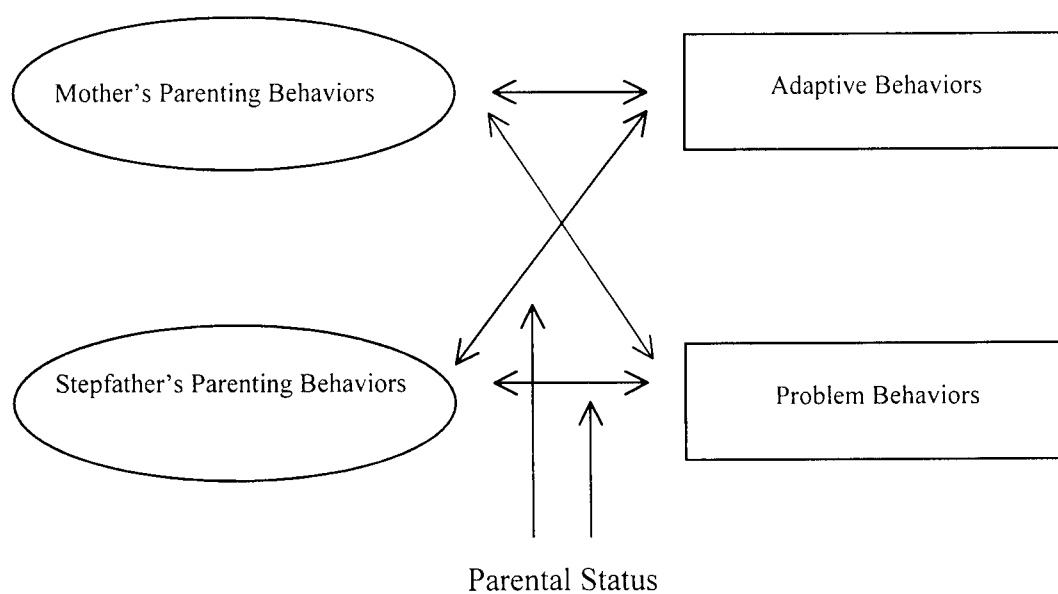
### Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses

In order to address the two primary questions that guided this study, a series of hierarchical multiple regressions were conducted. As shown in Figure 1, the proposed model involves several paths to explain adaptive and problem behavior in young adults.

What are the effects of late adolescent perceptions of parental behaviors (i.e., connection, behavioral regulation, psychological control) by biological mothers and stepfathers in stepfather families on late adolescent adjustment (i.e., adaptive and problem behaviors)? This question was addressed by an examination of the main effects in the regression analysis (see Tables 7 - 10). Predictors were entered into the equation in three blocks.

First, race and education were entered as control variables. Race and mother's education were included as control variables because fathers' and stepfathers' education were not associated with the variables of interest in this study. For females, correlation coefficients for father's and stepfather's education and adaptive and problem behaviors ranged from  $r = .16$  to  $r = -.15$ . For males, these correlations ranged from  $r = .12$  to  $r = -.17$ . Thus, they were removed from the model. This reduced the number of variables in the model to a minimum. However, mother's education was associated with mother's psychological control ( $r = -.30, p < .01$ ) for females, and adaptive behavior and problem behavior for males ( $r = -.36, p < .01$  and  $r = .32, p < .05$  respectively). Therefore, mother's education was retained in the model.





**Figure 1.** Model of the influence of mother's and stepfather's parenting behaviors on youth adjustment, and stepfather's parental status as a moderator of the influence of stepfather's parenting behaviors on late adolescent adjustment.

Table 7

## Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Adaptive Behavior of Females (N = 98)

Variables	Block 1		Block 2		Block 3		Block 4	
	B	$\beta$	B	$\beta$	B	$\beta$	B	$\beta$
Constant	47.23 (.65) <sup>a</sup>	-	44.70 (2.52)	-	44.87 (2.95)	-	46.16 (3.40)	
Step 1								
Race	.47 (.70)	.07	.42 (.70)	.06	.49 (.73)	.07	.60 (.74)	.09
Education	-.05 (.56)	-.03	-.37 (.56)	-.07	-.45 (.58)	-.08	-.41 (.58)	-.08
Step 2								
Mother's Parenting Connection			.08 (.07)	.17	.07 (.08)	.16	.09 (.09)	.18
Behavioral regulation			.14 (.18)	.15	.15 (.14)	.17	.15 (.14)	.17
Psychological control			-.10 (.12)	-.11	-.08 (.13)	-.09	-.05 (.13)	-.09
Step 3								
Stepfather's Parenting Connection					.03 (.07)	.08	.03 (.07)	.06
Behavioral regulation					.02 (.14)	-.03	-.09 (.18)	-.10
Psychological control					-.05 (.08)	-.07	-.16 (.11)	-.23

Table 7 con't...

Table 7

Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Adaptive Behavior of Females (N = 98) (continued)

Variables	Block 1		Block 2		Block 3		Block 4	
	<u>B</u>	$\beta$	<u>B</u>	$\beta$	<u>B</u>	$\beta$	<u>B</u>	$\beta$
Parental status					.00 (.01)	-.10	-.01 (.01)	-.19
Step 4 PSI x connection							.00 (.00)	-.19
PSI x behavioral regulation							.00 (.00)	.17
PSI x psychological control <sup>b</sup>								
<u>F</u> - change	.24		4.19**		.31		1.31	
<u>R</u> <sup>2</sup>	.01		.13		.14		.16	
Adjusted <u>R</u> <sup>2</sup>	-.02		.08		.05		.06	

Note. a. Standard error of B in parenthesis

b. Eliminated from the model because multicollinearity tolerance exceeded

\*  $p < .05$ \*\*  $p < .01$

Table 8

## Results of Hierarchical Analysis for Adaptive Behavior of Males (N = 55)

Variables	Block 1		Block 2		Block 3		Block 4	
	B	$\beta$	B	$\beta$	B	$\beta$	B	$\beta$
Constant	45.24 (.74) <sup>a</sup>	-	45.01 (2.44)	-	45.92 (2.81)	-	45.19 (3.30)	-
Step 1								
Race	2.03 (.79)	.32**	1.06 (.96)	.17	1.12 (.10)	.17	1.15 (1.02)	.18
Education	-2.00 (.74)	-.33**	-1.84 (.73)	-.31*	-1.66 (.76)	-.28	-1.87 (.85)	-.31*
Step 2								
Mother's Parenting Connection			.10 (.10)	.19	.09 (.12)	.17	.01 (.12)	.16
Behavioral regulation			.00 (.19)	.01	.00 (.22)	.00	.00 (.22)	-.02
Psychological control			-.18 (.13)	-.19	-.18 (.15)	-.19	-.18 (.15)	.19
Step 3								
Stepfather's Parenting Connection					.00 (.11)	.00	.02 (.12)	.04
Behavioral regulation					.12 (.20)	.10	.16 (.35)	.13
Psychological control					-.08 (.11)	-.12	.02 (.14)	-.04

Table 8 con't...

Table 8

**Results of Hierarchical Analysis for Adaptive Behavior of Males (N = 55) (continued)**

Variables	Block 1		Block 2		Block 3		Block 4	
	<u>B</u>	$\beta$	<u>B</u>	$\beta$	<u>B</u>	$\beta$	<u>B</u>	$\beta$
Parental status					.01 (.02)	.18	.01 (.02)	-.17
Step 4								
PSI x connection							.00 (.00)	.10
PSI x behavioral regulation							.00 (.01)	-.03
PSI x psychological control <sup>b</sup>							-	-
<u>F</u> - change	7.50**		1.91		.53		.19	
R <sup>2</sup>	.22		.31		.34		.34	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.19		.23		.20		.17	

Note. a. Standard error of B in parenthesis

b. Eliminated from the model because multicollinearity tolerance exceeded

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

Table 9

## Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Problem Behavior of Females (N = 98)

Variables	Block 1		Block 2		Block 3		Block 4	
	$\underline{B}$	$\beta$	$\underline{B}$	$\beta$	$\underline{B}$	$\beta$	$\underline{B}$	$\beta$
Constant	53.13 (6.05) <sup>a</sup>	-	42.70 (24.09)	-	45.57 (27.63)	-	45.54 (32.25)	-
Step 1								
Race	3.43 (6.50)	.05	5.76 (6.72)	.09	3.36 (6.81)	.05	3.79 (7.01)	.06
Education	-9.23 (5.26)	-.18	-5.78 (5.38)	-.11	-4.31 (5.44)	-.03	-4.14 (5.55)	-.08
Step 2								
Mother's Parenting Connection			.36 (.72)	.08	.73 (.79)	.16	.77 (.81)	.17
Behavioral regulation			-1.70 (1.12)	-.20	-2.20 (1.33)	-.26	-2.16 (1.36)	-.25
Psychological control			2.01 (1.16)	.23	1.91 (1.20)	.22	2.01 (1.26)	.23
Step 3								
Stepfather's Parenting Connection					-1.10 (.66)	-.25	-1.12 (.67)	-.26
Behavioral regulation					1.21 (1.30)	.13	1.25 (1.68)	.14
Psychological control					.37 (.76)	.06	1.38 (1.01)	.02

Table 9 con't...

Table 9

**Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Problem Behavior of Females (N = 98) (continued)**

Variables	Block 1		Block 2		Block 3		Block 4	
	<u>B</u>	$\beta$	<u>B</u>	$\beta$	<u>B</u>	$\beta$	<u>B</u>	$\beta$
Parental status					.01 (.12)	.02	.01 (.12)	.10
Step 4								
PSI x connection							.00 (.03)	-.05
PSI x behavioral regulation							.00 (.03)	-.01
PSI x psychological control <sup>b</sup>							-	-
<u>F</u> - change	1.59		2.50		1.26			.07
R <sup>2</sup>	.03		.11		.15			.16
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.01		.06		.07			.05

Note. a. Standard error of B in parenthesis

b. Eliminated from the model because multicollinearity tolerance exceeded

Table 10

## Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Problem Behavior of Males (N = 55)

Variables	Block 1		Block 2		Block 3		Block 4	
	$\underline{B}$	$\beta$	$\underline{B}$	$\beta$	$\underline{B}$	$\beta$	$\underline{B}$	$\beta$
Constant	52.05 (6.49) <sup>a</sup>	-	23.79 (21.67)	-	20.38 (24.48)	-	15.05 (28.79)	-
Step 1								
Race	-11.13 (6.96)	-.21	-2.07 (8.64)	-.04	-2.58 (8.87)	-.05	-2.67 (9.06)	-.05
Education	11.02 (6.58)	.22	9.39 (6.60)	.19	10.35 (6.75)	.21	10.15 (7.47)	.21
Step 2								
Mother's Parenting Connection			-.45 (.93)	-.10	-.18 (1.03)	-.04	-.25 (1.06)	-.06
Behavioral regulation			1.16 (1.67)	.14	-.44 (1.91)	-.05	-.48 (1.95)	-.06
Psychological control			2.33 (1.18)	.30	2.27 (1.28)	.29	2.20 (1.31)	.28
Step 3								
Stepfather's Parenting Connection					-.51 (.97)	-.12	-.52 (1.02)	-.12
Behavioral regulation					3.50 (1.83)	.35	4.86 (3.12)	.49
Psychological control					-.12 (.97)	-.02	-.24 (1.25)	-.04

Table 10 con't...



Table 10

Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Problem Behavior of Males (N = 55) (continued)

Variables	Block 1		Block 2		Block 3		Block 4	
	<u>B</u>	$\beta$	<u>B</u>	$\beta$	<u>B</u>	$\beta$	<u>B</u>	$\beta$
Parental status					-.07 (.13)	-.10	-.02 (.14)	-.11
Step 4 PSI x connection							.00 (.03)	-.03
PSI x behavioral regulation							.00 (.05)	-.15
PSI x psychological control <sup>b</sup>							-	-
<u>F</u> - change	2.94		1.48		1.00			.16
R <sup>2</sup>	.10		.18		.25			.25
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.07		.09		.09			.06

Note. a. Standard error of B in parenthesis

b. Eliminated from the model because multicollinearity tolerance exceeded

In all regression equations, the demographic characteristics (race, parent's education) were entered in the first block. Given that 77.6% of the sample indicated Caucasian heritage, this variable was coded into Non-Caucasian = 0 and Caucasian = 1. The education variable was coded as mother's education no university or college = (0) and university or college = (1). This division was chosen because it divided the sample at the median score.

