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The Portrayal of Stepfamilies in Young Adult Literature

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Abstract

This study used content analysis of a selected sample of 25 contemporary young adult fiction books published between 1990-2000, to determine if stepfamilies are portrayed accurately. Contemporary American families are less likely to endure as a traditional biological household. Novels read by young adults may not reflect these new realities. Findings indicate that in a majority of the titles stepparents are portrayed positively and they gave their stepchild time and flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation. Findings also revealed that the biological relationship was not more important than the marital relationship. There was insufficient data to prove that the relationship with the stepchild is more positive with the parent/stepparent with whom they live.

The Portrayal of Stepfamilies

In Young Adult Literature

This Graduate Research Paper

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Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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by

Cynthia Buck Tuttle

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Abstract

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“Be a stepmother kindly as she will, There’s in her love some hint of winter’s chill.” --*D’Arcy Wentworth Thompson, 1829-1892* (Benham, 1965, p. 396a).

Background

The dynamics of the traditional family have changed drastically throughout the years. Herbert (1999, p. 59) states that “the government estimates that stepfamilies will outnumber traditional nuclear families by the year 2007.” Because of these changes in family structure, fewer students come through school systems with their biological mother and father living with them at home. This study focuses on the treatment of stepfamilies in young adult books.

The traditional family of one mother, one father, and brothers and sisters is not extinct, but it has declined in numbers. Since the American family unit has shifted, one might expect children to have to confront many issues that are immediate and important in their lives. Besides school, home life touches them the most. Lifestyle change is inevitable when a new stepfamily is formed (Herbert, 1999, p. 61) and “having the arrival of a new adult - often with a child or two from a previous marriage - can turn a child’s world upside down, prompting fears, conflicts and doubts about the child’s role and status in the family” (Gerhart, 2000, p. 1). Many other factors can cause upheaval in a young person’s life: a parent dying, parents divorcing, the family moving, or a parent remarrying. Appendix A shows the complexities of these new family structures in which a child may live.

“When stepfamilies are formed, the enormous tasks of reorganizing households, adjusting to one another, and renegotiating family roles must be undertaken” (Fitzpatrick,

& Vangelisti, 1995, p.290). This is a major task for an adult, let alone for a child. Because 8.8 million children under the age of 18 live in stepfamilies (p. 290), millions of children have to deal with change in their living situations.

Reading about others who have similar problems helps a child realize that s/he is not the only one who has this dilemma. If children can identify with situations comparable to their own, the results may help them develop some insight as well as coping strategies (Teeter, 1991). There are three factors that could be considered when analyzing children's books about stepfamilies. These include the typical stereotypes of stepfamilies, the realistic characteristics of stepfamilies, and the problems inherent in stepparent/stepchild relationships.

Stereotypes of Stepfamilies

There have been negative myths and stereotypes associated with stepparent-stepchildren families (Bass, 1999, p. 1256) that have been around for many years. These negative connotations about stepfamilies are so substantial that they can be found in stories, books, plays, and movies, especially the fairy tale Cinderella (p. 1256) and a movie closely associated with it called Ever After (Soria & Trench, 1998.) Most of this literature is filled with wicked stepmothers; it seems that authors have forgotten evil stepfathers. "According to Martin Daly and Margo Wilson, authors of The Truth About Cinderella, stepfathers don't come off all that well either; they're often lustful as well as cruel" (Herbert, 1999, p. 62). We also see passive fathers who let their new wives dominate their children as in the stories Hansel and Gretel (Grimm, 1979), The Juniper Tree (Grimm, 1973, p.314-332), and Snow White (Grimm, 1974).

When Meg Schlefer wants to get the attention of her stepchildren, she uses humor to get her stepdaughters to do their chores by saying, "Your wart-covered, foul-smelling,

evil stepmother asks you, 'Please clean your room'" (Herbert, 1999, p. 64).

Unfortunately, Cinderella and other tales like it, leave uncomplimentary images and perceptions about stepmothers.

There have been very few investigations of the perceptions of stepfamilies as groups, but the limited findings have indicated that stepfamilies are viewed less positively than most other family forms (Levin & Sussman, 1997, p. 95). Lukens (1999) states that stereotypes --like politicians, mothers, athletes, or poets--are inaccurate or unjust once we compare them to individuals we know well (p. 86, 87). There are also realistic characteristics of stepfamilies that are important for all of us to remember before we stereotype all stepfamilies.

Realistic Characteristics of Stepfamilies

One of the many realistic characteristics of a secure stepfamily is that the couple have a strong and unified marital relationship (Visher & Visher, 1990, p. 8). The couple must put their relationship first since the family will not last if the parents' relationship does not (Herbert, 1999, p. 67). They must also realize that the children need the sense of security from a stable couple and the certainty that their stepfamily will continue (Visher & Visher, 1990, p. 8).

Another realistic characteristic is the reluctance of children to get too close to the new adult in their lives because that adult might let them down by leaving. The children have lived through the trauma of loss and they do not want to be hurt again (Fitzsimmons, 1993, p. F-1).

An additional issue that affects a successful stepfamily is the realization that it takes time to establish relationships. Researchers Stern, Hetherington and Anderson (Visher & Visher, 1990, p. 9) have documented the "importance of stepparents entering

the family system slowly and forming a friendly relationship with stepchildren before gradually taking on a disciplinary role.” “Stepparents have got to be patient,” said Della Kopper a stepparent to 13-year-old Gisela (Fitzsimmons, 1993, p. F-1). Della became involved in activities with Gisela and established their relationship over many years. This was partially due to the fact that Gisela lived quite a distance from her father and stepmother. Being involved in stepchildren’s activities is a vital issue in establishing a healthy stepfamily relationship.

Problems Inherent in Stepparent/Stepchild Relationships

Every relationship can have obstacles and stepfamilies are no exception. They are usually not *The Brady Bunch* (Lavenas, 1998, March 17, p. 1) which was a 1960s television show in which two families merged and everyone related well with a little guidance from the stepmother and stepfather. This is not reality, at least not in the beginning. When Warren’s daughter, Dana, moved in with them it was a difficult adjustment (Rosen, 1998, August, p. 12). Dana knew just how to manipulate the adults so that her father and stepmother Ellen, were bickering more than ever (p.12). Setting up a contract stating his or her needs and expectations made Dana realize that they were serious about making some changes. Once those expectations were established, Warren and Ellen could work on building the intimacy back in their marriage as well as learning how to deal with anger and trust in their lives through counseling (p. 16). In another case, stepfather Bloomfield was “surprised by his own feelings of resentment when his teen-aged stepsons moved in.” (Fitzsimmons, 1993, July 3). Bloomfield continued, “The growing tension in our family eventually started to erode my confidence in our marriage” (p. 5). Bloomfield and his wife spent a weekend away working on family problems as well as taking the following year to rebuild the stepfamily relationships to turn the family

around (p. 5). Bloomfield says stepparenting is a very satisfying role but it is also quite challenging (p. 5). These stepfamily/parental relationships are issues that can be found in young adult literature.

Books for Young Adults

All of these issues concerning the stereotypes of stepfamilies, realistic characteristics of stepfamilies, and problems inherent in stepfamilies are subjects of concern that could be treated in fiction books. Since books are a way “young people can make observations about themselves and the society in which they live” (Weiner & Stein, 1985, p.3) literature offers an avenue for young adults to read about topics that are important to them. This has not always been the case.

Fiction for the youthful reader has expanded slowly. The term adolescent novel was used in the 1940s to “describe the writing which was judged to be appropriate for readers older than children but not yet adults” (Weiner & Stein, 1985, p. 3). By the 1960s language was used to portray characters more accurately, thus making stories more convincing (p.3). Currently “books for young readers describe many phases of contemporary society, including the controversial and problematic aspects of young people’s lives” (p. 4). Reading quality popular fiction is one avenue for adolescents to understand their own experiences, thoughts and feelings (p.134) especially when they choose subjects that are similar to their own situation. They then can read from the point of view of the key character (p. 135) and see how others handle situations similar to their own.

Robert Cormier, when asked whether his books are appropriate for a young adult reading public, usually answers: "I write for the intelligent reader, and this intelligent reader is often fourteen or sixteen years old. A work of fiction, if true to itself, written

honestly, will set off shocks of recognition in the sensitive reader, no matter what age that reader is. And I write for that reader" (<http://www.uiowa.edu/~english/profpage/blandon/tlucht/lit-teachingcormier.html>). "A good book holds the reader because it gives the temporary illusion of reality while he's reading it - because he believes it and gets deep in it during the reading" (Meredith, 1974, p. 99). Young and old will not stay with a book unless there is some plausibility, some trueness to the story. The test of plausibility in fiction is not whether or not it is possible; it is whether it is probable. (Meredith, 1974, p. 112). That will hold the reader to the story.

