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**Contemporary American Stepparenting: Integrating  
Cohabiting and Nonresident Stepparents**

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## **Contemporary American Stepparenting: Integrating Cohabiting and Nonresident Stepparents**

Using the National Survey of Families and Households, I incorporate emerging trends in cohabitation and nonresident stepparenting into our traditional definition of a stepparent (i.e., married adult with resident stepchildren) and create a revised view of stepparenting that is more appropriate for describing contemporary stepfamily life. Adopting revised view of stepparenting alters our understanding of both the prevalence and composition of stepparents. Including cohabiting and nonresident stepparents more than doubles the proportion of adults involved in stepparenting. The “traditional” definition of a stepparent is shown to describe less than half of all stepparents today. Results also highlight diversity in stepparents’ parenting obligations and sociodemographic characteristics. The implications of a revised view of stepparenting for stepfamily research are discussed.

**Keywords:** Cohabitation, Nonresident, Sociodemographic characteristics, Stepfamilies, Stepparenting

## **Introduction**

The way in which stepparents are typically defined in stepfamily research is becoming less meaningful as we enter the new millennium. In particular, growth in cohabitation and greater involvement between nonresident parents and children has increased diversity in the kinds of people engaged in stepparenting. Yet, our traditional definition of stepparents, married adults with resident stepchildren, has not incorporated these trends.<sup>1</sup> In order to achieve an accurate portrait of the context in which contemporary stepparenting now occurs, our definition of stepparents must evolve to accommodate these changes in family life. Drawing on the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), this paper has several goals. First, I revise our traditional notion of stepparenting to reflect important trends in cohabitation and nonresident parenting. Second, I estimate the prevalence of stepparenting in the United States based on this revised view. Third, I demonstrate how a revised definition of stepparenting alters our understanding of the composition of stepparents, the parental obligations of stepparents, and the sociodemographic context within which stepparenting occurs. Finally, the implications of a revised view of stepparenting for stepfamily research are discussed.

## **Background**

There are roughly 5 million stepfamily households in the United States, 21 percent of married-couple households with children, up from 16 percent in 1980 (Norton & Miller 1992). Estimates suggest that the proportion of all children who could expect to live in a married stepfamily increased from 14 percent in the early

1970s to as much as one-third in the early 1980s (Glick 1989). Growth in stepfamilies over the last three decades has created a plethora of stepfamily research, but the results of this work are limited for understanding contemporary stepfamily life. Researchers have tended to focus on married resident stepfamilies, neglecting less prominent stepfamily forms (Coleman & Ganong 1990). Although previously rare stepfamily types have become more abundant in recent years, researchers are not adequately addressing growing complexity in stepparenting and stepfamily life. For instance, although studies suggest that resident married stepfamilies are at a socioeconomic and structural disadvantage compared to original two-parent families (Bachrach 1983; Moorman & Hernandez 1989; Thomson 1994), we know relatively little about the demographic characteristics of emerging stepfamily forms.

In particular, Thomson (1994) points out two important trends that are currently challenging the traditional view of the stepfamily, cohabitation and nonresident parenting. The work of Larry Bumpass has highlighted the dramatic impact of cohabitation on American family life (e.g., Bumpass & Raley 1995; Bumpass, Sweet, & Cherlin 1991). Bumpass, Raley, and Sweet (1995) show that if cohabiting couples were considered stepfamilies, they would account for one-quarter of all resident stepfamilies. In addition, this research suggests that half of all married stepfamilies start out as a cohabiting union. These authors argue that excluding cohabitators from the definition of a stepfamily misclassifies a significant proportion of stepfamilies as single-parent families, and understates the duration of married stepfamilies. Moreover, some evidence suggests that cohabiting and

married stepfathers carry out their stepparent roles in a very similar manner (MacDonald & DeMaris 1996; Marsiglio 1992).

A second issue is a consequence of increased parental involvement among nonresident (i.e., noncustodial) parents. Empirical studies suggest that nonresident parents are becoming more active in the lives of their children, as a result of stricter child support enforcement and increases in joint custody, divorce mediation, paternity testing, and various parent education programs (Furstenberg & Harris 1992; Pearson & Thoennes 1998; Seltzer, McLanahan, & Hanson 1998). Because the majority of nonresident parents form unions with new partners, nonresident stepparents are expected to play a greater role in the lives of children as well. Many nonresident stepparents exhibit a high level participation in the care of visiting stepchildren (Ahrons & Wallisch 1987; Ambert 1986; Smith 1990). Moreover, the residential status of stepchildren can be unstable, with children moving back and forth between parents' households (Maccoby & Mnookin 1992).