Second, mothers' parenting behaviors (connection, behavioral regulation, psychological control) were entered as a block. Third, stepfathers' parenting behaviors (connection, behavioral regulation, psychological control) and parental status were entered together in a block. Four analyses were conducted, one for each female and male, adaptive and problem behaviors.

Adaptive behaviors. Regarding females, mother's race and education explained almost none of the variance in adaptive behaviors. When mother's parenting behaviors were added to the equation, a significant  $F$ -change resulted ( $F$ -change = 4.19,  $p < .01$ ) and an additional 10% of the variance in adaptive behaviors were explained. Mother's connection and regulation behaviors were the strongest predictor (Beta = .17 and .15 respectively). When stepfather's parenting behaviors and parental status were added, a significant  $F$ -change did not result, and there was a slight reduction in the amount of variance explained by the model. Thus, when late adolescents are females and see their mothers as behaving in ways that reflect connection and regulation, they are more likely to report adaptive behaviors.

Regarding males, race and education were found to explain 19% of the variance in adaptive behaviors (Beta = .32 and -.33, respectively). When mother's parenting behaviors were added to the equation, the  $F$ -change statistic was not significant, with these behaviors explaining only an addition of 4% of the variance. Education remained the strongest predictor (Beta = -.31), with mother's

connection and psychological control the next strongest (Betas = .19, -.19 respectively). When stepfather's parenting and parental status were added to the equation, again the resulting  $F$ -change was not significant and the inclusion of these variables failed to explain additional variance. Thus, when late adolescent males are white and their mothers have less education they are more likely to report adaptive behaviors.

Problem behaviors. Regarding females, again race and education explained almost none of the variance in problem behaviors. When mother's parenting behaviors were added to the equation, a significant  $F$ -change did not result, and only an additional 5% of the variance in problem behaviors were explained. Mother's behavioral regulation and psychological control were the strongest predictors (Beta = -.20 and .23 respectively). When stepfather's parenting behaviors and parental status were added, no significant  $F$ -change was found. Stepfather's connection was the strongest predictor (Beta = -.25). No significant  $F$ -change was found for the equation predicting problem behavior for females.

Regarding males, race and education were found to explain 7% of the variance in problem behavior (Beta = -.21 and .22 respectively), but the  $F$  statistic was not significant. When mother's parenting was added to the equation, the  $F$ -change statistic was not significant and these behaviors added only 2% more variance explained. When stepfather's parenting and parental status were added to the equation the  $F$ -change was not significant and no additional variance was explained. Stepfather's behavioral regulation was the strongest predictor (Beta = .35), and mother's psychological control was the next strongest predictor (Beta = .29).

Testing the moderator. Does late adolescent perception of the parental status of the stepfather moderate the relationship between late adolescent perceptions of stepfathers' parental behavior and late adolescent adjustment? This question is addressed in accordance with the guidelines of Baron and Kenny (1986), who suggest that once the main effects of a model have been examined, the presence of a moderator can be confirmed by a significant  $F$ -change when the interaction terms (the product of the moderator and predictor) are added to the model. (In all models, these results appear in Block 4.) Again, main effects are not necessary to test the moderator hypothesis.

Regarding adaptive behaviors of females, when the interaction terms were added, the  $F$ -change statistic was not significant. Thus, the parental status of stepfather did not moderate the effects of his connection, behavioral regulation or psychological control on her adaptive behaviors.

Regarding the adaptive behavior of males, when the interaction terms were added, the  $F$ -change was not significant. Thus, the parental status of stepfather did not moderate the effects of his connection, behavioral regulation or psychological control on adaptive behaviors of his stepson.

For problem behaviors of females, the  $F$ -change statistic was not significant when the interaction terms were added to the equation, and there was a reduction in the variance explained. Again, the parental status of stepfather did not moderate the effects of his connection, behavioral regulation or psychological control on her problem behaviors.

Lastly, regarding problem behavior of males, when the interaction terms were added to the equation, the  $F$ -change statistic was not significant. Thus, the parental status of stepfather did not moderate the effects of his connection, behavioral regulation or psychological control on problem behaviors of his stepson.

## CHAPTER 6

## Study 2: Discussion

The Effects of Mothers' and Stepfathers' Parenting Behaviors on Late Adolescent Adjustment and Parental Status as a Moderator of the Effects of Stepfathers' Parenting Behaviors on Late Adolescent Adjustment

Summary of findings. This research explored the effects of adolescent perceptions of parental behaviors (connection, regulation, psychological control) by mothers and stepfathers on late adolescent adjustment and further explored the moderating effects of stepfathers' parental status on the relationship between his parenting behaviors and late adolescent adjustment. Participants were 156 late adolescents from a west coast Canadian university and college.

In general, stepfathers' parenting behaviors but not mothers' parenting behaviors were correlated with parental status. For each type of parenting behavior, mothers' and stepfathers' behaviors were significantly associated (e.g., mothers' connection with stepfathers' connection). However, the associations between parenting and stepparenting behaviors and late adolescents adaptive and problem behaviors were generally weak or non-significant.

Multiple regression analyses showed that only mothers' connection explained a significant albeit small amount of variance (10%) in adaptive behaviors of females. Thus, female late adolescents who see their mothers as behaving in ways that reflect connection are more likely to report adaptive behaviors. For males, race and mother's education explained 19% of the variance in adaptive behaviors; none of mothers' parenting behaviors added a significant amount of variance explained (4%). Also, stepfather's parenting behaviors did not contribute to the variance explained in this model. Clearly, for male late

adolescents in stepfather families, being white and having mothers with less education is associated with adaptive behaviors, but parenting behaviors are not. Further, models explaining problem behavior in female or male late adolescents in stepfather families accounted for small and insignificant amounts of variance (7% and 9% respectively).

Regarding the moderating effects of parental status on the relationship between late adolescents perceptions of stepfathers' parenting behaviors and adjustment, findings were that parental status did not moderate the effects of stepfathers' connection, regulation or psychological control on late adolescents adaptive or problem behaviors for either females or males. Thus, parental status did not strengthen or weaken these relationships for stepchildren in this sample.

Convergence or divergence with extant literature. Given that these dimensions of parenting have a long and rich history in the study of parent-child relationships, it was surprising that mothers' and stepfathers' parenting behaviors had little or no effect on adaptive and problem behaviors in the late adolescents in this study. Although the measures of parenting behaviors and adjustment are valid, reliable instruments drawn from the extant literature, the expected effects were not found in this study.

In general, it was mothers' parenting behaviors that contributed to the explained variance, whereas stepfathers' parenting behaviors rarely did so. Only in females did stepfathers' connection and regulation contribute to explaining problem behaviors. However, even in models where mothers' parenting contributed to the variance explained, the contribution of each predictor variable was generally non-significant and the models were not significant.

Given that, in the majority of analyses in this study, the parenting behavior variables did not predict significant amounts of variance in adjustment for females and males, interpretations based on the parent-child socialization literature are limited. For example, previous studies report significant associations between parental connection and child and adolescent adjustment (Armsden and Greenberg, 1987; Herman et al., 1997; Kurdek & Fine, 1994).

When examining this research more closely, it appears that, although parental connection can be significantly associated with relevant outcomes, the magnitude of the effect can vary widely. On one hand, Herman et al. (1997) studied connection, regulation and psychological autonomy and educational outcomes in 12 - 18 - year olds. Although significant F-changes were found when all the variables were entered, most values of Beta for connection were less than .2. Variance explained in educational outcomes was over 50% for some composite models explored, but variance explained by connection was not reported.

On the other hand, other researchers have found much stronger results. Kurdek & Fine (1994) utilized the parenting dimensions of connection to investigate young adolescent perceptions of family climate. Connection in the family climate was found to explain 22% of the variance in psychosocial competence and 13% of the variance in self-regulation problems. Similarly, Armsden and Greenberg (1987) studied parental attachment in college students 16 - 20 - year olds. Regression analysis was used to predict self-esteem, life satisfaction, and depression/anxiety. Results showed parent attachment to predict 58% of the variance in self-esteem, 38% of the variance in life satisfaction, and 43% of the variance in depression/anxiety. Thus it may be that connection is more closely associated to emotional than behavioral outcomes, or that emotionally focused outcomes are easier to tap into. As such, the YASR, a

behavioral measure, may have been less sensitive to parental connection than an outcome measure such as self-esteem or life satisfaction.

Similarly, previous research on behavioral regulation has found that regulation is associated with higher levels of adjustment (Barber, 1996; Barber & Olsen, 1994; Fauber et al., 1990; Kurdek & Fine, 1994). Such was not found to be the case here. Barber (1996) studied behavioral control and psychological control for children in grades 8 and 10. The values of Beta reported do not exceed .39, however, in many cases these values of Beta are significant at  $p < .001$ . However, once youth delinquency, age, race SES, and religious affiliation had been controlled, these variables explained minimal amounts of variance. In contrast, Barber et al. (1994) also studied behavioral control and psychological control for children in grades 5 and 10. Taken together, these parenting behaviors explained 25% of the variance in externalizing behavior and 20% of internalizing behaviors.

It may be that the type of regulation examined here (i.e., monitoring, or the degree to which the parent knows what the adolescent is doing, how s/he spends money, where s/he goes after school or work) may be less relevant for parenting college students. Some may be living away from home and monitoring may require a shared residence. There exists no psychometrically sound measure of regulation for late adolescents in the literature at this time (Barber, personal communication, 1998).

In this study, connection and regulation were moderately to highly associated for mothers and moderately associated for stepfathers. Further, factor analysis showed that these two scales loaded equally well on a one-factor and a two-factor solution. The two-factor solution was chosen so the measures were consistent with the literature. Thus, it may be that for late adolescents, monitoring is more closely related to connection than it is to limit-setting.



Bulcroft et al. (1998) reviewed the literature on several aspects of control and suggested that parental monitoring does not imply the imposition of constraints and directions on the child's behaviors. These authors suggest that parents who engage in monitoring also may be involved in control and supervision. However, the concept of monitoring tells little about the degree of latitude and independence parents allow their children. Again, regulation as defined in this study may have been more of an extension of connection than an indicator of parental control and supervision.

Perhaps patterns of regulation are different in stepfamilies than in first-marriage families. There is evidence to suggest that patterns of supervision shift as the family changes from a first-marriage family to a sole-parent family and then to a stepfamily. Kurdek and Fine (1995) found that relative degrees of supervision of mothers, fathers, stepfathers, and siblings were different in stepfamilies than in first-marriage families. Mothers' and fathers' levels of involvement in supervision were found to be most similar in first-marriage families. In contrast, siblings and stepfathers were most similar in levels of involvement in supervision for younger children in stepfather families. Thus, patterns of supervision in stepfamilies may not be the same as those in first-marriage families.

The third parenting dimension, psychological control, also explained little significant variance in this study. Only mothers' psychological control was a significant predictor variable in any model, explaining a significant amount of variance in problem behaviors in males only. Psychological control has been found to exert a negative effect on child and adolescent adjustment (Barber & Olsen, 1997; Eccles et al., 1997; Steinberg et al., 1992). Thus, these findings suggest that psychological control may be an important element in understanding

problem behavior of stepsons and should be included in future parenting research in stepfamilies.

In summary, the three elements of parenting used in this study explained small amounts of variance in adaptive and problem behaviors. In contrast to the established research literature on parent-child relationships, these parenting variables explained little variance in adaptive or problem behaviors in these late adolescents. It may be that these elements of parenting are useful for studying children and adolescents, but do not continue to have the same effect on adjustment for late adolescence or young adulthood. Perhaps peer relationships or romantic relationships are more influential to adjustment as adolescents make the transition to college. Bell et al. (1985) suggested that the overall family environment rather than specific aspects of the parent-child relationship may be more influential to the well-being of college students. This is consistent with Kurdek and Fine (1994) who found family connection and regulation to predict substantial amounts of variance in early adolescent adjustment.

The findings of this study are not consistent with previous research regarding gender. In general, this literature shows few gender differences. However, the gender difference found in this study are inconsistent with those found in the literature. Regarding connection, Eccles et al. (1997) studied 7th and 8th grade students, including five types of family structures (first-marriage, stepfamilies, live-in, separated/divorced, never married). Controlling parents' marital status, they found girls to be slightly more advantaged by parental support than boys. In the current study, while mother's connection was included in three of four models (female adaptive and problem behaviors, male adaptive behaviors), mother's connection explained significant variance in male adaptive behaviors only. While these results are consistent with the importance of mother's connection in general, they do not support the idea that females are

benefited to a greater degree by connection. Given that children are more likely to reside with their mother following separation and divorce (Hernandez, 1988), that fathers discontinue their involvement (Buelher & Ryan, 1994), and that the majority of stepparents are stepfathers (Ganong & Coleman, 1994a), perhaps the impact of mother's connection on boys becomes more important (especially for late adolescents) than has been found in studies of younger children.