Problem Statement

Contemporary American families are less likely to endure as a traditional biological household. Novels read by young adults may not reflect these new realities.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine contemporary young adult fiction to determine if these stories portray stepfamilies accurately.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses for this study are as follows:

1. In the majority of books analyzed, stepparents are portrayed in a negative manner.
2. In the majority of books analyzed, stepparents give the child time and flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation.
3. In the majority of books analyzed, the biological relationship with the child is more important than the marital relationship.
4. In the majority of books analyzed, the relationship with the (step)children is more positive with the parent/stepparent with whom they live.

Assumptions

Young adults today can, and do, read fiction books that deal with nearly every situation that happens in real life. Accuracy and realism are important parts of the definition of contemporary realistic fiction so that the reader can feel that the story is believable, that it could happen. It is necessary for young adult fiction to accurately portray stepfamily situations; otherwise the reader will not continue reading it if the storyline does not sound probable. The books used for this study are representative of young adult fiction published during the 1990s. The researcher has the capability to recognize words/descriptions symbolizing the characteristics of stepfamily situations.

Limitations

Only fiction books for young adults published in English between 1990 and 2000 in which stepfamilies play an important role are considered. This decade was chosen because census figures have shown that the number of such families have increased substantially during the last census. The story will not deal with single-parent families, with the issues of cohabiting adults or divorce per se, or the issue of losing a parent because of death.

Definitions

Contemporary realistic fiction - is imaginative writing that accurately reflects life as it could be lived today.

Stepfamily - did not occur in the OED until July of 1995. (Levin, 1997, p. 71) - a family created by two adult partners one or each of whom already has a child from a previous relationship (Levin, 1997, p.267).

Young adult fiction is imaginative literature written for individuals between the ages of twelve to eighteen.

Significance

Determining that these books are representative of real situations and that the character reactions could be those of actual stepfamilies will endorse their placement in elementary or junior high/middle school library media centers for any young adult to read. Other professionals who are responsible for any collection development may be interested in the information within this study.

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

The purpose of this study is to examine contemporary young adult fiction to determine if the stories portray stepfamilies accurately. The researcher reviewed studies concerning stepfamilies. These studies tend to fall in the following categories: characteristics of stepfamilies, marital relationship concerns and problems inherent in stepfamilies.

Characteristics of Stepfamilies

Fine (1986) examined college students to see if they have less positive perceptions of stepparents than they do of biological parents and whether the degree of these stereotypes depends on the current family structure of the raters. The subjects were 175 introductory psychology students at two large Midwestern universities. The students had a variety of backgrounds (traditional, divorced parents, single-parent family) and were tested in groups of ten to thirty in a large classroom. They were told that the purpose of the study was to assess college students' feelings about family positions and friends. Testing included rating eight family positions and two nonfamily positions using a variety of adjectives which would represent positive or negative reactions. The study showed results comparing fathers vs. stepfathers; mothers vs. stepmothers; stepfathers vs. stepmothers; as well as ratings of other family and peer positions. Negative stereotypes existed for both stepfathers and stepmothers, with stepmothers represented by the stronger stereotype. There were lesser stereotypes among students from non intact families than from intact families. The more exposure these students had in their background with stepfamilies the more positive ratings. Students who had little or no contact showed more negative ratings.

Bryan, Coleman, Ganong, and Bryan (1986) compared perceptions of stepparents and stepchildren to perceptions of adults and children in other family structures. They used the First Impressions Questionnaire (Bryan et al., 1986) with 460 female and 236 male college students. The subjects were told they were participating in a study concerning "the accuracy of first impressions." Bryan et al. (1986) concluded that the family structure is a cue by which stereotypes are formed. The categories of stepparent and stepchild, in particular, appeared to lend themselves to more negative stereotyping.

Bronstein, Stoll, Clauson, Abrams, & Briones (1994) hypothesized that the supportive involvement of a father figure in parenting, whether it was a resident or nonresident biological father or a resident stepfather, would have beneficial effects on children's development. This study included 136 parenting females, 94 parenting males, and 136 children between the ages of 9 and 12 (77 girls and 59 boys). They were almost entirely Caucasian. Families were from a wide socioeconomic range though the median family income was \$39,500. Several standard psychological tests were given to these volunteer stepfamilies. Results showed that noncustodial fathers, in comparison with resident biological fathers and stepfathers, showed the lowest level of *involvement* in children's lives. However, their *parental behavior*, as reported by their children, was no different from that reported by the children of resident biological fathers. Stepfathers were less involved in children's lives than were resident biological fathers and stepfather *parental behavior* was viewed as being less positive than that of resident biological fathers. As anticipated, fathers' level of *involvement* and more supportive *parental behavior* were positively associated with children's *self-concept* and *GPA*. The correlations revealed that the fathers' higher level of *contact/involvement* was particularly associated with their sons' higher academic performance, and with their daughters' (but

not sons) popularity with their peers. The findings of the study provided evidence to support Bronstein's et al. (1994) hypotheses.

Orchard & Solberg (1999) explored the self-perceived role of the stepmother and the expectations that stepmothers have of themselves. Participants were stepmothers who were members of the Stepfamily Association of America (SAA). There were 265 typically white, middle class women who replied to the questionnaire which included both rating scales and open-ended questions. The study found that role ambiguity was evident for stepmothers. They perceived their role as difficult, stressful, and undervalued. Stepmothers' expectations appeared to be more realistic, wanting to be a part of decision-making, tasks, and responsibilities. They did not expect to replace the biological mother.. The more time stepmothers spent with their stepchildren, the more likely the expectations were to be higher regarding stepmothers' physical and emotional involvement. Having realistic expectations led to reduced stress and a healthier environment within the stepfamily household.

Marital Relationships

Crosbie-Burnett (1984) compared the relative importance of the marital relationship versus the step relationship in predicting family happiness. Crosbie-Burnett used a paper and pencil questionnaire with 87 upper-middle class Caucasian mother-stepfather households and one or two adolescent children. She found that the step relationships were more highly associated with the family happiness than the marital relationship. One criticism of the study is that findings were based on the lives of traditional white, middle-class, nuclear families.

Ambert (1986) examined the diversity and complexity of the structure of the stepparenting experience. Two key areas in the experience of stepparenting were

examined: stepparents' reported marital life and their perceived relationship with their stepchildren. Three basic situations were examined in terms of where the stepchildren were living: a) live with stepparent; b) live with the other parent; and c) live on their own. Ambert also examined stepsiblings' relationships as perceived by stepparents. The study was conducted by interviews and questionnaires to 109 stepparents who formed the basis of this report. The questions also allowed the researcher to explore the stepparents' feeling for their stepchildren. It was concluded that the stepparenting experience is more positive with live-in children. Twenty percent to 60 percent of both stepmothers and stepfathers indicated that their marriage would be happier and more harmonious without stepchildren but stepchildren got along better when they lived together most of the time than when one set merely visited the house of the other.

Guisinger, Cowen, & Schulberg (1989) examined 62 remarried fathers and their new wives concerning their feelings of marital satisfaction. The participants were mainly white, middle-class, and well-educated. The researcher used an assortment of standard tests to measure the couples' self-esteem, mutual role arrangements, and the relationships with the husbands' children and former wife. Marital satisfaction was demonstrated when the couple had a good initial marital relationship, when the husband volunteered more equitably to child care, when the couple shared tasks and decisions, when the stepmother developed a good relationship with her stepchildren, and when the couple was not too indifferent about the former wife.

Whitsett & Land (1992) examined 73 stepparents to gain insight on the relationship between role strain and marital satisfaction of remarried parents. The sample of stepparents consisted of a majority of white, middle-to-upper income respondents. The questionnaires were an assortment of standard tests. Whitsett & Land discovered

that role strain varies inversely with marital satisfaction and that stress levels will be affected if the strain itself is diminished. Stepparents reported a lack of clarity regarding expectations of them by their spouses in their role as a stepparent. The conflicting relationship between role strain and marital satisfaction confirms that long held clinical theory that remarried couples are a population at risk for conflict and its initial effects.

Gold, Bubenzer, & West (1993) investigated the effects of family configuration, residence of children and birth of a mutual child on blended family marital intimacy. There were 88 volunteer couples recruited from the Stepfamily Association of America. The majority of the participants were Caucasian and Protestants. Gold et al. used an assortment of standard typical psychological tests to use in his research. The results showed contrasting responses to the presence of children. It showed that spouses in blended families with residential children report greater marital intimacy than do spouses in blended families with nonresidential children. For the biological parent, the presence of children seems linked to greater marital intimacy. However, for the stepparent the presence of children seems linked to less marital intimacy. Conversely, stepparents in blended families with nonresidential children reported greater marital intimacy, while biological parents in those families reported less marital intimacy. Spouses in complex blended families with residential children reported greater marital intimacy than did spouses in complex blended families with nonresidential children.

Problems Inherent in Stepfamilies

Clingempeel, Brand, and Ievoli's (1984) research described the characteristics of stepparent-stepchild relationships in stepmother and stepfather families. The data were collected during 3 1/2 hour home visits. There were 16 stepmother and 17 stepfather families, at least half having a male and half a female child, between the ages of 9-12. The

data showed that stepparent-stepdaughter relationships in both stepmother and stepfather families were more problematic than stepparent-stepson relationship. It is consistent with other research that girls have more difficulty relating to stepfathers than boys. It is a surprising result that stepmother-stepdaughter relationship is more problematic.