Nonresident stepparents have conventionally been excluded from estimates of stepfamilies, as national surveys have traditionally limited data collection to family members currently residing in the household. However, Thomson (1994) finds that almost one-quarter of resident stepfamilies are also nonresident stepfamilies, in that at least one partner has children living outside the household. Another exception is Glick (1989) who estimated that, under a wider definition of stepfamilies that includes nonresident stepchildren, *over one-half* of children in the United States would have at least one stepparent by the year 2000.<sup>2</sup>

Researchers have questioned whether the household is the appropriate unit of analysis for understanding stepfamily life, because stepfamily relationships extend across more than one household (Coleman & Ganong 1990).

Additionally, the focus of previous work on the household has tended to minimize complexity in stepparents' parental obligations. Two scholars have previously proposed reconceptualizing the stepfamily to include parents and children living in other households, e.g., Ahron's (1979) "Binuclear Family" and Jacobson's (1987) "Linked Family System." However, only recently has it become possible for researchers to incorporate nonresident stepparent-stepchild relationships using national data.

The present study extends knowledge of stepfamily life by incorporating a fuller definition of a stepparenting. Similar to a few recent studies (e.g., Manning, Stewart, & Smock 2000; Wineberg & McCarthy 1998), I account for stepparents in cohabiting unions as well as nonresident stepparent-stepchild relationships. Critics of a more inclusive definition of stepparents may argue that nonresident and cohabiting stepparents are less committed to parenting stepchildren than traditional stepparents and therefore should not be defined as stepparents. Studies indicating that cohabiting stepparents are less involved in parental activities than married stepparents (Nock 1995; Thomson, McLanahan, & Curtin 1992) and studies showing lower quality relationships between nonresident stepparents and stepchildren compared to those who live together (Ambert 1986; Fine 1995; Pasley 1987) lend support to this view. Nonetheless, I employ a "family systems" approach that considers the family a system of relationships that transcends both



legal ties and residential structures (Scanzoni et al. 1989). Furthermore, as suggested by Bumpass et al. (1995:434), rather than *defining* the character of stepfamilies, union and residential status should be included as important explanatory variables in our research.

### **Data and methods**

Analyses were conducted using data from the first wave of the National Survey of Families and Households (1987-1988), a national probability sample of approximately 13,000 respondents randomly selected from each household (Sweet, Bumpass, & Call 1988). The primary advantage of the NSFH is that it directly asks respondents about stepchildren living in other households. Other national data sources require the indirect identification of nonresident stepchildren because they do not attempt to gather data on children living outside the household (e.g., Current Population Survey). A second advantage is that it contains comparable data with respect to spouses and cohabiting partners. These data allow stepparents and stepchildren previously excluded from stepfamily research to be included, such as children in single-parent families who are the stepchildren of their nonresident parent's current spouse (Jacobson 1987). All analyses are weighted to represent the national population.

This analysis uses cross-sectional data, and thus provides information only about men and women who are currently stepparenting. This perspective does not fully capture the extent to which stepfamily relationships touch the lives of adults and children, because union formation and dissolution patterns are such that individuals make frequent transitions between family structures (Hofferth 1985).

However, by defining stepparents broadly to include nonresident and cohabiting stepparents, the findings presented here provide information about groups of stepparents about which little is known. Thus, although these results are descriptive, they serve as a useful starting point for illustrating the diverse conditions under which stepparenting is occurring in American families.

The analytical sample is drawn from main respondents in married or cohabiting unions who have any children under age 18 (resident or nonresident, biological, adopted, or step). I use stepparents' own reports of resident and nonresident stepchildren and limit my analyses to minor stepchildren. Thus, "stepchildren" refers to the stepchildren of the main respondent, i.e., spouses or partners' children from a previous union either living with the couple or in another household. Stepchildren are classified as "resident" or "nonresident" based on whether they reside in the respondent's household for at least half the time. In addition to stepchildren, stepparents may have resident and/or nonresident biological children from a previous union who are the stepchildren of their partner, as well as children from the current union. Of approximately 7,437 main respondents living with a spouse or partner, 4,194 report biological, adopted, or stepchildren under age 18 living within or outside their household. Since I examine the sociodemographic characteristics of stepparents, cases missing on race, age, and union duration were removed to create a final analytic sample of 4,175 main respondents (respondents missing on education, church attendance, and earnings were coded to the mean).<sup>3</sup>

## Results

My overall objective is to show how including cohabiting and nonresident stepparents changes our understanding of the prevalence and context of stepparenting in the U.S. I first estimate the prevalence of stepparenting, contrasting the “traditional” view of stepparenting with the “revised” view. Table 1 shows the proportion of adults with stepchildren based on the “traditional” view of stepparents, i.e., married stepparents with resident stepchildren. Results indicate that 6% of married adults with minor children have stepchildren, whereas 94% have biological children and no stepchildren.