Regarding behavioral regulation, Herman et al. (1997) found that such regulation was more important for boys than girls. Family structure (single parent families, stepfamilies, first-marriage families) was a control variable in the analysis.

Regarding psychological control, Barber and Olsen (1997) are best noted for their works in this area. They assessed students in grades 5 and 8 and found that psychological control was associated with depression and antisocial behavior. Unfortunately, family structure was not reported by Barber and Olsen (1997) nor was it included as a control or independent variable in the analysis. Therefore, it is not possible to compare the results from this study with the earlier work of these researchers.

Earlier, Barber (1996) examined the psychological control in parent-child relationships with children in grades 5 and 8. Mothers' psychological control was a stronger predictor of depression and delinquency than was mother's behavioral regulation for both females and males. In general, the ability of mothers' psychological control to predict depression and delinquency for females and males was similar across all categories (i.e., depression in females and males, delinquency in females and males). Thus, the effects of mothers' psychological control on late adolescents adjustment for the females and males in this study are not consistent with those reported in the literature. No studies

were found in which psychological control of (step)parents in stepfamilies was explored.

Finally, in this study, the demographic characteristics of race and mother's education predicted 19% of the variance in male adaptive behavior. Thus, males whose mothers were less educated reported higher levels of adaptive behaviors.

Previous studies of demographic characteristics, parenting styles and adjustment do not explain the results of this study. Parental education was utilized to assess socio-economic status because it remains constant through fluctuations in occupation and income over the course of a child's lifetime (Avenevoli et al., 1999). In general, higher socio-economic status is expected to be associated with more positive outcomes (Avenevoli et al., 1999; Demo & Acock, 1996). However, in this study, mothers' education (as an indicator of socio-economic status) was found to have a negative effect on male adaptive behaviors.

Surprisingly, male adaptive behaviors were higher when mothers' education was lower. In this sample, 38% of the mothers had only high school education and an additional 18% had less than high school. In total, 56% of the mothers had not completed university or college degrees or completed graduate or professional education. If mothers' have low levels of education yet their late adolescents are attending post-secondary education after high school, then supplementary financial resources may be coming from another source. Although students may be working as well as attending school or have student loans, this sample also may have included late adolescent males whose father and/or stepfather contribute(s) financial support thereby exerting a positive influence in the life of the late adolescent and contributing to his adaptive behaviors.

Lack of findings for direct effects of mothers' and stepfathers' parenting on late adolescents adjustment. Given that the child socialization literature is well established and long-standing, it was unexpected that the proposed variables would explain little variance in adaptive and problem behaviors. Three aspects of this study may explain the lack of findings: level of adjustment of participants, the suitability of the independent measures for use with late adolescents, and the sensitivity of behavioral measures to these parenting dimensions.

Regarding level of adjustment, this sample consisted of college students. Their mean adaptive scores were similar to those of non-referred samples and their problem scores were higher, although not as high as those reported for referred samples (Achenbach, 1997). Therefore, this sample was relatively well-adjusted and did not include the complete range of adaptive and problem behaviors reported by Achenbach. This may have reduced the likelihood of finding significant effects for the variables under investigation. If the sample had included scores reflecting the entire range for referred and non-referred samples as described by Achenbach (1997), greater variance would be likely in the outcome measures, thus increasing the probability of finding significant effects.

Regarding the suitability of the independent measures for connection, regulation, and psychological control, most have been used with school-age children and younger adolescents. It may be that for late adolescents attending post-secondary education, parental behaviors are less influential than behavior in the peer context for explaining adaptive and problem behaviors. In their research on children's social relationships, Furman and Buhrmester (1992) found that initially children look to parents for basic social needs, then branch out to include friends and romantic partners. Their results suggested that adolescents increasingly look to peers for basic social needs. This is not to

suggest that parents are rejected in later years. For example, Kenny (1987, 1990) reported that college students studied saw parents as an important source of support. Therefore, although parents may still be important to late adolescent college students, their relationships with their parents may no longer have a direct effect on their adaptive and problem behaviors.

Regarding outcome measures, perhaps behavioral outcomes are less sensitive to parenting behaviors than emotionally focused outcomes. No reviews of the literature were found that investigated effects sizes for the findings reported in the child socialization literature. Nevertheless, perhaps there are differences in effects for different outcome measures. As previously explained, when Herman et al. (1997) studied connection, regulation and psychological autonomy and educational outcomes in 12 - 18 year olds, significant findings explained little variance in outcomes. In contrast, Armsden and Greenberg (1987) found parental attachment to predict 38% - 58% of the variance in self-esteem, life satisfaction, and depression/anxiety for the adolescents studied. Systematic review of the socialization literature exploring varying effect sizes for different measures and outcomes could serve to clarify some of these inconsistencies.

However, regarding parenting behaviors, this research may not have included sufficient sample size to reject the model. Using procedures described by Kraemer and Thieman (1987), calculations suggest that the sample may have been insufficient. For example, calculations showed that a sample size of 200 is desirable to have confidence in the results. Specifically, estimates indicated that for females, stepfathers' connection and psychological control had only 75% and 85% (respectively) chance that with the current sample of 98 significant results would surface. Calculations show that these estimates would increase to 95% and 99% receptively with a sample size of 200. Similarly, the chance of mothers'

psychological control predicting adaptive behavior would increase from 69% to 85% with an increase in sample size from the current 55 to 100.

Lack of findings for the moderating effects of parental status. What does this study tell us about the moderating effects of parental status on the influence of stepfathers' parenting behaviors on adolescent adjustment? The answer to this question is, "not much." In this study, parental status did not affect the relationship between stepfathers' parenting behaviors and adaptive or problem behaviors for either females or males.

Given that parental status has been alluded to in the literature (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1994; Fine et al., 1998, 1999; Hetherington et al., 1989), logic suggests that the effects of parenting behaviors by a stepparent low in parental status would be different than that by a stepparent high in parental status.

Although one always wishes for a larger sample size, sample size does not appear to be a limitation in this study. Following procedures described by Kraemer and Thieman (1987) calculations suggest that it is unlikely that a larger sample size would have led to different results. With one exception, the standardized coefficients for the tests of the moderating effect of parental status on the relation between stepfathers' parenting behaviors and female or male adaptive or problem behavior were very small. For females, the power of parental status to moderate the relationship between stepfathers' connection and female adaptive behavior would likely have been significant with a larger sample (i.e.,  $N = 200$  rather than  $N = 98$ ). However, in all other analyses, it is unlikely that a larger sample size would have led to significant results.

Another possibility is that the association between parenting behaviors and late adolescent adjustment were not strong enough to test parental status as a moderator. Barron and Kenny (1986) suggest that main effects are not necessary to test a moderator hypothesis. However, these scholars do not address

assumptions regarding minimal amounts of association necessary between independent and dependent variables. Are there levels of association too low to demonstrate moderation? Given the extremely low levels of association between many of the parenting behaviors and late adolescent adjustment found in this study ( $r = .07 - r = .32$  for females,  $r = .01 - r = .37$  for males), perhaps there was not a sufficient relationship between parenting and late adolescent adjustment to test a moderator hypothesis.

Perhaps the aspects of parenting chosen for this study were not those most sensitive to influence by parental status. Previous research has found that control in the stepparent-stepchild relationship does not operate in the same way as it does in the biological parent-child relationship (Fine et al., 1993; Kurdek & Fine, 1995; Thomas et al., 1992). However, there are many ways to define behavioral control (Bulcroft et al., 1998), only one of which was used in this study. Here, control was defined as monitoring, and as such may be very similar to the "baby-sitting" role often prescribed for new stepparents (Anderson et al., 1999). Perhaps this role is useful for new stepparents precisely because it is not necessary for a stepparent to have high parental status in order to be good "baby-sitter" to his partner's children. In this study, stepfathers' behavioral regulation was moderately associated with mothers' behavioral regulation. Perhaps monitoring by stepfathers is more indicative of the stepfathers' support for mothers' regulation than it is a measure of stepfathers' attempts to regulate the stepchild's behavior. Thus, parental status may indeed moderate parental control but not monitoring.

Bulcroft et al. (1998) suggested that parental monitoring does not imply the imposition of constraints and directions on the child's behaviors. They suggested that while parents who engage in monitoring also might be involved in control and supervision, monitoring does not indicate the degree of latitude



and independence children are allowed. Thus, monitoring by the stepparent may not reflect the degree of constraint and direction given to the stepparent-stepchild. Rather, for college students, many who may live away from home, monitoring may be a form of connection. For both females and males monitoring and connection were moderately to highly associated for mothers and moderately associated for stepfathers (as discussed earlier in this chapter).

A measure of control that includes constraint and direction for late adolescents, and therefore is potentially more sensitive to parental status, is that of parental power (Smith, 1970). Smith (1970) distinguished among various sources of parental power, such as outcome-control power (parental control of economic resources, perceptions of decision-making in the parental unit, perceived strength of parental rewards and punishers), referent power (adolescent's predisposition to turn to the parent for guidance and advice), legitimate power (late adolescents' experience of parents' right or authority) and expert power (late adolescents' perception of competence and knowledge). It may be that outcome power and legitimate power are more influenced by parental status. Late adolescents may experience parental influence as control of economic resources, guidance, or perceptions of the parent as having a right to exert authority. A stepparent low in parental status who attempts to exert these types of power with a late adolescent may make poor decisions based on little knowledge of the adolescent, or, perhaps more importantly, interrupt the parental authority of the biological parent. Further, late adolescents may no longer need the type of supervision described by monitoring, and when living away from home, may not directly be available for such monitoring. Thus, parental power may be more relevant for late adolescents and more sensitive to the parental status of the stepparent.

In summary, the findings from this research tell us little about the two questions that guided Study 2. Mothers' and stepfathers' parenting behaviors explained little variance in adolescent adjustment. The independent measures chosen for this study may not be appropriate for use with late adolescents. Further, samples that include a less restricted range of adaptive and problem behaviors may be necessary to show results, since most late adolescents in this study were well adjusted.

Regarding parental status as a moderator of the effects of the relationship between stepfathers' parenting behaviors and adolescent adjustment, again significant findings did not result. On one hand, it may be that the aspects of stepparent-stepchild relationships most sensitive to parental status were excluded from the study. On the other hand, it may be that the relationship between parenting behaviors and late adolescent adjustment, as operationalized in this study, were not strong enough to test a moderator hypothesis. As such, parental status may not yet have been tested as a moderator. Instead, a thorough understanding of effect sizes in the socialization research, further development of existing constructs such as parental power, or the development of additional new constructs such as parental status may be required to understand the adjustment of late adolescent in stepfamilies.

## CHAPTER 7

## General Discussion:

## Implications, Limitations and Future Directions

General Implications of Findings

This research defined the construct of parental status, developed an assessment measure (PSI; The Parental Status Inventory), and then used it to test the moderating effect of parental status on the relationship between stepfathers' parenting behaviors and late adolescent adjustment. The parental status construct and the operationalization of this construct have substantial implications for theory, research, and clinical practice. Although the findings here indicated little effect of parenting behaviors on late adolescent adjustment and parental status did not moderate the effects of stepparenting behaviors in stepfather families, the results of this study shed some light on research seeking to explore parenting in stepfamilies.

In this seminal research on the construct of parental status, many important findings were noted. The status of the evidence to date for the construct of parental status and the PSI is generally good. First, the PSI showed strong reliability in two samples. Further, in both samples, the construct validity of parental status was supported by the moderate, inverse association between parental status and the age of the respondent at the beginning of the stepfamily. The construct validity of parental status also was supported by the moderate, positive association between parental status and the time in the stepfamily residence.

Although further development and testing of the measure is necessary, this research suggests that parental status may be an important, yet overlooked element of stepfamily life. The parental status of the stepparent may be

implicated in a number of critical stepfamily processes of relevance to researchers and clinicians. For example, parental status may be an important predictor of stepparent-stepchild attachment. Parental status also may have important implications for relational processes in the couple relationship as well. Finally, the consensus or discrepancy between family members perceptions of parental status may be an important predictor of stepfamily adjustment.