Brown, Gree, & Druckman (1990) assessed the processes in stepfamilies in which a child is a symptomatic, identified patient. They hypothesized that nonproblem stepfamilies would show greater stepfamily role clarity, better stepfamily conflict management, better stepfamily couple conflict management, less unresolved emotional divorce, and a better relationship between divorced parents. Over 90% of the subjects were Caucasian, and all were middle-class. Brown et al. used an assortment of standard tests in this study with two groups of stepfamilies: one in therapy for a child-focused problem and the other not in therapy nor having child-focused problems. The results for both groups showed that they did not differ on the amount of authority-related or nurturing and befriending behavior initiated by the stepparent; they differed on the reaction of the stepchildren to that behavior. This means that the parental role behavior initiated by the stepparent is less important to the stepfamily functioning than is the receptivity of the stepchild to that behavior. In the problem group, only the stepchildren perceived the biological parents as being less supportive of the stepparents. In the nonproblem group, as predicted, they were more satisfied with the stepparent's role highlighting the importance of role clarity as a factor in positive stepfamily functioning. There was no difference between the groups in the ability of the couples to communicate and resolve conflict, meaning that the couple relationship tends to be strong and functional, even in dysfunctional stepfamilies. Almost half of the biological parents

proved to be legally committed to dealing cooperatively with the other biological parent.

MacDonald and DeMaris (1995) examined the hypothesis that marital conflict is more frequent in stepfamilies than in biological families with a questionnaire to 2,655 black and white married couples with children. They also measured the impact of remarriage and stepchildren on frequency of marital conflict. The researchers concluded that remarriage and stepchildren are not necessarily associated with more frequent marital conflicts, and in some cases are associated with less frequent conflict. The impact of stepchildren varies depending on the length of marriage.

Henry & Lovelace (1995) examined the relationship between family resources and adolescent adaptation within the context of the remarried family household. The subjects were a sample of 95 students ages 14-18. The sample consisted of 39 boys and 56 girls who were mostly Caucasian. Data were collected using self-report questionnaires administered through the high school English classes. This study consisted of an assortment of standard tests concerning the following topics: adolescent family life satisfaction; family resources; effectiveness in parent-adolescent communication and effectiveness in stepparent-adolescent communication; household time and routines; and the observance of celebrations in remarried family households. The results showed that flexibility was the overall remarried family household resource that showed the strongest relationship with adolescent family life satisfaction. Flexibility allows households to adapt to the changing needs of households and individual family members. Flexibility also assists households in responding effectively to specific situational demands, rather than adhering to existing interaction patterns. Because remarried family households encounter the challenges of establishing new patterns of interaction related to the management of time, money, energy, and space, flexibility can be an important family resource. Thus,

adolescents in remarried families may be in a position that requires negotiating expectations, responsibilities, and freedoms with multiple households. Another result showed that adolescents had greater satisfaction with the remarried family structure if they perceive to have a regularity in family time and routines within the remarried household. This daily routine of family life allows families to have a sense of continuity while decreasing the number of decisions regarding routine matters. The results supported the theory that adolescents who perceive effective communication with their parents are more satisfied with overall remarried family households. Effective communication characterizes relationships that tend to reflect a confidence in the ability to actively address or reframe problems rather than passively wait for problems to be resolved over time. Finally, there was not a significant relationship between household celebrations and aspects of adolescent family life satisfaction within remarried family households. Although developing shared patterns of celebrations in a remarried household would appear to be significant, it may be more related to satisfaction with the extended remarried family system than the specific household of residence.

Summary

Stepparents have been victims of the label of wicked stepmothers and cruel stepfathers for centuries. There are stepparents who are not involved in their stepchildren's activities or are trying to replace their "real" parent. Orchard & Solberg (1999) showed that those stepparents who are involved in their stepchildren's activities and who try not to replace the biological parent have a better chance of avoiding the negative role and gaining their stepchildren's attention.

Henry & Lovelace (1995) revealed that having a flexible family support system gives the child and the entire family time to adapt to the changing living arrangement.

Having good communication between the parent, stepparent and stepchild throughout the relationship as well as to give everyone time to mourn the loss of what they had before, shows that the family unit is strong even though different. Crosbie-Burnett (1984) also showed that the relationship with the stepchildren can be more important than the marital relationship. Finally, Ambert (1986) revealed that the relationship is more positive with live-in children than with visiting children.

Using factors identified from previous studies will enable this researcher to collect data to show how stepfamilies are portrayed in stories and compare that data to the research.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the subject of stepfamilies is portrayed accurately in young adult literature.

Research Design

Analyzing the contents of documents is called content analysis (Fraenkel, p. 469). “Content analysis can be used to investigate possible relationships” (p. 472). Because it is a “systematic, quantitative method, content analysis allows a selected group of books’ contents to be objectively described” (Bekkedal, 1973, p. 110). This research used content analysis to determine how the subject of stepfamilies was portrayed in contemporary settings in children’s literature. Analyzing the content of specific titles provided a view of stepfamilies as it is pictured in young adult books.

A review of the literature provided criteria for the creation of a content analysis instrument that was used to analyze each title included in this study. Four hypotheses were tested by the instrument each focusing on the portrayal of stepfathers, stepmothers, and stepchildren in the family makeup of each book.

Criteria for specific title selection included contemporary realistic fiction published in English between 1990 and 2000 in which stepfamilies were the main family structure. The researcher randomly selected twenty-five young adult books for ages twelve to eighteen.

The content analysis instrument was derived from previous research and is Appendix B. Each of these areas were coded by the researcher in order to maintain uniformity throughout the research.

The researcher tested the instrument on a title which had an older copyright and

made necessary revisions before beginning this research.

Procedures

Identification of titles were found by using the bibliographies in Appendix C as well as eliciting possibilities from colleagues. The researcher also used the catalogs in appropriate libraries to find suggested titles looking under the keywords or subjects of **stepparents, stepfamilies, stepchildren, stepmothers, or stepfathers**. The researcher found books from John F. Lawson Elementary Library in Johnston, Iowa, Rod Library at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, Johnston, Urbandale, Grimes and Waukee Public Libraries, and via interlibrary loan through Heartland Area Education Agency XI or any of the aforementioned libraries. The books had a copyright date of 1990 or newer.

Only fiction books for young adults published in English between 1990 and 2000 in which stepfamilies played an important role were considered. They did not deal with single-parent families, cohabiting adults or divorce per se, or the issue of losing a parent because of death. The stepchild was the significant character in the story, and episodes of family life and relationships were present so we could determine if these stories portrayed a child's life in a stepfamily accurately. The researcher chose the titles by randomly selecting them for this study. The list of books selected is Appendix D.

Book titles were read and recorded upon the content analysis instrument which was derived from research described in the literature review. Each title was examined and recorded on a separate instrument by noting the answers to the questions mentioned above. Supplemental notes were added to show the researcher's recording decisions. The content analysis checklist is Appendix B. Completed checklists are Appendix E.

Description of data set analysis

The description of the data the researcher collected was analyzed with tallies and percentages of findings displayed in tabular and narrative forms.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to examine contemporary young adult fiction to determine if the stories portray stepfamilies accurately. The researcher reviewed studies concerning stepfamilies which emphasized three areas that structured the study: characteristics of stepfamilies, marital relationship concerns and problems inherent in stepfamilies.

Appendix A shows various categories in the structure of the stepfamily that the researcher predicted finding. Table One shows the actual findings in the books that were analyzed.

Table One: Categories of Stepfamily Structure

Status of Child	Frequency	Percentage
A	10	40%
B	3	12%
C	2	8%
D	2	8%
F	2	8%
Other	6	24%

There were six titles that the researcher designated as “Other”. This means that the book had other stipulations, such as a single mother and a stepfather, the biological mother and father were dead, the child lived with only a stepfather, or the biological father was mentioned once and we never heard of him again. Even though the information in Appendix A looked complete, the reality of children’s lives is even more complex than the researcher had predicted.

Hypothesis one stated that in the majority of books analyzed, stepparents would be portrayed in a negative manner. Not all the parents or stepparents were always visible; some were dead, some had left and had never kept in touch. Table Two shows the results as to the portrayal of the stepparents in the books.