‘Table 1 about here’

The “revised” view of stepparenting adds two components, cohabiting stepparents and stepparents with nonresident stepchildren. Under this view, about 14% of married and cohabiting adults have stepchildren and 86% have biological children and no stepchildren. Broadening our traditional definition to include nonresident and cohabiting stepparents more than doubles the proportion of adults involved in stepparenting, from 6% to 14%. Thus, continued use of the “traditional” definition in stepfamily research omits substantial numbers of stepparents from consideration.<sup>4</sup>

By definition, the traditional view of stepparenting consists of little diversity in the stepparenting context. All stepparents are married (either in first marriages or remarriages) and all stepparents live with their stepchildren. The bulk of stepfamily research has been conducted with this group of stepparents, and most

of our knowledge of stepparenting is limited to stepparents and stepchildren living within this context.

Table 2 presents the characteristics of stepparents based on a more inclusive view of stepparenting. Clearly the composition of stepparents changes when we apply a revised definition that includes cohabiting and nonresident stepparents. First, similar to Bumpass et al.'s (1995) findings on stepfamily households, results suggest that fully one-quarter of all stepparents are cohabiting with their partners. Only about three-fourths of stepparents are married to their stepchildren's biological parent.

'Table 2 about here'

Second, the composition of stepparents is substantially altered when we include nonresident stepparents, i.e., stepparents who do not live in the same household as their stepchildren. Roughly half (47%) of all stepparents are nonresidential, and a small percentage (6%) of stepparents have both resident and nonresident stepchildren. Only 48% of stepparents under the revised view live with their stepchildren full-time.

Taken together, these results suggest that the traditional definition of a stepparent (married with resident stepchildren) actually represents less than half of all stepparents, or about 41%. The majority of stepparents (59%) are "nontraditional," i.e., cohabiting or nonresidential. Thus, our traditional definition is really not very meaningful for describing stepparents today. In contrast to our common perceptions of stepfamily life, stepparenting is not restricted to marriage and coresidence.

In addition to complexity with respect to cohabitation and residential patterns, complexity with respect to stepparents' other parenting responsibilities has not received much attention. Stepparents are typically assumed to have no other parenting obligations, and the popular media have a tendency to portray stepparents as having little or no experience with children. Moreover, many researchers do not account for the potential impact of stepparents' previous children on family life, especially when those children live in other households (Coleman & Ganong 1990). Table 2 shows that the parenting configurations of resident and nonresident stepparents are actually quite diverse. Only about a third (32%) of stepparents have no biological children. About 28% of stepparents have their own biological children from a previous union, and 29% have biological children with their current partner. A substantial minority of stepparents (11%) have complicated family situations that include a combination of stepchildren, biological children from a previous union, and biological children with the current partner. Moreover, these figures do not account for complexity with respect to the residential patterns of these children, which combined with this information, can produce upwards of 50 possible family structures.<sup>5</sup>

The final section of the analysis is concerned with the implications of an expanded definition of stepparents for our understanding of the sociodemographic context in which stepparenting occurs. Table 3 compares the personal and union characteristics of married and cohabiting adults with minor children, by their stepparent status. Column 1 presents a demographic profile of married stepparents with resident stepchildren ("Traditional"), Column 2 presents the

demographic characteristics of stepparents after including cohabiting and nonresident stepparents (“Revised”), and Column 3 presents the characteristics of adults in unions who have biological children and no stepchildren (“None”). Table 4 and Table 5 present data with respect to differences in stepparents' sociodemographic characteristics (under the “revised” view), by union status and residence.

‘Table 3 about here’

Taken together, the results suggest that adopting a revised view of stepparenting changes the overall sociodemographic profile of stepparents in several important ways (significant differences between “traditional” and “revised” groups are indicated by an asterisk). The characteristics of stepparents under the traditional and revised views differ. First, while stepparents under the traditional definition are comprised of mostly men, stepparents under the revised view consist of roughly half men and half women. This is because almost 80 percent of stepmothers live apart from their stepchildren (results not shown). Second, stepparents as a group are significantly younger once cohabiting and nonresident stepparents are included. Third, traditional stepparents show significantly higher levels of employment than stepparents in the revised group. As discussed in detail below, these findings are a result of sociodemographic differences between cohabiting and married stepparents and resident and nonresident stepparents. Stepparents in the “traditional” and “revised” groups do not statistically differ with respect to racial composition, level of education, or religiosity.