Theoretical implications. The development of the Parental Status Inventory makes a contribution to social cognition theory, specifically that which attempts to further our understanding of stepfamilies. Social cognition theory suggests that individuals make assumptions about how the world is, and that these assumptions serve to create internal representations that categorize objects and events (Baucom et al., 1989). Fine et al. (1998, 1999) applied social cognition theory to stepfamilies and found that ambiguities and differences in cognitions between stepfamily members about the stepparents' role can influence adjustment. Other stepfamily researchers have described a wide range of stepparent-stepchild relationships, generally organized around the degree to which the stepparent is perceived as a parent to the stepchildren (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1994; Hetherington et al., 1989). Throughout its development and its first application in research, the PSI was found to be a valid and reliable measure of the degree to which a stepchild considered the stepparent like a parent. Thus, the construct of parental status articulates and defines a basic social cognition within stepparent-stepchild relationships and it can now be included to further develop social cognition theory as applied to the study of stepfamilies.

Research implications. This research provides a measure that will discriminate between stepparent-stepchild relationships where stepparents are

afforded differing levels of parental status. In this way, stepparents who are more or less like parents can be differentiated from those who are not.

Measures developed for parents in first-marriage families may be appropriate for use with some stepparents under certain conditions. The PSI may help to determine for which stepparents these instruments are appropriate and to tease out aspects of parent-child relationships that are similar to stepparent-stepchild stepfamilies. Questions for "parents" can then be directed to stepparents high in parental status and excluded for those low in parental status. The stepparent-stepchild relationships at moderate levels of parental status can be explored to learn more about the degree of parental status necessary to effect various aspects of parent-child relationships. Further, researchers can begin to explore appropriate related behaviors for stepparents who are low in parental status without assuming such behaviors are appropriate for stepparents high in parental status. This will result in more accurate understanding of the stepparent's role and the ways in which stepparenting affects children.

Theoretically, these results challenge the typical categorizing of stepparents with either biological parents or single parents. For example, comparing intact and non-intact families (e.g., Steinberg et al. 1989, 1991) places stepfamilies in the non-intact category, assuming no difference between the single-parent family and the stepfamily, thus implicitly suggesting that the presence of the stepparent is irrelevant. Equally misguided are studies that group families as one-parent or two-parent (e.g., Barber, 1996), thereby assuming that there is no difference between couples where both parents are biological and couples where one parent is biological and the other is a stepparent.

Further, this research suggests that mothers parenting may be a stronger influence on late adolescent adjustment than that of stepfathers. Therefore, in order to accurately assess stepfamily dynamics, future stepfamily research may need to modify models of parenting derived from research on the first-marriage family model. In first-marriage families, mothers have been found to exert a stronger influence than fathers on children's adjustment (Simons & Chao, 1996; Thomson et al., 1992). Mother's beliefs about parenting are associated with father's supportive parenting, but mother's parenting was not affected by father's parenting beliefs. Other researchers (Belsky, Youngblade, Rovine & Volling, 1991; Booth & Amato, 1994) found that mother-child relations are less affected by changes in the couple relationship than are father-child relations, such that conflicts disrupt fathering but not mothering.

However, when father's education, earnings, and co-parental relationship are included, mother's and father's are found to influence different aspects of children's outcomes differently (Amato, 1999; Belsky, 1999). Amato (1999) found that in first-marriage families, father's accounted for more variance in children's education, psychological distress, and self-esteem than did mothers. However, mothers contributed more to children's kin ties and close friends. Father's and mother's contributed roughly equally to children's life satisfaction. Similarly, Belsky (1999) studied families rearing toddlers and found that mother's parenting and co-parenting contributed more than father's parenting to externalizing behaviors at 3 years of age, whereas fathering contributed more than mothering to inhibition at the same age. Thus, although mother's and father's contribute to child outcomes in first-marriage families, mother's relationship with her children appears to be a stronger influence than that of fathers and that father's influence increases when education and income are included. A father's relationship with his children appears to be more

influenced by his relationship with his spouse and by her beliefs about his parenting than is her relationship with her children influenced by his parenting or his beliefs about her parenting.

What does this mean for stepfather families? As in the first-marriage family, mothers' parenting may be a stronger influence than stepfathers' parenting. Yet, it is reasonable to assume that differences exist between children's relationships with fathers and those with stepfathers. The results of this study support mothers as primary parents in stepfather families and further suggest that a stepfamily may operate like a sole-parent family with another supportive adult. This is consistent with Bray and Kelly's (1998) work in which they describe the "Matriarchal Stepfamily." In this type of stepfamily, the mother is in charge of power and decision-making in the family, including parenting. Thus, stepfathers' behaviors should be explored from a perspective other than that of a primary parent. For example, perhaps stepfathers' behaviors are better conceptualized in terms of how supportive they are of mothers' parenting behaviors. Given that mothers' parenting behaviors may be more influential than that of stepfathers, the key influence may be the degree to which his parenting behaviors are supportive of the parenting already established between by the mother.

Clinical implications. Discussions of appropriate stepparent parenting behaviors are numerous within the clinical literature on stepfamilies (Berger, 1998; Bray & Kelly, 1998; Martin & Martin, 1992; Mills, 1984; Papernow, 1993; Sager et al., 1983; Visser & Visser, 1988; Whiteside, 1989). The construction and development of the PSI offers clinicians a useful tool for assessment. Informal discussions of parental status can clarify the ways in which stepfamily members view the stepparent role. Similarly, stepfamily members can easily use this

construct as a way of thinking and communicating about their experiences in their stepfamily.

Also, the construct of parental status can assist clinicians to communicate clearly with their clients about roles and expectations in the stepfamily. Clinical experience of the author and others familiar with the parental status construct (Buir, personal communication, 2000; Grigg, personal communication, 1999) through local publications (Gamache, 1997, 1998, 1999) suggest that stepfamily members quickly understand parental status and can identify the aspects of stepfamily living that are sensitive to it. For example, in one new stepmother family, discussions of parental status and consequent power and responsibility for child-rearing resulted in the new stepmother realizing that it was unreasonable for her to automatically know how to act as a primary parent for her husband's 8-year-old. Her experience was one of immense relief. In another stepfamily, this time with a stepfather, one 15-year-old felt that kids in stepfamilies should always get the bad news (i.e., discipline) from their biological parent. Clearly, the stepfather in this family was not perceived by this adolescent as having sufficient parental status to engage in parental behavioral regulation. This is consistent with Ganong and Coleman (1994b), who suggest that stepchildren generally prefer that their biological parents do most of the disciplining, perhaps because of their shared history.

Once parental status has been introduced and discussed by the clinician and discussed in therapy, expectations for the stepparent-stepchild relationship can be explored in light of the parental status held by the stepparent. Mills (1984) suggested that it is the precipitous assumption of parental authority by the stepparent that begins destructive cycles of conflict in the stepfamily.

With further empirical validation, the PSI can be used by clinicians to obtain information about the parental status of the stepparent from the



perspective of different family members. Fine et al. (1998, 1999) provided empirical support for the contention that ambiguities and confusion about the stepparent role are related to adjustment in stepfamilies. Given that the PSI is brief and easy to administer, it has the potential to offer clinicians a tool for gathering information from all stepfamily members about the perceived level of parental status of the stepparent as a means of addressing issues of authority and discipline in the stepparent-stepchild relationship. For example, if the parent attributes a higher level of parental status to the stepparent than does the stepparent, the parent likely has expectations of greater participation in connection (involvement) and regulation (discipline) activities for the stepparent, encouraging the stepparent to "jump in." The stepparent's effort to resist such participation may be perceived as rejection of the child or lack of support for the parent. Clarifying family members' perceptions of parental status can help family members' understand of each other and lead to refinement of expectations. When a stepparent assumes he/she has high parental status, but this perception is not shared by the parent or children, efforts to 'jump in' may interfere with the on-going parenting by the biological parent. Conflict can result as children reject the stepparent's interference in the parent-child relationship. Parents can feel inadequate under the scrutiny of their partner and parent less effectively. Consensus around the stepparent's parental status allows stepfamily members to organize family life in a way that respects both the stepparent's role and that of the on-going parent-child relationships.

The investigation of the effects of parenting behaviors on late adolescent adjustment in stepfamilies also has clinical implications. Although few results were significant, mothers' parenting was found to exert a stronger influence on late adolescent adjustment in stepfather families than does that of stepfathers. In a first-marriage family, typically both adults are biological parents to the

children, even though their roles may differ. However, in stepfamilies, this is not the case. Stepfather families include one primary biological parent (mother) and another adult who may be relatively uninvolved in parenting or whose parenting behaviors have less effect on children's well-being. This suggests that clinicians must modify the practice of traditional family therapy (Browning, 1994).

Family therapists working with stepfamilies must recognize that the parenting unit in stepfamilies operates differently from that found in first-marriage families. For example, Browning (1994) suggests that the decision to bring all family members in to the therapy session may be useful in therapy with biological families but may not serve the stepfamily well. If the inclusion of the stepfather low in parental status in a therapy session is experienced by the children as interfering with their relationship with their mother, efforts to work with the family unit may fail or may further exacerbate the problems that brought them into therapy. Conversely, if the parent and children wish to exclude a stepfather who has been in the family for the majority of the children's lives, this may signal that parental status has not developed within family. Clinicians must find ways to work with stepfamilies that create inclusion while respecting the differences between the biological parent-child relationship and the stepparent-stepchild relationship. Parental status can be expected to develop over time, and clinicians should be alert to situations in which this has not occurred.

These research findings support the clinical recommendations of Pasley, Dollahite and Ihinger-Tallman (1993). These authors provide recommendations for therapists that are consistent with the extant research literature on stepfamilies. First, they suggest that clinicians normalize the realities of stepfamily living for clients. Discussion of the construct of parental status can

help stepfamily members normalize their experience. Roughly one-third of the respondents placed their stepfather in each category of low, moderate or high parental status. Thus, stepfamily members can be reassured that there are stepparents of all levels of parental status.

Perhaps most importantly, in this study, parental status was not associated with adjustment. Correlations between parental status and adaptive and problem behaviors for both males and females were generally not significant. Therefore, stepfamily members also can be reassured that their family can provide a positive environment for child development with varying levels of parental status.

Second, Pasley et al. (1993) pointed out that the quality of the stepparent-stepchild relationship can effect the quality of the marital relationship and that the quality of the marital relationship can effect child adjustment. Informal teaching about parental status can assist the couple to communicate effectively about this fundamental aspect of stepfamily life. Accurate communication in the couple can then lead to better management of parenting responsibilities so as to increase the likelihood that positive relationships develop between stepparent and stepchildren, thereby enhancing the couple relationship, which in turn can encourage child adjustment.

These authors further suggest that the development of a close couple relationship may be more difficult when the stepparent does not have previous experience as a parent. In such situations, understanding the role of the stepparent may be more critical. Clinicians can discuss parental status so new stepparents understand their developing role with the children. The stepparent can be encouraged to see that they are valuable members of the family whatever their level of parental status. Further, the parents' experience of stages of child development can serve as a teaching tool for the new stepparent without

previous parenting experience. Thus, an educational approach that includes parental status and aspects of child development that are relevant to the clients' situation can be developed to bring the new stepparent without previous parenting experience "on board" without compromising the fundamental connection between parent and child. This can facilitate appropriate expectations in the couple and can serve to strengthen their relationship.

Third, these authors suggest that clinicians can help stepfamilies by teaching stepparents how to support and assist the parent in the parental role. They suggest that new stepparents begin by assisting in the monitoring of stepchildren and supporting the parent who is directly involved in any limit-setting and discipline. Understanding parental status facilitates this process. Once new stepparents understand that they usually begin low in parental status, taking on parental responsibilities that are consistent with full parental status can be understood as hazardous to positive stepfamily development. They are then in a better position to support the existing parenting of the biological parent and to take on aspects of parenting that are conducive to positive stepfamily development (i.e., monitoring).

Lastly, Pasley et al. (1993) encourage clinicians to focus on increasing family flexibility more than family cohesion early in the development of the stepfamily. They suggest that clinicians may erroneously chose to facilitate cohesion first, thereby attempting to make relationships between stepfamily members more like those found in a cohesive, first-marriage family. Teaching stepfamily members about parental status and accurately assessing the various perspectives of parental status of family members, can assist in this process in two ways. First, teaching about parental status quickly differentiates stepfamilies from first-marriage families. This helps to develop the couple's flexibility because it requires that they explore and evaluate their current

assumptions about parenting. Although some assumptions may carry over into the stepfamily environment, others may have to be substantially modified and still other new assumptions integrated into stepfamily life.