Table Two: Positive and Negative Stepparents

	Positive	Percentage	Negative	Percentage	Shifts	Percentage
Stepmothers	5	20 %	2	8%	2	8 %
Stepfathers	9	36 %	6	24%	1	4 %
Totals	14	56%	8	32%	3	12%

In the book called Cinderella 2000, the stepmother favors her biological daughters over her stepdaughter Ashley. Her stepmother takes her daughters to Disney World without Ashley. She also has mood swings so that Ashley does not know what kind of mood her stepmother is going to be in. Cynthia Voigt's book called When She Hollers portrays the stepfather as very abusive since he has been raping his stepdaughter since she was a young girl. The theme of rape was also in the book Forged by Fire when the stepfather was raping his young stepdaughter. In the book called Her Blue Straw Hat, Rachel loves her stepfather, Ben. Ben gives her a blue hat and she loves him for it. He seems to understand her, sometimes better than her mother. Rowena, in the book Sticky Beak, was very happy when her dad marries her teacher Ms. Dunning. The wedding day was the happiest day of Rowena's life. The two stories which were classified under the "shifted" category had the stepparent change from negative behavior to positive. Dawn, in the book called Dawn, thinks her stepmother Carol is immature. They get on each other's nerves. However, after the baby is born, Dawn likes helping with it, and the

relationship improves between Dawn and Carol. Despite the negative examples, less than a majority of stepparents were portrayed in a negative manner. Hypothesis one is rejected.

Hypothesis two stated that in a majority of books analyzed, stepparents would give their stepchildren time and flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation. Table Three shows the results of the analysis.

Table Three: Stepparents Gave Time and Flexibility

Reasons	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage	No Evidence	Percentage	Shifts	Percentage
Time	12	48%	4	16%	5	20%	4	16%
Flexibility	15	60%	3	12%	6	24%	1	4%

Neil, the stepparent in the book called Until Angels Close my Eyes, wants a good relationship with Leah, his stepchild, and knows he can not replace her father. He has to find his own place with her. Neil also shows some flexibility as they leave Leah alone when they went on their honeymoon showing their trust in her. They socialize but they do not put demands on Leah to do things with them. Tessa, the stepchild in Blind Beauty, felt unwanted and unloved the minute her mother married Maurice. She wants affection, respect, and kindness but never receives it from her stepfather. Maurice is demanding from the beginning to the end of this story, thus demonstrating that he did not give Tessa time or flexibility to adapt to the new family situation. An example of stepparents shifting from negative behavior to positive behavior is in the book The Junkyard Dog. Jim Grady said that he was not used to little kids. By the end of the story, Jim had formed a strong bond with Katie, his stepdaughter, and his opinion of her and her opinion of him had changed. Another shift of giving stepchildren time was in the book

Spike It! The father had not told his children that he was getting married and the parents needed to give Jamie, his oldest daughter, lots of time to adapt to the situation. By the end of the story, Jamie had adapted. The majority of titles did show that the stepparent gave the child time and flexibility. Hypothesis two is accepted.

Hypothesis three stated that “In the majority of books analyzed, the biological relationship with the child is more important than the marital relationship.” Having a strong marriage is the foundation for the happiness of the stepchild. Table Four shows the results of the analysis.

Table Four: Stepchildren vs. Marriage

	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage	N/A	Percentage
Stepchildren more important than marriage	0	0%	23	92%	2	8%

Many of the characters demonstrate their love for their spouses by hugging and kissing in front of the stepchild. In Susan Pfeffer’s book, Devil’s Den, Joey notices that even after five years of marriage, his stepfather still kisses his mother. In Spike It! Dad tells Jamie his daughter that he loves Tracy, her stepmother, and Tracy’s daughter and that they are just as much my family as her and her sister Donna. In the book For Every Joy that Passes, Dad tells Becki, his daughter, to apologize to her stepmother. Dad also challenges Becki to become part of the “team” so that their family could work. In two of the young adult novels, the stepparent did not remarry. The results of hypothesis three show that the biological relationship with the child is not more important than the marital relationship. Hypothesis three is rejected.

Hypothesis four stated that “in the majority of books analyzed, the relationship with the stepchild is more positive with the parent/stepparent with whom they live.”

Table Five shows the results of the analysis.

Table Five: Where the Stepchild Lives

Stepchild relationship is more positive with stepparent with whom they live	Yes and Percentage		No and Percentage		No Evidence and Percentage		Shifts and Percentage		N/A and Percentage	
		6	24%	3	12%	3	12%	2	8%	11

In the majority of the twenty-five titles, it was not possible to determine this data for almost half of the titles. In six of these titles, the parents had died, in four the father is never mentioned, and in another the father never knew where the mother and daughter moved. In all other cases, the child's relationship with the step/parents with whom they live is more positive. After Joey finds and talks to his real dad in the story Devil's Den, he decides that he doesn't want to think of him as his father. He is glad he has Ben, his stepfather, who wants to adopt him. Becki, in For Every Joy That Passes, realizes that living with her real mom would drive her nuts. Becki likes things neat and her mom is very messy. Because of the complexity of this issue, data proved insufficient to test the hypothesis.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of this content analysis was to examine contemporary young adult fiction to determine if these stories portray stepfamilies accurately. Contemporary American families are less likely to endure as a traditional biological household and novels read by young adults may not reflect these new realities. Based upon research described in Chapter 2, the data gathered by this analysis revealed that two of the hypothesis pertaining to the portrayal of stepfamilies in young adult literature were rejected, one was accepted and one did not result in enough data to test it.

Hypothesis one was rejected. Stepparents were not portrayed in a negative manner. Hypothesis two was accepted since most parents did give their stepchild time and flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation. Hypothesis three was rejected as the biological relationship was not more important than the marital relationship. Hypothesis four which stated that the relationship with the stepchild is more positive with the parent/stepparent with whom s/he lives, had insufficient data to test it.

The methodology used to analyze the contents of documents was called content analysis which is used to investigate possible relationships. This research used content analysis to determine how the subject of stepfamilies was portrayed in contemporary settings in children's literature. Analyzing the content of specific titles provided a view of stepfamilies as pictured in young adult books.

Forty percent of stepfamily structure consisted of the child living with the custodial mother, stepfather, and half-siblings. Twenty-four percent of the books were in the "Other" category, which means that the structure did not fit any of the eight family

structures the researcher described. The biological parents could be dead, parents sent child away, or the biological parent was hardly mentioned. In several books the researcher noticed that the biological parent did not want to talk negatively about the other parent.

There were more negative stepfathers (24%) than stepmothers (8%). Overall, stepfamilies were portrayed as doing a good job of being flexible and giving the child time and space to adapt to the new family situation. The biological parent did not put his/her biological child before the marriage. In 92% of the books parents/stepparents did establish a strong marriage which is the foundation for the happiness of the stepchild. In 24% of the books, the relationship was more positive with the parent/stepparent with whom the child lived. However, in 44% of the books, the child was living with another person, or the other biological parent was not a choice since they did not have any contact with the child.

Conclusions

Considering the criteria parameters included in the content analysis instrument, the research supported the following conclusions. In the majority of young adult fiction books, stepparents were portrayed accurately. Concerns of the child would have been taken care of had the parents/stepparents talked to the child more. The child felt that s/he had not been included in any of the dialogue, before, during or after the marriage. In the book called What Hearts, Asa knows nothing about the divorce until he comes home from his last day of first grade. He never sees his father again. In Chevrolet Saturdays, Joey loves his father and feels that it is not fair that his parents had not asked him what they should do. Daddy just left. In several titles the child did not know what to call the stepparent. Again, in Chevrolet Saturdays, Joey did not know what to call his stepfather. Finally, when Joey asks him what to call him, his stepfather talks about it with him and

by the end of the story Joey has resolved his dilemma. There were several titles in which the parent/stepparent were to have a baby. The child wonders why they needed a baby. They wonder why s/he were not enough for their parent/stepparent. Talking more and including the stepchild would help solve some of these feelings of uncertainty.

As stated in the beginning of Chapter 1, "Be a stepmother kindly as she will, There's in her love some hint of winter's chill." --*D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, 1829-1892* (Benham, 1965, p. 396a), the portrayal of stepmothers has always been wicked. However, this was not how stepmothers were portrayed in the majority of books. Stepmothers were negative only in eight percent of the books, compared to 32% of stepfathers.

Surprisingly, in at least five of the 25 titles (20%), at least one, if not both, biological parents had died. In nine of the titles (36%) the biological father was hardly mentioned. The child thinks and wonders about him, but s/he does not dwell on him. Also, surprisingly, the biological parent usually speaks highly of the missing parent. In Chevrolet Saturdays, Mama tells her son Joey that his dad did not abandon him. Even Joey's stepfather speaks nicely about Joey's father.

In two of the books the biological parent removes his/her own child from their household or lets the stepparent remove him/her. In the book Being With Henry, Laker's biological mother makes him leave the house when he and his stepfather are not getting along. Not sticking up for his/her child also shows up in two books that had the stepfather raping the biological child and the mother not believing her own child. In Cynthia Voigt's book When She Hollers, Tish confronts her stepfather in front of her mother and her half brothers and sister. Her mother never says a word about it and lets the stepfather and Tish argue. This book was the most disturbing of all the researcher had

read because of the disregard of the child's well-being by the biological parent.