Second, the actual level of the stepparent's parental status in a family can act as a guide when choosing which elements of parenting are appropriate, which may be appropriate in the future, and which are not reasonable to expect at any time given the current situation. Thus, parental status becomes a way for clinicians to initiate opportunities for flexibility in child-rearing and provides a guide to crafting unique solutions for each stepfamily environment. Once the appropriate family environment has been designed and implemented, positive experiences are more likely to occur, thereby developing the cohesion found in all successful families.

Facilitating positive experiences for stepfamilies may contribute to what Papernow (1993) has defined as "middle ground." Middle ground is defined as "areas of shared experience, shared values, and easy cooperative functioning created over time" (p. 39). Once roles for child-rearing are clearly understood and expectations of the couple are mutual, the experiences and opportunities can bring stepfamily members into contact with each other in such a way as to gradually increase cohesion and lead to enhanced overall well-being in the family.

#### General Limitations of Study

This research investigated a specific social cognition of the stepparent relationship in stepfather families and developed and tested the social cognition of parental status. Further, the effects of mothers' and stepfathers' parenting on late adolescent adjustment in stepfather families was explored, as well as the moderating effects of stepfathers' parental status on these relationships.

The participants in this research were primarily white, female and male students attending post-secondary educational institutions. As such, the findings may be more representative of those similar to this sample.

Further, this research included the perspectives of young adults in stepfather families only. Given that stepfather families have different family dynamics than do stepmother families (Crosbie-Burnett & Giles-Sims, 1994; Kurdek & Fine, 1995), the results of this research cannot be generalized to stepmother families. However, this sample included many types of stepfather families. The stepfathers in this sample had children from a previous relationship in 53% ( $N=83$ ) of the cases, and children had been born to the current couple in 18% ( $N=28$ ) of the cases. Also, only the perspectives of the young adults were included so the results do not reflect the perspectives of mothers or (step)fathers.

The use of measures for parenting behaviors were developed on first-marriage families, and this may be a limitation in this research. Stepfamily dynamics may include other aspects of parenting than those defined in the literature derived from first-marriage families. Other aspects of parenting, such as authority or control of financial and emotional resources, may be more sensitive to the influence of parental status in the stepparent-stepchild relationship.

#### Future Directions

The construct of parental status and the PSI opens the door to new avenues of study. At this juncture, further empirical validation is necessary. However, now that a research tool exists, future research and clinical practice can include the PSI to differentiate types of stepfather relationships, (i.e., those that are high, low or moderate in parental status). Articulating parental status within the stepfather-stepchild relationship acknowledges the variability of stepfather

relationships. This prevents the assumption that all stepfather-stepchild relationships are the same. It also reduces the ambiguity and confusion that often surround attempts to define stepfather relationships, thereby allowing both researchers and clinicians to be more precise and efficient.

The PSI has allowed the articulation of another social cognition that may prove helpful to future research. Research that seeks to identify social cognitions of relevance to stepfamily members can utilize the PSI as an assessment tool. This information can then be used to further our understanding of other related cognitions or aspects of family dynamics that have previously been unavailable to us. For example, slight adjustments to the PSI allow for the development of different forms of the inventory for various family members, i.e., perspectives of children, biological parent and stepparent. This would allow the assessment of parental status from the perspective of all family members, thereby furthering investigations of consensus or lack of consensus in this area on stepfamily well-being or other variables of interest.

Parental status and the PSI can make a contribution to clinical research and practice. Other research tools, such as the computer generated genogram (McGoldrick & Gerson, 1985), can include parental status, thereby allowing for consistencies and discrepancies between families members to be tracked and explored. Further, the exploration of typical interaction patterns of stepfamily households segregated by level of parental status can provide researchers with information to more accurately understand and treat the diversity in all stepfamilies, thereby countering assumptions of homogeneity. The construct of parental status can be incorporated into clinical practice to help clinicians modify treatment interventions, evaluating those practices for which full parental status is assumed when such might not be the case for their stepfamily clients.

Parental status could also make a contribution to the continuing development of social policy. Currently, in the US, social policy analysts are studying American stepfamilies (Pasley, 2000, personal communication) and developing protocols for legislating the rights of stepparent relationships (Mason, 2000, personal communication). This includes drafting policy regarding various aspects of the stepparent-stepchild relationship (e.g., stepparent rights to approve emergency medical treatment and the financial obligations of the stepparent to the stepchild). Given the wide range of stepparent-stepchild relationships, it may be important for legislators to discriminate between stepparents of varying degrees of parental status. With further development, the PSI could assist legislators to make such discriminations thereby clarifying ambiguities in this legislation.

The construct of parental status itself merits further exploration. Key questions for the future include: What creates parental status? What interferes with the development of parental status? How is parental status experienced differently by children of different ages? By parents and stepparents? How does parental status for stepfathers compare with that of stepmothers? How do stepfamily households that include a stepparent high in parental status differ from those in which the stepparent is low in parental status? What effect does PSI have on the well-being of stepchildren, parents and stepparents? Which elements of family life, if any, are affected by differing levels of parental status?

The investigation of parenting practices in stepfamilies has only just begun, and research initiatives in this area are warranted. Given the large numbers of stepfamilies in our communities and the effects of parenting on child and late adolescent adjustment, accurately understanding the contributors to positive stepfamily adjustment is vital. Studies that explore child socialization in stepfamilies must continue to be sensitive to the heterogeneity in stepfamilies.



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APPENDIX A

Item Evaluation Package

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Sex: \_\_\_\_\_
4. How long have you been part of a stepfamily (in years) as:
  - a) a biological parent? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) a stepparent? \_\_\_\_\_
  - c) a biological grandparent? \_\_\_\_\_
  - d) a stepgrandparent? \_\_\_\_\_
5. If the categories above do not seem to fit your experience, please briefly describe how you have been part of a stepfamily and indicate how long you have been part of a stepfamily in this way.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Total number of years that you have been part of one (or more) stepfamilies as an adult and as a child: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Total number of years in a stepfather family: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Total number of years working with stepfamilies in a clinical context: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Degrees / qualifications:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Areas of specialization:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Professional associations:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Item Selection - Demographics - Young Adults

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Sex:
4. How long have you been part of a stepfamily as:
  - a) a biological child (under 19)? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) a stepchild (under 19)? \_\_\_\_\_
  - c) a biological adult child (over 19)? \_\_\_\_\_
  - d) an adult stepchild (over 19)? \_\_\_\_\_
5. If the categories above do not seem to fit your experience, please briefly describe how you have been part of a stepfamily and indicate how long you have been part of a stepfamily in this way.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Total number of years that you have been part of one (or more) stepfamilies as a child and an adult: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Total number of years in a stepfather family: \_\_\_\_\_

## PARENTAL STATUS QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questions ask you to describe your relationship with the man who is your mother's husband or partner. When answering these questions, please DO NOT consider situations that include your biological father or his extended family. Out of 100%, please indicate how much each of the following statements is true for you.

1. I think of him as my father.
2. I think of myself as his daughter/son.
3. When my mother is present, I think of him as my father or my dad.
4. When my mother is present, I think of myself as his son/daughter.
5. When my mother is NOT present, I think of him as my father or my dad.
6. When my mother is NOT present, I think of myself as his daughter/son.
7. I introduce him as "my father" or "my dad".
8. I introduce him as "my mother's husband" or "my mother's partner".
9. I introduce my mother and him as "my parents".
10. He introduces me as his son/daughter.
11. I avoid introducing him.
12. I address him by his first name.
13. I address him by a nickname.
14. I do not address him.
15. I refer to him as my father/dad.
16. I refer to him as my mother's husband/ partner.

17. I am comfortable when someone else refers to him as my father/dad.
18. I am comfortable when someone else refers to him as my mother's husband/partner.
19. I consider him a member of my family.
20. He should be invited to my relatives parties, weddings, etc.
21. In my family, he is treated as an outsider.
22. I consider him an outsider.
23. He should be included in a family picture.
24. The neighbors my family has contact with are aware that he and I are not biologically related.
25. My family's friends are aware that he and I are not biologically related.
26. My friends are aware that he and I are not biologically related.
27. I consider him and I to be related.
28. When I think of my mother's house, I consider it to be a 2-parent family household.
29. It would be appropriate for he and I to attend a father - daughter/son function together, i.e., banquet, baseball game, bar-b-que.
30. It is appropriate for me to acknowledge him on Father's Day.
31. If I were choosing a greeting card for him, the inclusion of the word 'son' or 'daughter' in the inscription would prevent me from choosing the card.
32. If I were choosing a greeting card for him, the inclusion of the word 'father' or 'dad' in the inscription would prevent me from choosing the card.

APPENDIX B

Study 1: Ethics Approval



APPENDIX C

Study 1: Research Package

## THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Department of Counselling Psychology  
 Faculty of Education  
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 Tel: (604) 822-5259  
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PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:  
 Dr. Beth Haverkamp  
 Dept. of Counselling Psychology  
 University of British Columbia  
 Tel: 822-5259

CO-INVESTIGATOR:  
 Susan Gamache, MA, RCC  
 Dept. of Counselling Psychology  
 University of British Columbia  
 Tel: 822-4919

The purpose of this study is to develop a questionnaire to measure one aspect of the stepparent-stepchild relationship.

For this pilot study, you are asked to complete two anonymous questionnaires. There is no interview involved. The first questionnaire will take you about 1 hour to complete. The second questionnaire will take you about 10 minutes to complete.

The procedure for this study involves two questionnaires, one raffle ticket, and two envelopes (one large and one small!). When completed, please place one copy of your identifying information together with the first (long) questionnaire in the large, stamped, self-addressed envelope provided, and return it to me by mail. Wait 2 weeks, then complete the short questionnaire and place it, the raffle ticket and the second copy of your identifying information in the small, stamped, self-addressed envelope provided and return it to me by mail. Upon receipt of the second envelope (containing the completed questionnaire, the raffle ticket and identifying information), the raffle ticket and identifying information will be separated from the short questionnaire by the co-investigator, and placed in a sealed envelope. Once 125 completed questionnaires are received, two envelopes containing raffle tickets and identifying information will be selected.

If any discrepancies are found in the information received, I would like to contact you by phone to verify your answers. Once any discrepancies are corrected, identifying information will be separated from your answers.

Any information resulting from this study will be kept strictly confidential. All documents will be identified only by code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. Data records will be kept on the hard disc of the student investigator, located in her private residence.

To thank you for your participation, you have an opportunity to be included in a raffle in which you could win one of two cash prizes of \$50 (Canadian) each.

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Dr. Beth Haverkamp at 822-5259 or Susan Gamache at 822-4919.

If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject you may contact the Director of Research Services at the University of British Columbia, Dr. Richard Spratley at 822-8598.

#### CONSENT

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. If the questionnaires are completed it will be assumed that consent has been given.

## IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: area code ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## DEMOGRAPHIC AND STRUCTURAL INFORMATION

NO NAMES PLEASE

Please answer every question. If you get stuck, call me (604-822-4919).

1. Primary residence \_\_\_\_\_  

City/Town
Prov./State
2. Sex        \_\_\_\_F \_\_\_\_M
3. Which racial group do you identify with the most?
  - \_\_\_\_ Aboriginal (eg., Native Canadian/Native American)
  - \_\_\_\_ Black (eg., African, Afro-American, W. Indies)
  - \_\_\_\_ European
  - \_\_\_\_ Indo/Pakistani
  - \_\_\_\_ Latin American
  - \_\_\_\_ North Asian (eg. Chinese/Japanese)
  - \_\_\_\_ South Asian (eg. Vietnamese/Cambodian)
  - \_\_\_\_ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Education

4. Are you a student or involved with a post-secondary training program?
  - \_\_\_\_ Yes, full-time
  - \_\_\_\_ Yes, part-time
  - \_\_\_\_ No
5. What is the highest level of education that you have reached?
  - \_\_\_\_ some high school
  - \_\_\_\_ completed high school
  - \_\_\_\_ vocational, trade, or business college
  - \_\_\_\_ university or college degree
  - \_\_\_\_ graduate or professional degree
6. What is the highest level of education completed by your mother? (If you're not sure, please answer with your BEST GUESS.)
  - \_\_\_\_ some high school
  - \_\_\_\_ high school
  - \_\_\_\_ vocational, trade, or business college
  - \_\_\_\_ university or college degree
  - \_\_\_\_ graduate or professional degree
7. What is the highest level of education completed by your biological father? (If you're not sure, please answer with your BEST GUESS.)
  - \_\_\_\_ some high school
  - \_\_\_\_ high school
  - \_\_\_\_ vocational, trade, or business college
  - \_\_\_\_ university or college degree
  - \_\_\_\_ graduate or professional degree

8. What is the highest level of education completed by your stepfather or mother's husband /partner? (If you're not sure, please answer with your BEST GUESS.)

☐ did not graduate from high school  
☐ high school  
☐ vocational, trade, or business college  
☐ university or college degree  
☐ graduate or professional degree

#### Finances

9. Are you financially dependent on your mother and/or her husband/partner?

☐ Yes, completely.  
☐ Yes, partially.  
☐ I receive occasional financial help from them.  
☐ No, I receive very little/no financial support at all from them.

10. If you do receive financial assistance from your mother and/or her husband/partner, indicate who the funds are from.

☐ your mother and her husband/partner together  
☐ your mother only  
☐ her husband/partner only  
☐ not applicable

#### Divorce or Death

11. Did your parents' marriage end because of marital separation or because of the death of your biological father?

☐ separation/divorce                      ☐ death

Please note: The next questions are about your age and the time line for the changes in your family. When the questions ask about the final separation of your parents, please consider the time of your father's death as the time of the final separation.

#### Age

12. How old are you now? \_\_\_\_\_ (in years and months)
13. How old were you when your biological parents separated for the last time? \_\_\_\_\_ (in years and months).
14. How old were you when your mother and her current husband/partner remarried or began living common-law? \_\_\_\_\_ (in years and months)

Time

Time questions can be difficult because life transitions through separation, divorce and remarriage are sometimes gradual and difficult to pin-point. For the following questions, give what you believe to be the best answer. If you get stuck, please call me (822-4919).

15. To the best of your knowledge, how long were your biological parents married or in a common-law relationship with each other? \_\_\_\_\_
16. What was the length of time between your biological parents' final separation, and your mother's remarriage/common-law commitment to her current partner? \_\_\_\_\_
17. To the best of your knowledge, how many committed relationship was your mother involved in, between your biological parents' separation and her current marriage/common-law commitment?  
\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ not applicable
18. To the best of your knowledge, how many years total did this/these relationship(s) last? \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ not applicable
19. How long have your mother and her current husband/partner been married/common-law?  
\_\_\_\_\_
20. Did you know your mother's husband/partner before he and your mother married/lived common-law? \_\_\_\_\_yes \_\_\_\_\_no
21. If so, how long? \_\_\_\_\_/ \_\_\_\_\_ not applicable
22. And in what capacity? (e.g., scout leader, coach, family friend)  
\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ not applicable

Custody/Living Arrangements

23. Which option below best describes your living arrangement after the final separation of your biological parents. Although living arrangements often change over time, please choose only one answer that best describes your experience.

- ☐ 100% with my mother. I hardly ever/never saw my biological father.
- ☐ 100% with my mother except for regular visits with my father (e.g., summer holidays, Christmas).
- ☐ 75% of the time I lived with my mother and went to my father's place regularly (e.g., every other weekend).
- ☐ 50% of the time with each. I spent 1/2 my time living at each biological parents' place.
- ☐ 75% of the time I lived with my father and went to my mother's place regularly (e.g., every other weekend).
- ☐ 100% with my father except for regular visits with my mother (e.g., summer holidays, Christmas).
- ☐ 100% with my father. I hardly ever/never saw my biological mother.

24. How long have you lived, full-time or part-time, with your mother and her current husband/common-law partner? \_\_\_\_\_(years)

Children

25. Has your biological father had children in a marriage or common-law relationship since the separation from your biological mother? ☐yes ☐no
26. Have your mother and her current husband/partner had at least one child together? ☐yes ☐no
27. Does your mother's current husband/partner have biological children (child) from a previous relationship? ☐yes ☐no
28. Did these children (child) reside with him and your mother when they were minors (under 19) either ....
- Full time? ☐yes ☐no ☐not applicable
- OR
29. Part time? ☐yes ☐no ☐not applicable



## GLOBAL PARENTAL STATUS

The purpose of this research is to study "Parental Status" of stepfathers, that is, the degree to which a married man (or common-law) is a 'parent' to his wife's (partner's) children from a previous relationship.

When the children think of him as "Dad" or almost like a dad, this relationship is very parental. We consider it to be *high* in Parental Status.

When the children think of him as "Mom's boyfriend, I don't even really know him", this relationship is more like a newcomer, very distant relative, or a friendly adult but not a parent. We consider it to be *low* in Parental Status.

When this relationship is somewhat like a parent but not completely, we consider it to be *moderate* in Parental Status.

Sometimes this man is "Dad" to some children in the family but not really a dad to others. Sometimes the adults want the children to consider him "Dad" even when it is uncomfortable for the children to do this. Equally, sometimes the children want to consider him "Dad" but this is uncomfortable for the adults.

IN GENERAL, how do you rate the Parental Status of your stepfather, or your mother's husband/partner? Please circle the word that BEST describes how YOU think of him.

LOW  
Parental  
Status

MODERATE  
Parental  
Status

HIGH  
Parental  
Status

The following questions ask you to describe your relationship with your stepfather, in other words, your mother's husband or partner. You may think of this man as your Dad, or as your mother's partner or husband but a stranger to you, or as someone in between these two extremes.

When answering these questions, please DO NOT consider situations that include your biological father or his extended family.

Please indicate how much each of the following statements is true for you by circling the number to the right which indicates the appropriate percentage.

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. I think of him as my father.  | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 2. I am comfortable when someone else refers to him as my father/dad.    | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 3. I think of myself as his daughter/son.                                | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 4. In my family, he is treated as an outsider.                           | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 5. I refer to him as my father/dad.                                      | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 6. It is comfortable for me to acknowledge him on Father's Day.          | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 7. I consider him to be one of my parents.                               | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 8. He introduces me as his son/daughter.                                 | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 9. I consider him a member of my family.                                 | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 10. I feel he should be invited to my relatives' parties, weddings, etc. | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 11. I introduce my mother and him as "my parents".                       | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 12. I consider him an outsider.  | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 13. He and I are just like father and son/daughter.                      | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 14. I feel he should be included in a family picture.                    | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |

15. I consider him to be a parental figure in my life.	0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100%
16. I am comfortable letting the neighbors my family has contact with know that he and I are not biologically related.	0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100%
17. I introduce him as "my father" or "my dad".	0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100%
18. I would feel comfortable if he and I were to attend a father - daughter/son function alone together, i.e., banquet, baseball game, bar-b-que.	0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100%
19. I introduce him as "my mother's husband" or "my mother's partner".	0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100%
20. I am comfortable letting my friends know that he and I are not biologically related.	0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100%
21. I consider us to be related.	0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100%
22. When I think of my mother's house, I consider him and my mother to be parents to the same degree.	0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100%
23. I consider him to be a father to me.	0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100%
24. I address him by his first name.	0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100%
25. If I were choosing a greeting card for him, the inclusion of the word 'father' or 'dad' in the inscription would prevent me from choosing the card.	0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100%

Please indicate whether the following statements are almost always or always true, often true, sometimes true, seldom true, or almost never or never true for you in your relationship with your stepfather.

Using the scale below as a guide, write a number beside each statement to indicate how much you agree with it.

1	2	3	4	5
Almost always or always true	Often true	Sometimes true	Seldom true	Almost never or never true

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. My stepfather respects my feelings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I feel my stepfather is successful as a stepfather.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I wish I had a different stepfather.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. My stepfather accepts me as I am.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I have to rely on myself when I have a problem to solve.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I like to get my stepfather's point of view on things I'm concerned about.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I feel it's no use letting my feelings show.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. My stepfather senses when I'm upset about something.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Talking over my problems with my stepfather makes me feel ashamed or foolish.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. My stepfather expects too much from me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I get upset easily at home.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I get upset a lot more than my stepfather knows about.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. When we discuss things, my stepfather considers my point of view.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. My stepfather trusts my judgment.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. My stepfather has his own problems, so I don't bother him with mine.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. My stepfather helps me to understand myself better.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I tell my stepfather about my problems and troubles.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I feel angry with my stepfather.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I don't get much attention at home.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. My stepfather encourages me to talk about my difficulties.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. My stepfather understands me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I don't know whom I can depend on these days.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. When I am angry about something, my stepfather tries to be understanding.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. I trust my stepfather.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. My stepfather doesn't understand what I'm going through these days.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. I can count on my stepfather when I need to get something off my chest.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. I feel that no one understands me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. If my stepfather knows something is bothering me, he asks me about it.

Please indicate whether the following statements are almost always or always true, often true, sometimes true, seldom true, or almost never or never true.

Using the scale below as a guide, write a number beside each statement to indicate how much you agree with it.

1	2	3	4	5	-
Almost always or always true	Often true	Sometimes true	Seldom true	Almost never or never true	

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I like to get my friends' point of view on things I'm concerned about.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. My friends sense when I'm upset about something.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. When we discuss things, my friends consider my point of view.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Talking over my problems with my friends makes me feel ashamed or foolish.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I wish I had different friends.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. My friends understand me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. My friends encourage me to talk about my difficulties.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. My friends accept me as I am.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I feel the need to be in touch with my friends more often.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. My friends don't understand what I'm going through these days.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I feel alone or apart when I am with my friends.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. My friends listen to what I have to say.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I feel my friends are good friends.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. My friends are fairly easy to talk to.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. When I am angry about something, my friends try to be understanding.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. My friends help me to understand myself better.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. My friends are concerned about my well-being.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I feel angry with my friends.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I can count on my friends when I need to get something off my chest.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I trust my friends.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. My friends respect my feelings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I get upset a lot more than my friends know about.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. It seems as if my friends are irritated with me for no reason.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. I tell my friends about my problems and troubles.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. If my friends know something is bothering me, they ask me about it.

The following questions are about your relationship with your stepfather, in other words, your mother's husband or partner. You may consider him your Dad, your stepfather, your mother's husband/partner or in some other way.

For each statement, please circle the letter that corresponds to the answer that best describes YOUR relationship with him.

1. Do you talk over your personal matters with him?

Most of  
time

About half  
of the time

Hardly  
ever

2. Do you ever feel that he neglects you and your wishes?

Most of  
time

About half  
of the time

Hardly  
ever

3. In general, how well do you get along with him?

Most of  
time

About half  
of the time

Hardly  
ever

4. Does he understand you and your problems?

Most of  
time

About half  
of the time

Hardly  
ever

5. How close do you feel your relationship with him is?

Very  
close

Moderately  
close

Not very  
close

Using the scale below as a guide, write a number beside each statement to indicate how much you agree with it.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
NOT TRUE			SOMEWHAT TRUE		VERY TRUE	

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. My first impressions of people usually turn out to be right.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. It would be hard for me to break any of my bad habits.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I don't care to know what other people really think of me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I have not always been honest with myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I always know why I like things.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. When my emotions are aroused, it biases my thinking.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Once I've made up my mind, other people can seldom change my opinion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I am not a safe driver when I exceed the speed limit.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I am fully in control of my own fate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. It's hard for me to shut off a disturbing thought.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I never regret my decisions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I sometimes lose out on things because I can't make up my mind soon enough.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. The reason I vote is because my vote can make a difference..
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. My parents were not always fair when they punished me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I am a completely rational person.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I rarely appreciate criticism.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I am very confident of my judgments.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I have sometimes doubted my ability as a lover.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. It's all right with me if some people happen to dislike me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I don't always know the reasons why I do the things I do.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I sometimes tell lies if I have to.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I never cover up my mistakes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. There have been occasions when I have taken advantage of someone.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. I never swear.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. I always obey laws, even if I'm unlikely to get caught.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. I have said something bad about a friend behind his or her back.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. When I hear people talking privately, I avoid listening.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. I have received too much change from a salesperson without telling him or her.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. I always declare everything at customs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31. When I was young I sometimes stole things.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 32. I have never dropped litter on the street.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 33. I sometimes drive faster than the speed limit.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 34. I never read sexy books or magazines.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 35. I have done things that I don't tell other people about.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 36. I never take things that don't belong to me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 37. I have taken sick-leave from work or school even though I wasn't really sick.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 38. I have never damaged a library book or store merchandise without reporting it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 39. I have some pretty awful habits.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 40. I don't gossip about other people's business.