In Chapter One the researcher looked at stereotypes of stepfamilies. She does not feel that any of the books portrayed any stepfamilies with any type of stereotype. Each book had a twist to it that gave it a unique touch to the situation. In Sticky Beak the stepchild was mute. In Dawn's Wicked Stepsister, Dawn's brother lives with their father in California while she lives with their mother in Connecticut. The researcher did not find that the stepfamily was viewed less positively than most other family forms.

The majority of the storylines were realistic. The only one that might be doubtful would be Look for Me By Midnight. There was a vampire in it. However, it was well-written and believable. Even the 360-page Blind Beauty kept the researcher's interest. The researcher got involved with each story and even after reading twenty-five books, she would be happy to read more on the same theme.

Hypothesis three stated that the biological relationship with the child would be more important than the marriage relationship. In twenty-two books, the marriage was strong and came before the biological relationship with the child. Surprisingly, in nine books the child spent the majority of their time in the story with their biological father and stepmother. There were several stories which the stepchild said they even felt closer to the stepparent than to the biological parent. The researcher was surprised that so many titles had the father and/or mother die or not be around. Of the twenty-five titles, only two (8%) were about African-American families. That seemed like a low statistic.

In several books the child wonders if the stepparent will stick around. In Chevrolet Saturdays, Joey is relieved to know that his stepfather is not going to leave. In The Junkyard Dog, Katie's feelings toward her stepdad go from disliking to liking several times. She finally realizes that he is a good person and that he is not going anywhere

without the entire family.

The researcher was surprised that the titles written in the 1990s did not have better communication between the biological parent and his/her child. This would be one area where the researcher thought things would be handled differently.

Recommendations

Recommendations for further study include the need for current research in the area of actual stepfamily cases. Finding out the statistics of how many various stepfamily structures might be undertaken. Keeping track of the ages and the gender of the stepchildren and how they adapt to the stepfamily might be studied. Knowing the validity of the authors and where they get their information for their stories might be studied, to see if they are writing from personal experiences or to see how they come up with their situations. Looking at this theme in books for young children might also be researched.

Further research could be done to examine the effect of reading books about stepfamilies on young adults and see if the books helped them. Discovering how young adults react to various stories about stepfamilies would make an interesting study.

It is hoped by the researcher that the results of this study can be applied to selection practices for young adult novels portraying stepfamilies. The result could be an increased sensitivity towards this subject along with an effort to balance a variety of representations that reflect real, true, and positive characterizations of stepfamilies in library collections. In addition, awareness of the results of this study by authors of young adult novels could increase a sensitivity of this subject and increase the number of authentic stepfamilies represented in young adult literature.

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APPENDIX A

Variations in Stepfamily Structure

	Status of Child	Mother	Father	Full Siblings at home	Full Siblings living elsewhere	Step-siblings	Half-Siblings
A	Child living in home	Custodial Mother (father living)	Stepfather	Full siblings living at home	Full siblings living elsewhere	w/o stepsiblings	w/o half-siblings
B	Child living in home	Stepmother	Custodial father (mother living)	Full siblings living at home	Full siblings living elsewhere	w/o stepsiblings	w/o half-siblings
C	Child living in home	Custodial mother (father dead)	Stepfather	Full siblings living at home	Full siblings living elsewhere	w/o stepsiblings	w/o half-siblings
D	Child living in home	Stepmother	Custodial father (mother dead)	Full siblings living at home	Full siblings living elsewhere	w/o stepsiblings	w/o half-siblings
E	Child visiting	Noncustodial Mother	Stepfather	Full siblings living at home	Full siblings living elsewhere	w/o stepsiblings	w/o half-siblings
F	Child visiting	Stepmother	Non-custodial father	Full siblings living at home	Full siblings living elsewhere	w/o stepsiblings	w/o half-siblings
G	Child in shared households	Mother	Stepfather	Full siblings living at home	Full siblings living elsewhere	w/o stepsiblings	w/o half-siblings
H	Child in shared households	Stepmother	Father	Full siblings living at home	Full siblings living elsewhere		w/o half-siblings

APPENDIX B
CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: _____

AUTHOR: _____

PUBLISHER: _____ COPYRIGHT DATE: _____

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: _____

(Name, Age, Gender)

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) **A B C D E F G H Other**
Other information:

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?
 yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence:

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?
 yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence:

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?
 yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence:

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?
 yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence:

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

 yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence:

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APPENDIX E

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: Being with Henry

AUTHOR: Martha Brooks

PUBLISHER: Dorling Kindersley Publishing, Inc.

COPYRIGHT DATE: 2000

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: 16-year-old Laker's parents divorced and his mother remarried twice. The second stepfather kicked him out of their house. His mom is pregnant.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) **A B C D E F G H Other**
 Other information: Throughout most of the book, Laker lives with an older man named Henry.

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 6: Laker calls his stepfather Rick the Prick (to himself). Page 20: Rick and Laker exchange words, Laker sticks up for his mother, Rick puts her down.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 20: His mom kicks Laker out (after Lake has a fight with Rick). Page 47: He can't come home. Page 122: Mom never stood up for me. Page 125: Henry stood up for me.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: See number 2 above - for the same reasons.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 122: Mom stood up for Rick not Laker and makes Laker leave. Page 47: Mom won't let Laker come home. He is on his own - at age 16, almost 17. Laker's mom is pregnant.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 202: Laker finally discovers who his father is but he never meets him nor do we know if he is even alive.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: Blind Beauty

AUTHOR: K.M. Peyton

PUBLISHER: Dutton Children's Books

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1999

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Tessa is 5 when her parents divorce. Her mother Myra married Maurice who had a son named Greevey. Greevey's mother had died. Tessa grows from 12 to 18 throughout the story.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) **A B C D E F G H Other**

Other information: Mother and father are divorced and mother remarried. Stepfather sends her to work and stay at a horse ranch. That is where Tessa lives for the majority of the story.

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 7: Tessa felt instant hate toward Maurice. Page 14 & 15: Tessa was frightened of Maurice. She hated him and thought of ways to kill him. Maurice doesn't treat anyone well.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 58: Tessa felt unwanted and unloved.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 30: Tessa wants affection, respect, kindness, a laugh or two...but she didn't get it now...with Maurice or with her mother. Her mother didn't get it either. Maurice is mean from the beginning to the end of the story.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 29: Maurice doesn't treat Tessa's mom well. Page 15: Her mother had married Maurice for his money but she wasn't happy. Page 98: He was cruel to her mother. Page 111: Maurice put her mother down at parties.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 9: Her dad (Declan) never knew where Tessa lived. He was a drunk. Neither place would have been a positive place for Tessa.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: Blue Heron

AUTHOR: Avi

PUBLISHER: Bradbury Press

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1992

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Maggie Lavchek is almost 13 and is visiting her father and stepmother for the month of August on the Massachusetts shore.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) **A B C D E F G H Other**

Other information: Her father and stepmom Joanna have a 4-month old baby named Linda.

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 2: Maggie got along with Joanna. Page 27: Joanna was almost easier to be with than her father.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 53: Maggie goes to visit the blue heron early every morning. She doesn't think the adults know about it, but they do. Page 2: Maggie has visited them regularly for the past two years and appears adjusted.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 2: Dad and Joanna had been married two years and Maggie had been there to visit at Christmas and in August. She spoke to her dad at least twice a week. During this story, they give her plenty of time to look at the blue heron and have time to herself.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 77: Dad is almost uncomfortable with family time. Page 59: Something was not right between Dad, Joanna and the baby. Maggie found out that her dad was sick and something else was bothering him (He had lost his job, too.). Page 37 & 50: He was focused on trying to find another job to show any favoritism to Joanna or Maggie (Though they never knew until the end of the book that he had lost his job.)

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 19: Maggie called her mom once she got to her dad's house. Seem to get along there and with her dad.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: Chevrolet Saturdays
 AUTHOR: Candy Dawson Boyd
 PUBLISHER: Maxmillan Publishing Company

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1993

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Joey, 11, has trouble in school and in accepting his parents' divorce as well as his mother's remarriage to Mr. Franklin Johnson, his new stepfather.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) **A B C D E F G H Other**

Other information: No siblings.