## APPENDIX D

**Study 1; Factor Loadings of Parental Status Inventory (25-item) for Canadians and Americans**

Item	Canadian			American		
	Parental Status	Family	Social Profile	Parental Status	Social Profile	Family
1	<u>.90</u>	.12	.07	<u>.93</u>	.05	-.00
2	<u>.62</u>	.37	.05	<u>.85</u>	.07	-.06
3	<u>.86</u>	.15	.05	<u>.89</u>	.04	-.08
4	.06	<u>.69</u>	.04	-.05	-.09	<u>-.77</u>
5	<u>.98</u>	-.11	-.06	<u>1.00</u>	-.03	.17
6	.50	.46	.05	.48	.09	.17
7	.52	.52	.05	<u>.68</u>	.11	-.36
8	<u>.82</u>	-.09	-.11	<u>.77</u>	-.12	-.07
9	.13	<u>.85</u>	-.02	.18	.02	<u>-.79</u>
10	-.17	<u>.91</u>	-.17	.13	.09	<u>-.75</u>
11	.41	.53	-.02	<u>.79</u>	.11	-.16
12	.18	<u>.67</u>	-.10	-.02	-.11	<u>-.85</u>
13	<u>.85</u>	.13	.05	<u>.90</u>	.03	-.09
14	.06	<u>.84</u>	-.04	.22	.08	<u>-.72</u>
15	.57	.46	.07	.51	.04	-.53
16	.05	-.07	<u>.91</u>	.00	<u>.92</u>	.14
17	<u>.95</u>	-.09	-.06	<u>.97</u>	.00	.10
18	.56	.38	.03	<u>.74</u>	.04	-.21
19	<u>.58</u>	.25	-.15	<u>.63</u>	-.10	-.16
20	-.15	-.06	<u>.80</u>	.00	<u>.91</u>	.03
21	.51	.43	-.02	.47	.10	-.51
22	<u>.80</u>	.12	.11	<u>.69</u>	.09	-.18
23	<u>.87</u>	.15	.04	<u>.89</u>	.07	-.10
24	<u>.97</u>	-.28	-.14	<u>.77</u>	-.24	.23
25	<u>.76</u>	.12	.03	<u>.61</u>	.00	-.20
Eigenvalue	15.62	2.01	1.48	15.73	2.20	1.32

## APPENDIX E

## Study 2: Ethics Approval

## APPENDIX F

## Study 2: Research Package

# THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Department of Counselling Psychology  
Faculty of Education  
2125 Main Mall  
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4  
Tel: (604) 822-5259  
Fax: (604) 822-2328

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:  
Dr. Beth Haverkamp  
Dept. of Counselling Psychology  
University of British Columbia  
Tel: 822-5259

CO-INVESTIGATOR:  
Susan Gamache, MA, RCC  
Dept. of Counselling Psychology  
University of British Columbia  
Tel: 822-4919

The purpose of this study is to explore relationships between young adults and their parents and stepparents.

For this study you are asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire. There is no interview involved. It will take you about 30 minutes to complete.

The procedure for this study involves only this research package. Upon receipt of the completed questionnaire, you will be sent \$10.00 in the mail.

If any discrepancies are found in the information received, I would like to contact you by phone to verify your answers. Once any discrepancies are corrected, identifying information will be separated from your answers.

Any information resulting from this study will be kept strictly confidential. All documents will be identified only by code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. Data records will be kept on the hard disc of the student investigator, located in her private residence.

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Dr. Beth Haverkamp at 822-5259 or Susan Gamache at 822-4919.

If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject you may contact the Director of Research Services at the University of British Columbia, Dr. Richard Spratley at 822-8598.

## CONSENT

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. If the questionnaires are completed it will be assumed that consent has been given.

## IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: area code (       ) \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## REQUEST FOR RESULTS

Dear Susan,

Please send me the results of your study. I realize that this research will not be completed until at least the summer of 1999. However, I am interested in knowing the results of the research that I have participated in.

Please send the results to:

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## DEMOGRAPHIC AND STRUCTURAL INFORMATION

NO NAMES PLEASE

Please answer every question. If you get stuck, call me (604-822-4919).

1. Primary residence \_\_\_\_\_  
Prov./State \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_
2. Sex \_\_\_\_\_F \_\_\_\_\_M
3. Which racial group do you identify with the most?  
 \_\_\_\_\_Aboriginal (eg., Native Canadian Indian/Native American Indian)  
 \_\_\_\_\_Asian  
 \_\_\_\_\_Black (eg., African, Afro-American, W. Indies)  
 \_\_\_\_\_White/Caucasian  
 \_\_\_\_\_Indo/Pakistani  
 \_\_\_\_\_Latin American  
 \_\_\_\_\_Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Education

4. Are you a student or involved with a post-secondary training program?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, full-time  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, part-time  
 \_\_\_\_\_ No
5. What is the highest level of education that you have reached?  
 \_\_\_\_\_some high school  
 \_\_\_\_\_completed high school  
 \_\_\_\_\_vocational, trade, or business college  
 \_\_\_\_\_university or college degree  
 \_\_\_\_\_graduate or professional degree
6. What is the highest level of education completed by your mother? (If you're not sure, please answer with your BEST GUESS.)  
 \_\_\_\_\_some high school  
 \_\_\_\_\_high school  
 \_\_\_\_\_vocational, trade, or business college  
 \_\_\_\_\_university or college degree  
 \_\_\_\_\_graduate or professional degree
7. What is the highest level of education completed by your biological father? (If you're not sure, please answer with your BEST GUESS.)  
 \_\_\_\_\_some high school  
 \_\_\_\_\_high school  
 \_\_\_\_\_vocational, trade, or business college  
 \_\_\_\_\_university or college degree  
 \_\_\_\_\_graduate or professional degree

8. What is the highest level of education completed by your stepfather or mother's husband /partner? (If you're not sure, please answer with your BEST GUESS.)

☐ did not graduate from high school  
☐ high school  
☐ vocational, trade, or business college  
☐ university or college degree  
☐ graduate or professional degree

#### Finances

9. Are you financially dependent on your mother and/or her husband/partner?

☐ Yes, completely.  
☐ Yes, partially.  
☐ I receive occasional financial help from them.  
☐ No, I receive very little/no financial support at all from them.

10. If you do receive financial assistance from your mother and/or her husband/partner, indicate who the funds are from.

☐ your mother and her husband/partner together  
☐ your mother only  
☐ her husband/partner only  
☐ not applicable

#### Divorce or Death

11. Did your parents' marriage end because of marital separation or because of the death of your biological father?

☐ separation/divorce                      ☐ death

Please note: The next questions are about your age and the time line for the changes in your family. When the questions ask about the final separation of your parents, please consider the time of your father's death as the time of the final separation.

#### Age

12. How old are you now? \_\_\_\_\_ (in years and months)
13. How old were you when your biological parents separated for the last time? \_\_\_\_\_ (in years and months).
14. How old were you when your mother and her current husband/partner remarried or began living common-law? \_\_\_\_\_ (in years and months)



Time

Time questions can be difficult because life transitions through separation, divorce and remarriage are sometimes gradual and difficult to pin-point. PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS CAREFULLY. Give what you believe to be the best answer. If you get stuck, please call me (822-4919).

15. To the best of your knowledge, how long were your biological parents married or in a common-law relationship with each other? \_\_\_\_\_
16. What was the length of time between your biological parents' final separation, and your mother's remarriage/common-law commitment to her current partner? \_\_\_\_\_
17. To the best of your knowledge, how many committed relationship was your mother involved in, between your biological parents' separation and her current marriage/common-law commitment?  
\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ not applicable
18. To the best of your knowledge, how many years total did this/these relationship(s) last? \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ not applicable
19. How long have your mother and her current husband/partner been married/common-law?  
\_\_\_\_\_
20. Did you know your mother's husband/partner before he and your mother married/lived common-law? \_\_\_\_\_yes \_\_\_\_\_no
21. If so, how long? \_\_\_\_\_/ \_\_\_\_\_ not applicable
22. And in what capacity? (e.g., scout leader, coach, family friend)  
\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ not applicable

Custody/Living Arrangements

23. Which option below best describes your living arrangement after the final separation of your biological parents. Although living arrangements often change over time, please choose only **one** answer that best describes your experience.

- ☐ 100% with my mother. I hardly ever/never saw my biological father.
- ☐ 100% with my mother except for regular visits with my father (e.g., summer holidays, Christmas).
- ☐ 75% of the time I lived with my mother and went to my father's place regularly (e.g., every other weekend).
- ☐ 50% of the time with each. I spent 1/2 my time living at each biological parents' place.
- ☐ 75% of the time I lived with my father and went to my mother's place regularly (e.g., every other weekend).
- ☐ 100% with my father except for regular visits with my mother (e.g., summer holidays, Christmas).
- ☐ 100% with my father. I hardly ever/never saw my biological mother.

24. How long have you lived, full-time or part-time, with your mother and her current husband/common-law partner? \_\_\_\_\_(years)

Children

25. Has your biological father had children in a marriage or common-law relationship since the separation from your biological mother? ☐yes ☐no
26. Have your mother and her current husband/partner had at least one child together? ☐yes ☐no
27. Does your mother's current husband/partner have biological children (child) from a previous relationship? ☐yes ☐no
28. IF SO, did these children (child) reside with him and your mother when they were minors (under 19) either ....
- Full time? ☐yes ☐no ☐not applicable
- OR
29. Part time? ☐yes ☐no ☐not applicable

## PARENTAL STATUS INVENTORY©

The following questions ask you to describe your relationship with your stepfather, in other words, your mother's husband or partner. You may think of this man as your Dad, *or* as your mother's partner or husband but a stranger to you, *or* as someone in between these two extremes.

When answering these questions, please DO NOT consider situations that include your biological father or his extended family.

Please indicate how much each of the following statements is true for you by circling the number to the right which indicates the appropriate percentage.

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. I think of him as my father.   | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 2. I am comfortable when someone else refers to him as my father/dad.   | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 3. I think of myself as his daughter/son.   | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 4. I refer to him as my father/dad.   | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 5. He introduces me as his son/daughter.  | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 6. I introduce my mother and him as "my parents".   | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 7. He and I are just like father and son/daughter.  | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 8. I introduce him as "my father" or "my dad".  | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 9. I would feel comfortable if he and I were to attend a father - daughter/son function alone together, i.e., banquet, baseball game, bar-b-que.        | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 10. I introduce him as "my mother's husband" or "my mother's partner".  | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 11. When I think of my mother's house, I consider him and my mother to be parents to the same degree.   | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 12. I consider him to be a father to me.  | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 13. I address him by his first name.  | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |
| 14. If I were choosing a greeting card for him, the inclusion of the word 'father' or 'dad' in the inscription would prevent me from choosing the card. | 0% 10 20 30 40 50% 60 70 80 90 100% |

A. Please rate your *mother* on a 3-point scale, choosing one of:

1 = Not at all like her    2 = Somewhat like her    3 = Very much like her

MY MOTHER IS A PERSON WHO ...

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. ... makes me feel better after talking over my worries with her. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. ... smiles at me very often.                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. ... is able to make me feel better when I am upset.              | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. ... enjoys doing things with me.                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. ... cheers me up when I am sad.                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. ... gives me a lot of care and attention.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. ... makes me feel like the most important person in her life.    | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8. ... believes in showing her love for me.                         | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 9. ... often praises me.  | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 10. ... is easy to talk to.   | 1 | 2 | 3 |

B. Please rate your *mother* on a 3-point scale, choosing one of:

1 = Doesn't know    2 = Knows a little    3 = Knows a lot

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. How much does she really know where you go at night?                        | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. How much does she really know where you are most days<br>after school/work? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. How much does she really know how you spend your money?                     | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. How much does she really know what you do with your free time?              | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. How much does she really know who your friends are?                         | 1 | 2 | 3 |

C. Please rate your *mother* on a 3-point scale, choosing one of:

1 = Not at all like her    2 = Somewhat like her    3 = A lot like her

MY MOTHER IS A PERSON WHO ...

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. ... changes the subject, whenever I have something to say.                              | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. ... finishes my sentences whenever I talk.  | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. ... often interrupts me.  | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. ... acts like she knows what I'm thinking or feeling.                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. ... would like to be able to tell me how to feel or think<br>about things all the time. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. ... is always trying to change how I feel or think about things.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. ... blames me for other family members' problems  | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8. ... brings up my past mistakes when she criticizes me                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 |

A. Please rate your *stepfather* on a 3-point scale, choosing one of:

1 = Not at all like him    2 = Somewhat like him    3 = Very much like him

MY STEPFATHER IS A PERSON WHO ...

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. ... makes me feel better after talking over my worries with him. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. ... smiles at me very often.                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. ... is able to make me feel better when I am upset.              | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. ... enjoys doing things with me.                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. ... cheers me up when I am sad.                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. ... gives me a lot of care and attention.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. ... makes me feel like the most important person in his life.    | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8. ... believes in showing his love for me.                         | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 9. ... often praises me.  | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 10. ... is easy to talk to.   | 1 | 2 | 3 |

B. Please rate your *stepfather* on a 3-point scale, choosing one of:

1 = Doesn't know    2 = Knows a little    3 = Knows a lot

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. How much does he really know where you go at night?                        | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. How much does he really know where you are most days<br>after school/work? | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. How much does he really know how you spend your money?                     | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. How much does he really know what you do with your free time?              | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. How much does he really know who your friends are?                         | 1 | 2 | 3 |

C. Please rate your *stepfather* on a 3-point scale, choosing one of:

1 = Not at all like him    2 = Somewhat like him    3 = A lot like him

MY STEPFATHER IS A PERSON WHO ...

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. ... changes the subject, whenever I have something to say.                              | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. ... finishes my sentences whenever I talk.  | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. ... often interrupts me.  | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. ... acts like he knows what I'm thinking or feeling.                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. ... would like to be able to tell me how to feel or think<br>about things all the time. | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. ... is always trying to change how I feel or think about things.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. ... blames me for other family members' problems  | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8. ... brings up my past mistakes when he criticizes me                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 |

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## YASR AND YABCL

Please print  
your answers

## YOUNG ADULT SELF-REPORT FOR AGES 18-30

For office use only  
ID#

YOUR First Middle Last  
FULL  
NAME

YOUR GENDER

☐ Male ☐ Female

YOUR  
AGE

ETHNIC  
GROUP  
OR RACE

TODAY'S DATE

Mo. Date Yr.

YOUR BIRTHDATE

Mo. Date Yr.

Please fill out this form to reflect *your* views, even if other people might not agree. Feel free to print additional comments beside each item.

YOUR USUAL TYPE OF WORK, even if not working now. Please be specific—for example, auto mechanic; high school teacher; homemaker; laborer; lathe operator; shoe salesman; army sergeant; student (indicate what kind of student, such as high school or college):

## PLEASE CHECK YOUR HIGHEST EDUCATION

- ☐ No high school diploma and no GED (1) ☐ Bachelor's or RN Degree (6)  
☐ General Equivalency Diploma (GED) (2) ☐ Some graduate school but no graduate degree (7)  
☐ High school graduate (3) ☐ Master's Degree (8)  
☐ Some college but no college degree (4) ☐ Doctoral or Law Degree (9)  
☐ Associate's Degree (5) Other education (specify):

## I. FRIENDS:

A. About how many close friends do you have? (Do not include family members.)

☐ None ☐ 1 ☐ 2 or 3 ☐ 4 or more

B. About how many times a month do you have contact with any of your close friends? (including in-person contacts, phone, letters, e-mail)

☐ Less than 1 ☐ 1 or 2 ☐ 3 or more

C. How well do you get along with your close friends?

☐ Not well ☐ Average ☐ Very well

D. About how many times a month do you invite any people to your home?

☐ Less than 1 ☐ 1 or 2 ☐ 3 or more

## II. EDUCATION:

At any time in the past 6 months, did you attend school, college, or any other educational or training program?

☐ No—please skip to Section III. JOB.

☐ Yes—what kind of school or program?

What degree or diploma are you seeking? Major?

When do you expect to receive your degree or diploma?

Circle 0, 1, or 2 beside items A-E to describe your educational experience during the past 6 months:

0 = Not True 1 = Somewhat or Sometimes True 2 = Very True or Often True

0 1 2 A. I get along well with other students

0 1 2 B. I achieve what I am capable of

0 1 2 C. I have trouble finishing assignments

0 1 2 D. I am satisfied with my educational situation

0 1 2 E. I do things that may cause me to fail

## III. JOB:

At any time in the past 6 months, did you have any paid jobs (including military service)?

☐ No—please skip to Section IV. FAMILY.

☐ Yes—please describe your job(s)

Circle 0, 1, or 2 beside items A-G to describe your work experience during the past 6 months:

0 = Not True 1 = Somewhat or Sometimes True 2 = Very True or Often True

0 1 2 A. I work well with others

0 1 2 B. I have trouble getting along with bosses

0 1 2 C. I do my work well

0 1 2 D. I have trouble finishing my work

0 1 2 E. I am satisfied with my work situation

0 1 2 F. I do things that may cause me to lose my job

0 1 2 G. I stay away from my job even when I'm not sick or not on vacation

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PAGE 1

Figure 2-1. Page 1 of the YASR.

## YASR AND YABCL

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*Please print your answers*

## IV. FAMILY:

Compared with others, how well do you:

	Worse	Average	Better	No Contact	
A. Get along with your brothers and sisters?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> I have no brothers or sisters
B. Get along with your mother?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Mother is deceased
C. Get along with your father?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Father is deceased

## V. SPOUSE OR PARTNER:

What is your current marital status? ☐ Never been married ☐ Married but separated from spouse☐ Married, living with spouse ☐ Divorced☐ Widowed☐ Other—please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

At any time in the past 6 months, did you live with your spouse or with a partner?

☐ No—please skip to Section VI.☐ Yes—describe your living situation \_\_\_\_\_Circle 0, 1, or 2 beside items A-G to describe your relationship *during the past 6 months*:

0 = Not True

1 = Somewhat or Sometimes True

2 = Very True or Often True

0 1 2	A. I get along well with my spouse or partner	0 1 2	E. My spouse or partner and I disagree about living arrangements, such as where we live
0 1 2	B. My spouse or partner and I have trouble sharing responsibilities	0 1 2	F. I have trouble with my spouse or partner's family
0 1 2	C. I feel satisfied with my spouse or partner	0 1 2	G. I like my spouse's or partner's friends
0 1 2	D. My spouse or partner and I enjoy similar activities		

VI. Do you have any illness, disability, or handicap? ☐ No ☐ Yes—please describe:VII. Please describe any concerns or worries you have about work, school, or other things: ☐ No concerns

VIII. Please describe the best things about yourself:

PAGE 2

Figure 2-1 (cont.). Page 2 of the YASR.

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## YASR AND YABCL

Please print your answers

IX. Below is a list of items that describe people. For each item, please circle 0, 1, or 2 to describe yourself over the past 6 months. Please answer all items as well as you can, even if some do not seem to apply to you.

0 = Not True	1 = Somewhat or Sometimes True	2 = Very True or Often True
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 1. I act too young for my age		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 38. I get teased a lot
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 2. <sup>b</sup> I make good use of my opportunities		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 39. I hang around with others who get in trouble
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 3. I argue a lot		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 40. I hear sounds or voices that other people think aren't there (describe): _____
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 4. <sup>b</sup> I work up to my ability		
0 1 2 5. I act like the opposite sex		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 41. I am impulsive or act without thinking
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 6. I use drugs (other than alcohol) for nonmedical purposes (describe): _____		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 42. I would rather be alone than with others
		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 43. I lie or cheat
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 7. I brag		0 1 2 44. I bite my fingernails
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 8. I have trouble concentrating or paying attention		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 45. I am nervous or tense
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 9. I can't get my mind off certain thoughts (describe): _____		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 46. Parts of my body twitch or make nervous movements (describe): _____
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 10. I have trouble sitting still		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 47. I lack self-confidence
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 11. I am too dependent on others		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 48. I am not liked by others
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 12. I feel lonely		0 1 2 49. <sup>b</sup> I can do certain things better than other people
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 13. I feel confused or in a fog		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 50. I am too fearful or anxious
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 14. I cry a lot		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 51. I feel dizzy or lightheaded
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 15. <sup>b</sup> I am pretty honest		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 52. I feel too guilty
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 16. I am mean to others		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 53. I eat too much
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 17. I daydream a lot		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 54. I feel overtired
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 18. I deliberately try to hurt or kill myself		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 55. I am overweight
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 19. I try to get a lot of attention		56. Physical problems without known medical cause:
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 20. I destroy my things		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> a. Aches or pains (not stomach or headaches)
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 21. I destroy things belonging to others		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> b. Headaches
0 1 2 22. I worry about my future		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> c. Nausea, feel sick
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 23. I break rules at school, work, or elsewhere		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> d. Problems with eyes (not if corrected by glasses) (describe): _____
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 24. I don't eat as well as I should		
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 25. I don't get along with other people		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> e. Rashes or other skin problems
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 26. I don't feel guilty after doing something I shouldn't		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> f. Stomachaches
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 27. I am jealous of others		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> g. Vomiting, throwing up
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 28. I get along badly with my family		0 1 2 h. Heart pounding or racing
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 29. I am afraid of certain animals, situations, or places (describe): _____		0 1 2 i. Numbness or tingling in body parts
		0 1 2 j. Other (describe): _____
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 30. My relations with the opposite sex are poor		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 57. I physically attack people
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 31. I am afraid I might think or do something bad		0 1 2 58. I pick my skin or other parts of my body (describe): _____
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 32. I feel that I have to be perfect		
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 33. I feel that no one loves me		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 59. I fail to finish things I should do
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 34. I feel that others are out to get me		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 60. There is very little that I enjoy
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 35. I feel worthless or inferior		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 61. My school work or job performance is poor
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 36. I accidentally get hurt a lot		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 62. I am poorly coordinated or clumsy
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 37. I get in many fights		0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 63. I would rather be with older people than with people of my own age

PAGE 3

Please see other side

Figure 2-1 (cont.). Page 3 of the YASR. Superscript *a* indicates items that have counterparts on the YABCL, while superscript *b* indicates socially desirable items.



## YASR AND YABCL

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Please print your answers

0 = Not True	1 = Somewhat or Sometimes True	2 = Very True or Often True
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 64. I would rather be with younger people than with people of my own age	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 90. I drink too much alcohol or get drunk	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 65. I refuse to talk	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 91. I think about killing myself	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 66. I repeat certain acts over and over (describe): _____	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 92. I do things that may cause me trouble with the law (describe): _____	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 67. I have trouble making or keeping friends	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 93. I talk too much	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 68. I scream or yell a lot	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 94. I tease others a lot	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 69. I am secretive or keep things to myself	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 95. I have a hot temper	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 70. I see things that other people think aren't there (describe): _____	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 96. I think about sex too much	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 71. I am self-conscious or easily embarrassed	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 97. I threaten to hurt people	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 72. I set fires	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 98. <sup>b</sup> I like to help others	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 73. <sup>b</sup> I meet my responsibilities to my family	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 99. <sup>b</sup> I enjoy a good joke	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 74. I show off or clown	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 100. I have trouble sleeping (describe): _____	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 75. I am shy or timid	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 101. <sup>b</sup> I have a good imagination	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 76. My behavior is irresponsible	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 102. I don't have much energy	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 77. I sleep more than most other people during day and/or night (describe): _____	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 103. I am unhappy, sad, or depressed	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 78. I have trouble making decisions	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 104. I am louder than others	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 79. I have a speech problem (describe): _____	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 105. <sup>b</sup> I like to make others laugh	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 80. <sup>b</sup> I stand up for my rights	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 106. <sup>b</sup> I try to be fair to others	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 81. I worry about my job or school work (describe): _____	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 107. I feel that I can't succeed	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 82. I steal	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 108. <sup>b</sup> I like to take life easy	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 83. I store up too many things I don't need (describe): _____	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 109. <sup>b</sup> I like to try new things	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 84. I do things other people think are strange (describe): _____	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 110. I wish I were of the opposite sex	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 85. I have thoughts that other people would think are strange (describe): _____	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 111. I keep from getting involved with others	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 86. I am stubborn, sullen, or irritable	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 112. I worry a lot	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 87. My moods or feelings change suddenly	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 113. I am too concerned about how I look	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 88. <sup>b</sup> I enjoy being with other people	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 114. I fail to pay my debts or meet other financial responsibilities	
0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 89. I am suspicious	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 115. I have nightmares	
	0 1 2 <sup>a</sup> 116. I worry about my relations with the opposite sex	
	117. In the past 6 months, about how many times per day did you use tobacco (including smokeless tobacco)? _____ times per day.	
	118. In the past 6 months, on how many days were you drunk? _____ days.	
	119. In the past 6 months, on how many days did you use drugs for nonmedical purposes (including marijuana, glue, cocaine, and any other drugs)? _____ days.	

X. Please write down anything else that describes your feelings, behavior, or interests:

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PLEASE BE SURE YOU HAVE ANSWERED ALL ITEMS

Figure 2-1 (cont.). Page 4 of the YASR. Superscript *a* indicates items that have counterparts on the YABCL, while superscript *b* indicates socially desirable items.