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 8: He isn't a bad man or even mean. Joey just wants his Dad. Page 8: Mr. Johnson and his mom wave goodbye to Joey as he left for school. Page 27: Mr. Johnson asks Joey to come along with him on his Saturday job. Page 46: Mr. Johnson tells Joey that this is his first family and he wants this to work. He understands that Joey has mixed-up feelings about everything. Page 46: At least Joey knows that Mr. Johnson is here to stay.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 27: Mr. Johnson asks Joey to come with him on his Saturday job but he doesn't pressure him. Page 30: Talking with Mr. Johnson wasn't so hard. Page 43: Mama talks to Joey about building a strong family. She need his support.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 44: Mama talks to Joey and wants him to try harder. Franklin does love him. She wishes that she would give our new family a chance and let him in. They don't push him. Page 152: Mr. Johnson spoke to him like a parent! Page 145: He was surprised at how much his stepfather's respect meant to him.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 20: Mama spends most of her time with Mr. Johnson. Page 29: Mr. Johnson got a truck for his part time business. Page 30: The truck is for our family. It is a new vision for our family.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 25: His father called and backed out of his weekend to have Joey - again.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: Cinderella 2000
 AUTHOR: Marvis Jukes
 PUBLISHER: Delecorte Press

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1999

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Stepdaughter Ashley Torel ,14, lives with her stepmother Phyllis and half-sisters twins Paige and Jessica, almost 12. Overall, they do not treat her well. No detail of what happened to her biological parents.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) **A B C D E F G H Other**
 OTHER: none of the choices; biological father and mother are both dead. Ashley has twin half-daughters

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 50: The stepmother certainly favors her biological daughters over Ashley; Page 10: Stepmother took her daughters to Disney World without Ashley; Page 81: Stepmother has mood swings so Ashley doesn't know what kind of mood she is going to be in.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 37: Ashley's mother died when Ashley was in preschool and he married Phyllis two years later. It does not go into any detail as far as telling if she had time to adapt.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 37: Ashley is now 14 and she has lived with her stepmother since she was about 6. It does not give any detail about how flexible they were to giving Ashley time to adapt to the situation at that time.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 19 & 37: The biological parents are both dead. The stepmother has not remarried nor has any romantic interests.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: The biological parents are both dead.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: Dawn: Diary Two
 AUTHOR: Ann M. Martin
 PUBLISHER: Scholastic

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1998

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Dawn is writing in her journal about her life. Her parents are divorced. Her dad married Carol who is now pregnant. Her mom has remarried.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) A **B** C D E F G H Other

Other information: Brother Jeff who lives with them. Her stepfather has a daughter. She likes them, too.

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: 6/6: Sunny, Dawn's friend, got along better with Carol than Dawn. 6/7: Jeff likes Carol. 6/12: Carol is immature. We get on each other's nerves. 6/20: After the baby is born, she loves helping with her and calls her her sister.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: This is an established family. It appears that the child has adapted. 6/11 Dawn helps with getting the baby's room ready as well as shopping for items since Carol is bedridden for three months. Everyone seems to be getting along well.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: This is an established family and it appears everyone gets along. 6/13: Dawn gets to go to concerts, see friends, visit Sunny's mom in the hospital...lots of freedom to do things on her own and with friends.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: 6/7: Can't talk to dad much unless it's about Carol. 6/12: Dad was lying on bed with his head on her stomach. 6/17: Tears of joy for her dad when the baby is born. Her dad is thrilled.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: 6/19: Dawn likes her baby sister and will miss her when she goes to visit her mother/stepfather. Sunday/Monday(toward end of book): She likes her other life in Stonybrook with her mom and stepfather. She likes them and has a great time with them.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: Dawn's Wicked Stepsister

AUTHOR: Ann M. Martin

PUBLISHER: Scholastic

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1990

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Dawn, 13, and Mary Anne, 13, become stepsisters! Dawn's mom, Sharon, marries Mary Anne's dad, Richard.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) **A B C D E F G H Other**

Other information: Dawn has a brother, Jeff, who lives in California with their father. Mary Anne's mother died when she was very young. She doesn't have any siblings. Mary Anne brings her kitten Tigger to the household.

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 61: Richard fixes breakfast every weekend and picks up after mom. Page 59: Richard and Mary Anne like things neat and orderly. Page 64 & 65: Mary Anne's mom is not neat and orderly and that bothers Richard and Mary Anne a lot! Richard is not portrayed negatively at all. Page 104: He even stuck up for Dawn with they had their fight.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 101 & 102: The parents never came into the picture much until they heard Mary Anne and Dawn arguing. The girls could babysit and seemed to have time to adapt to the new situation.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 24: Mary Anne was crabby and didn't want to leave her old house. She was crabby for several days and Page 27: Dawn thought that Mary Anne and Tigger would drive her mother crazy. Mom didn't say anything to them.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 104: We never hear from the parents much but they did disagree on which girl was right when the girls were fighting. Page 141: New arrangement about meals since Mom and Dawn like health foods and Richard and Mary Anne like traditional foods. Page 140: They all have been making an effort to work things out better and to be more honest with each other. To stop trying to please each other so much.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 7: Brother Jeff lives with father in California. Think that Dawn probably had a good relationship with him, too. They never dwell on it.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: Devil's Den

AUTHOR: Susan Beth Pfeffer

PUBLISHER: Walker and Company

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1998

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Joey is a 7th grader. Always wonders about his real dad. His parents are divorced and Ben is his stepfather.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) A B C D E F G H Other

Other information: Joey has a three half-sisters.

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 11: Ben is great. Joey loves him. Page 39: Joey is glad to be with Ben. Page 113: Joey knew that he loved Ben.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: This is an established family already. Page 44 - 48: They did need to give Joey time to accept the fact that Ben wanted to adopt him.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: This is an established family. Page 64: Ben used to have a babysitter after school, but now that he is in middle school he can be on his own.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 1 & 2: They have been married over five years and he still gives her kisses. Page 110: Ben said that his mom and Joey are more important than meetings.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 70-76: Joey called his real dad and found out that he has been married two more times and that he has three half-sisters. Page 77: Joey didn't want to think of him as his father.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: Dive

AUTHOR: Adele Griffin

PUBLISHER: Hyperion Books

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1999

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Ben, 11, is telling this story as if to his stepbrother Dustin, who is older than he. Ben was 7 when they moved in with Lyle who married his mother. Ben's mom, Gina, left them and Ben wanted to stay with Lyle, who had rules and loved him. Dustin wanted to live with Gina because she let Dustin do whatever he wanted. Dustin's mom died and Ben's dad left, made promises to return but hasn't- though he does get cards with money in them for Christmas and Birthdays. More than what his mother sends him (nothing).

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) **A B C D E F G H Other**

Other information: Lives with stepfather and half brother; mom moved to California. Dad is out of the picture.

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 66: Ben told Lyle he's the coolest. Page 94: No more sharing Lyle. Page 110: Ben tells his mom she will have to go alone. He wants to stay with Lyle.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 62: Lyle figured out Ben. Page 71: Ben's parents were real flexible and Lyle has rules. Ben likes rules.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 62: Lyle figured out how to help Ben gain some patience: putting model airplanes together. And he kept buying more challenging ones for Ben and Ben kept succeeding. Page 21: Lyle has clients (must be a psychiatrist) and has written a book on how to handle various situations in a person's life.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship? yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 1 & 2: Lyle isn't married but does has a girlfriend. Page 69: At the motel they get two rooms: one for Mallory (girlfriend) and one for Lyle and Ben.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 129: Mom wants to bond with Ben but Ben just wants to go back to Lyle.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: For Every Joy That Passes
 AUTHOR: Kristi D. Holl
 PUBLISHER: Royal Fireworks Press

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1997

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: 13-year-old Becki Lang live with her dad and stepmom Sarah. They have been married for 6 months. Sarah runs a day care in their home.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) **A B C D E F G H Other**

Other information: Sarah cannot have children of her own. No other siblings. Sarah was widowed. Dad was divorced.

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 17: Sarah asked if Becki wanted anything from the store. Page 51: Sarah made new bedroom curtains for Maggie. Page 62 & 63: Becki got stung by a bee and Sarah took care of her. Page 65: Almost anyone would like Sarah.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 57 & 58: Sarah and Dad are fighting and Sarah is fed up with Becki's behavior toward her. Dad wants to give her more time to adapt. (Dad and Sarah have been married for six months.)

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 1: There was so much commotion going on with the baby care business that Becki thought no one would notice if she came home or not. Page 71: Sarah never asked Becki for her help but sometimes Becki did help her. Page 40: Becki frequently went to their neighbor Kathryn's house to check on her.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 96: Dad told Becki to apologize to Sarah. Page 97: Dad is challenging Becki that they were a team.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 99: Living with her real mom would drive her nuts. She was messy and Becki liked things neat. At least Sarah was always home.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: Forged by Fire

AUTHOR: Sharon M. Draper

PUBLISHER: Atheneum Books for Young Children

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1997

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Gerald was 3 when the story begins and lives with his Aunt Queen until his 9th birthday when his mother and his stepfather (Jordan Sparks) come and get him. When the story ends he is 17.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) **A B C D E F G H Other**

Other information: Not sure about the father. Stepfather (Jordan) and his mother have a daughter Angel.

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 47: Jordan Sparks was mean and Monique (Mom) was afraid of him, too. Page 56 & 57: Jordan raped Angel. Page 141: Jordan tells them that Angel isn't his daughter.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 61: Gerald wondered when his mother ever got a chance to be happy. Page 55: First time Mama and the kids were happy and Jordan wasn't around. Page 56: Monique tells Gerald that Jordan tries to be a good father to him. Page 69: Monique stuck up for Jordan during the trial (of raping Angel).

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: See answer number 2.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 122: Jordan hit Monique. Page 83: While Jordan was in prison for raping Angel, Monique waited for him and denied that he did anything wrong. Page 87: She drank and stopped caring for the kids. Page 97: Jordan was back and Monique let him return.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 13: They don't know where their daddy is. He isn't mentioned in the story.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: Her Blue Straw Hat

AUTHOR: C.S. Adler

PUBLISHER: Hartcourt Brace & Company

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1997

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Rachel, 12, lives with her stepfather Ben and her mother MJ. On their vacation to the beach they are joined by Ben's daughter, 14, and Ben's exwife's boyfriend's son, Carlos, 13.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) **A B C D E F G H Other**

Other information: Page 21/22: Rachel is an only child of a single mother; there wasn't ever a father in her life.

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 1: Because of the hat, Rachel loved Ben. Page 3: Mother didn't always understand her. Page 5: She liked Ben's genial company. He understood her; he seemed to like her.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 1: Rachel had warily watched Ben become a part of her mother's life. Page 24: Ben is special. The relationship had been easy to get used to.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 53: Rachel barely got used to Ben living with them and now his "real" daughter was spending the summer with them! Page 1: Ben, MJ and Rachel had spent last summer together on the beach and they had given her plenty of time for Rachel to read and be alone with her thoughts.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 21/22: MJ is pregnant. Page 81: MJ needed Ben to take her to the hospital and he immediately left the kids to do that.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 21/22: Rachel is an only child of a single mother; there wasn't ever a father in her life.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: The Junkyard Dog

AUTHOR: Erika Tamar

PUBLISHER: Alfred A. Knopf

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1995

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Katie Lawrence, 11, lives with her mom and stepdad Jim Grady in a small apartment. Her parents are divorced.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) **A B C D E F G H Other**

Other information: no siblings

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?
 yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 4: Katie didn't want to be alone with him. Page 5: She didn't know how to act towards him. Page 9: Jim made a three-panel screen for Katie's posters. Page 14: Jim yelled for them to be quiet. Page 16: How awful to have him around every day. Page 24: Jim stood up for giving the chicken to the dog. Page 38: Katie stuck up for Jim. Page 51: She hated Jim Grady. Page 98: Talking to him was easy.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?
 yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 27: Katie tells Jim that he is walking too fast for her. He says that he is not used to little kids. Page 35: They give Katie the freedom to be with her friends and to go see the dog: Time to be with others and time to be alone.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?
yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 66: Katie wants to build a doghouse and Jim is flexible to help her (working around his two jobs.) Page 30 & 31: Jim tells her to buy dog food with her own money - she does not like to hear that, but she understands why. It all makes her a strong person and it brings Jim and her closer. (Page 84: She is my daughter.)

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 9: Jim and her mother hugged. Page 21: Jim and her mother affectionate.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 16: Her real dad is never around. We never hear from him.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: Look for me by Moonlight

AUTHOR: Mary Downing Hahn

PUBLISHER: Avon Books

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1995

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Cynda, 16, has gone to stay with her Dad and his wife of two years, Susan. They have one child, Todd, now 5. Susan is pregnant. Her mother and her stepdad Steve moved to Italy and Cynda was tired of moving so much since Steve was in the Navy.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) **A B C D E F G H Other**

Other information: One half brother, Todd, 5.

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 178: Susan said they were our children. Page 23: Cynda saw her dad, Susan and Todd holding hands. Page 12 & 13: Cynda could tell Susan and her dad were happy. Page 19: Cynda was feeling like part of the family.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 19: Cynda felt like part of the family shortly after she arrived. Page 179: Cynda received a letter from her mom begging her to come to Italy. She missed her mom but she was just beginning to feel comfortable with Dad. If she left now, she might have another chance to get to know him.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Throughout the book, Cynda willingly played with and read to her half brother. She grew to love him. No one pressured Cynda to adapt to the family at any time through the book, so I feel that they did give her flexibility she needed.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 12: Susan and Dad are happy. Page 23: Dad and Susan were holding hands. Page 35: Dad had his ear against Susan's stomach listening to the baby.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 2: Things hadn't been good in our house since Cynda turned thirteen (she had been living with her mom and stepdad.)

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: More than This

AUTHOR: Laura Peyton Roberts

PUBLISHER: Bantam Books

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1999

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Jesse Jones, a 16-year-old boy, has a crush on Melanie who also has a stepmother. Jesse lives with his dad and stepmother Elsa and stepsister twelve-year-old Brittany in Missouri. Jesse's mom lives in California.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) A **B** C D E F G H Other

Other information: Has a stepsister named Brittany, 12. He also has two brothers who are already grown and in college.

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 37: Dad and Elsa spoke badly about his mother in front of Jesse. Page 68: Stepmom's catty remarks to Jesse.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 88: His parents divorced when Jesse was a ninth grader and his dad immediately married Elsa. Now it is two years later and they still do not get along. Page 90: It appears that Elsa has never been nice to him, until Brittney runs away and then (page 177) she was nice to him.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 171: Jesse has his own car - a BMW - and seemed to be able to come and go as he wanted.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 90: Jesse says that his dad used to be a good father and now all he thinks about is himself and Elsa.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 29: His mother understood him. Page 135 Stepmother talks snidely to Jesse. Page 91: His mother is unhappy without him and Jesse is unhappy without her.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: My Mom Married the Principal

AUTHOR: Margaret Bechard

PUBLISHER: Viking

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1998

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Eighth Grader Jonah Truman's mom has married the principal of his school (Bob Decker).

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) **A B C D E F G H Other**

Other information: Jonah has a sister who is in 4th grade. His dad is remarried and lives in Seattle.

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 154: Bob is trying to fit in. Page 17: He likes to bond outdoors. He has taken the entire family hiking three times and had a family picture of all of them taken there. Page 24: Let's Jonah join the drama club. Page 25: Bob said that the teacher will be happy to have a kid like you in there.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 161: Bob suggested a roller-hockey league but wanted to leave it up to Jonah whether he would join or not.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 30 & 31: Bob and Ellen were doing different things and offered both Jonah and Liz a chance to participate, but they didn't push it on them.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship? yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 17: Mom seems happier. Page 19: Bob and mom hugged and kissed real quick.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 15: They get along with their dad and stepmom, too, but the stepmom is a vegetarian and they had nearly starved to death on their last visit. Page 32: They think it is boring at their dad's house.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: Secret Star

AUTHOR: Nancy Springer

PUBLISHER: Philomel Books

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1997

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Tess Mathis, 14, lives with her stepfather (She calls him Daddy.) They are very poor. Her mother and father are dead. Tess cannot remember anything before the age of ten. Her stepfather is in a wheelchair.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) **A B C D E F G H OTHER**

Other information: Mother and father are dead. No siblings. Lives with her stepfather.

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 7: Daddy was in a wheelchair and yet he still cooked and tried to make do with what they had for food. Tess glanced at him fondly: Daddy had not been a happy telemarketer; he was too nice to people to talk them into buying junk they didn't want or need.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 108: Tess had seen "Daddy" kill her real father, and then her mother shoot "Daddy" before killing herself. She blocked in all out and couldn't remember anything. They seemed to get along well, after she forgot everything.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 12: Daddy gives Tess lots of time to be alone and let's her get and keep a job.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Pages 9, 10, & 109: Her stepfather never remarried.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 9 & 10: Both parents are dead. Page 109: How her parents died.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: Spike It!

AUTHOR: Matt Christopher

PUBLISHER: Little, Brown and Company

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1998

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Jamie (13-year-old girl) is having a difficult time accepting her dad's sudden marriage and the jolt it is to share her dad, her room, her sister, schoolmates and friends, as well as the volleyball court.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) A B C D E F G H Other

Other information: Jamie has a little sister named Donna, 10. Stepmom Tracy has a daughter Michaela, also 13, who moves in with Jamie, Donna, and their dad, Chuck.

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 22: Tracy apologized that it was kind of a shock that it happened so suddenly. Page 73: Tracy said that she was sorry that Jamie felt so strongly against Michaela.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 15: Their dad surprised them (Tracy and Donna) with the news that he is getting married...this Saturday. They did not know that he was that serious about Tracy and he hadn't told them anything. Page 101: Their dad told Tracy that he was sorry and that he wanted to give her more time now to adapt to the situation.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 84: Jamie got her bedroom back so that she could have more time to adapt. (Michaela shared Donna's bedroom.) Page 109: The family left Jamie alone and gave her space to come to grips with her actions.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 103: Dad loves Tracy and Michaela. They're just as much my family as you and Donna.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 7: Jamie's mom died 8 years ago. Page 27: Stepmother Tracy lost her husband to a drunk driver.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: Step by Wicked Step

AUTHOR: Anne Fine

PUBLISHER: Little, Brown and Company

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1996

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: This story tells about 5 schoolmates who end up alone at Old Harwich Hall. They find an old diary and read about a young boy who had a wicked stepfather. Each student then tells their story about their stepfamily situation. I chose the first one to tell about. Claudia, 16, lives with her mother. Her stepmother is Stella..

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) **A B C D E F G H Other**
Other information: no other children

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 44: Claudia hated Stella at first. Page 49, 50 & 51: Dad and Stella were having his friends over and Claudia was there. Claudia noticed that all those friends were being rude to Stella, so Claudia made a point to include Stella, and that helped a lot with their relationship and the friends were nicer to her, too. It was a start.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 42: Stella did try to have a conversation with Claudia but wouldn't pursue it when Claudia didn't answer or wasn't nice. She just let it go.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 47: When Dad and Stella had their party, Claudia ended up at their place that weekend, and Stella said, "The more the merrier." Page 47: Stella was very nice to Claudia and tried to make her feel comfortable without pushing herself on her.

4. 4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 50: The party went on with Claudia there. The marital relationship never seemed to come before the relationship with the child.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 44: Initially, Claudia had a better time with her mom, but after the dinner party, her relationship gets better with Stella (page 51).

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: The Stepsister

AUTHOR: R.L. Stine

PUBLISHER: Pocket Books

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1990

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Nancy, a senior, and sister Emily's, a sophomore, mother marries Hugh Wallner. Hugh has a girl and a boy, Jessie, 16 and Rich, 13. Strange things happen after Hugh's children move in and Jessie's actions make Emily feel threatened.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) A B C D E F G H Other

Other information: Both "other" parents have died. Half-sister and a half-brother move in with Nancy and Emily..

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 4: Nancy and Emily didn't care much for their stepfather. Page 27: Hugh was always putting down Rich.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 19 & 20: Hugh started picking on Rich right away. He also embarrasses him. Rick is Hugh's own son. No validity to show if stepparent gave the girls time to adapt.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 10 & 28: Almost immediately there is conflict between the stepsister (Jessie) and Emily. It was difficult to tell if they had any flexibility to adapt to their new situation.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship? yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 4: Their mom seemed blissfully happy being married to Hugh.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 11: Jesse and Rich's mom shoved them off on their dad and new stepmom; Page 22 & 23: Nancy and Emily's dad died in a boating accident.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: *Sticky Beak*

AUTHOR: Morris Gleitzman

PUBLISHER: Harcourt Brace and Company

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1993

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Rowena Batts is a mute 12-year-old girl who is happy that her dad remarried but can't figure out why she is doing some strange things. Her dad and his new wife, Rowena's former teacher, are going to have a baby in 15 days.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) **A B C D E F G H Other**

Other information: No other children. Dad and stepmother are going to have a baby soon.

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 6: Marrying Ms. Dunning is the best thing he ever did. Ms. Dunning is a top person. Rowena has felt happy all year. (They have been married a year). Page 6: Wedding was the happiest day of Rowena's life.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 6: Rowena knew that after mom died they went through some hard times. She knows her dad deserves Ms. Dunning. Page 23: Rowena seems to be able to walk around town and see friends without any nagging from anyone. Page 71 & 72: Dad always says the way to handle a problem is to tell him about it so she does feel free to tell him how she is feeling about things, once she figures out what is bothering her (the baby).

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 72: Rowena talks to her dad about the new baby (and again on page 116) but they do assure her that they are not replacing her and that the baby may be mute, too (Page 124) but they would love her just as much as they loved Rowena and that there was nothing wrong with Rowena.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship? yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 4: Ms. Dunning (Claire) (actually she calls her that but they are married), is 8 1/2 months pregnant. Page 18: They kiss in the hallway even after being married a year. Page 45: Parents go shopping for the baby's room. They don't get anything for Rowena.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 6: Mom died.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: Timon's Tide

AUTHOR: Charles Butler

PUBLISHER: Margaret K. McElderry Books

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1999

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Daniel is a 16-year old boy who is struggling with the thought that he was the cause of his brother Timon's death 6 years ago. His mother Lisa, Max his stepfather, Ruby, 18, half-sister, and crazy Aunt Jenkins all live in England.. Lisa and Max are to have a new baby soon. The real dad is only mentioned a few times (Valentine). Max's wife had died when Ruby was 13.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) **A B C D E F G H Other**

Siblings: Timon, brother, half-sister Ruby, and will soon to have another sister or brother

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: "Max never did speak strictly to his stepson." (p. 8); Max did speak to Daniel when he did something he didn't approve of (p. 34), but he was not a negative stepparent.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 4: Max knew that Daniel liked to be alone and liked to fish and gave him the time and space he seem to need.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Daniel gets to go fishing (p.4), have a job (p. 47), and walk the four miles to school (p. 11) without interference from the family.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 3: Max and Lisa have parties. Page 4: They are going to have a baby and are very happy. Page 43: Daniel and Ruby accept the fact well.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Daniel's dad is only mentioned a few times, but he never sees him.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: Until Angels Close my Eyes
 AUTHOR: Lurlene McDaniel
 PUBLISHER: Bantam Books

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1998

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: 17-year-old Leah Lewis-Hall is a senior in high school. Her mother is now married to stepfather number 5, Neil Dutton, and she likes him the best of all. Her father has died and she does not have any siblings. Neil's first wife had passed away.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) A B C D E F G H Other
 siblings: none

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?
 yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 2: Neil is the best stepfather she had ever had. Page 13: Leah likes Neil and tells him. Page 18/19: Neil has been good to her and her mother.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?
yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 12: Neil wanted a good relationship with Leah; he knew he could not replace her father, he had to find his own place with her. He was also adjusting to having a new wife and daughter. Page 14: Leah had had bone cancer and Neil hadn't shared with her that he had had cancer because he didn't want to burden her with that information since she had so much to carry while she was sick. He wanted more in common with her than the fact that they both had cancer.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?
yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 7: They left Leah on her own while they were on their honeymoon and trusted her. They let Leah's mother and Neil socialize but do not put demands on Leah to do things with them. Page 40: They took her with them to Chicago and she even had her own room which made her feel very special.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 145: Neil told Leah about her biological father and all the facts that her mother hadn't told her, but Neil also told her mother he had done this and that opened up a closer relationship between Leah and her mother.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 13: Her biological father had passed away.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: What Hearts

AUTHOR: Bruce Brooks

PUBLISHER: HarperCollins Publishers

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1992

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Asa is a cunning, smart boy who is very sensitive to everything around him. The four chapters show us Asa at 7, 9, 11, and 12-years-old and how he handles the pain of divorce... twice, as well as his relationship with his peers, his mother and his stepfather, Dave.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) **A B C D E F G H Other**

Siblings: None

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 17: First impression: Dave gave a mean glance to Asa in the rearview mirror in the car; Page 97: Dave did not trust Asa; Page 120: Dave hit Asa with a baseball.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 176: Dave doesn't seem to push himself or the situation on Asa but Dave does want to love Asa and tells him that he has tried to love him since he married his mother.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 103: Dave has tasks that Asa has to do at home, Page 99: but Dave and Asa's mother attend Asa's school events and lets Asa participate in sports. Page 97: They gave him plenty of time to read and be alone.

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 176: Dave told Asa he felt he should love him since he was marrying his mother. He hates anything that he has to do. Page 94: Dave kind of picked on Asa and finally his mother stuck up for Asa. Page 120: His mother also discovered a bruise on Asa's side where Dave had thrown a baseball at Asa -during one of their practices - on purpose. Dave never practiced with Asa again, but his mom did. Never got the impression that one came before the other.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: The biological father was mentioned only once after the initial divorce. We never saw him at all throughout the story.

CONTENT ANALYSIS FORM

TITLE: When She Hollers

AUTHOR: Cynthia Voigt

PUBLISHER: Scholastic

COPYRIGHT DATE: 1994

DESCRIPTION OF MAIN CHARACTER: Tish, a teenager, not yet 18, is struggling with her stepfather, Tonnie, (now her father, he adopted her when she was one) and his raping her, since she was a young child. Also physical and verbal abuse.

TYPE OF STEPFAMILY (see Table 1, page 2) **A B C D E F G H Other**

Other information: Tish also has three half-siblings: two boys and a girl; her mother is pregnant.

1. Is the stepmother/stepfather portrayed negatively?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 4: She hated him. Chapter One: Tish confronts Tonnie with a knife and tells him to leave her alone - and he denies he's doing anything.

2. Does the stepparent give the stepchild time to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 19: He teased her when she was little. Page 30: He was the only father she knew. Her biological father left when she was a baby and they she never hears from him.

3. Does the family give the stepchild flexibility to adapt to the stepfamily situation?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 30: Since Tish was just a small baby she never knew her real dad and didn't need time to adapt. (Adapting to being raped: No, she cannot adapt to that.)

4. Is the relationship with the biological child more important than the marital relationship?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 35: Her mom had a happy smile on her face. Page 37: Mom needed someone to take care of her. Page 9: Her mom was pregnant. Page 45: Tish thinks her mom knows but she is in denial since she is so needed. She doesn't believe Tish.

5. Is the relationship with the stepchild more positive with the parent/stepparent whom with they live?

yes no can't tell shifts not applicable

Evidence: Page 13: Her dad is gone. Tish never hears from him.