The characteristics of the union are next contrasted. First, although cohabitators comprise over one-quarter of all stepparents under the revised definition, they constitute only about 7% of all parents in unions (Column 4). Thus, cohabiting parents contribute more stepparents, under the “revised” view, relative to their number than married parents. Second, whereas the traditional definition of stepparents omits unmarried people, under the “revised” view, about 12% of stepparents have never been married. There are no differences in union duration, gap in age between partners, earnings, and the number and ages of children.<sup>6</sup>

The second and third columns of Table 3 provide a contrast of the sociodemographic characteristics of stepparents (under the “revised” view) and biological parents who have no stepchildren. Results suggest that the context of stepparenting is very different from that of biological parenting, as statistically significant differences exist between groups on every variable with the exception of sex. Similar to previous work that compares resident stepfamilies to original two-parent families (Bachrach 1983; Moorman & Hernandez 1989; Thomson 1994), the results presented here portray stepparents in a less favorable socioeconomic position than biological parents. Stepparents are significantly younger than biological parents, a higher proportion of stepparents are nonwhite, and stepparents have less education, despite higher levels of employment. Additionally, a lower proportion of stepparents regularly attend church services. In terms of union characteristics, significantly more stepparents are cohabitators, unmarried, or are in their second or third marriage. Stepparents’ union durations are more than twice as short as biological parents,’ and the gap in age between

partners is, on average, two years larger. Stepparents also have significantly lower combined earnings, yet have significantly more minor children. The children of stepparents tend to be older than those of biological parents, as measured by the age of the couple's youngest child.

These findings mask some important differences in the sociodemographic conditions that exist among stepparents themselves. That is, overall differences between stepparents and biological parents may not be appropriate for diverse populations of stepparents. Table 4 contrasts stepparents who are cohabiting with those who are married. Overall, results suggest that cohabiting stepparents are in an even worse socioeconomic position than married stepparents. Compared to married stepparents, cohabiting stepparents are significantly younger, a higher proportion are nonwhite, and they have less education and lower earnings. Cohabitors also attend church significantly less often than married stepparents. Although they have a similar number of children as married stepparents and children of the same age, almost half of all cohabiting stepparents have never been married (48%). Cohabiting stepparents are in unions of shorter duration compared to married stepparents, and the gap in age between partners is significantly greater. These results are consistent with previous comparisons of cohabiting versus married stepfamily households (Thomson 1994).

'Table 4 about here'

Table 5 shows significant differences in the sociodemographic characteristics of resident and nonresident stepparents. The major difference is that resident stepparents are primarily male and nonresident stepparents are primarily female,



about 80% of each. The following results reflect this fact. For instance, nonresident stepparents are significantly younger than resident stepparents and have lower employment levels, yet are more highly educated. Nonresident stepparents also report significantly longer union durations than resident stepparents. Resident and nonresident stepparents are not significantly different with respect to race, church attendance, union status, number of marriages, age gap between partners, earnings, or the number and ages of either partner's children. In addition, because about one in five resident stepparents are women and nonresident stepparents are men, the characteristics of resident stepparents and stepfathers and nonresident stepparents and stepmothers do not completely overlap (results not shown). As more men receive physical custody of their children (Meyer & Garasky 1993), this issue will become a more important consideration in future work.

'Table 5 about here'

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this paper was to demonstrate how reformulating our traditional definition of a stepparent to include previously excluded groups changes our understanding of the current prevalence and context of stepparenting in the United States. Results show that expanding the traditional definition of stepparents to include cohabiting and nonresident stepparents more than doubles the proportion of adults with children who are involved in stepparenting. Redefining stepparents in this manner also illustrates that stepparents are not a homogeneous group. Half of all stepparents do not live with their stepchildren

and over one-quarter of all stepparents are cohabitators. These results challenge the common perception that stepparenting only exists within the confines of marriage and coresidence. In fact, evidence suggests this definition describes less than half of all stepparents today. Moreover, these results highlight diversity in the parenting configurations of stepparents. The majority of stepparents are shown to be coping with multiple parenting demands.

Reconceptualizing stepparenting to include nonresident and cohabiting stepparents produced changes in the sociodemographic characteristics of stepparents as well. Including nonresident stepparents caused a major shift in stepparents' sex composition, as the majority of nonresident stepparents are women. The focus of previous work on resident stepfamilies has resulted in a rather limited understanding of stepmothers, which may have aided in the perpetuation of myths and misconceptions regarding the stepmother role (Santrock & Sitterle 1987). Under a revised view of stepparenting, it would be difficult to justify the continued neglect of nonresident stepmothers in stepfamily research, as nonresident stepparenting is actually a much more common experience for women.

Second, including cohabitators has implications for the socioeconomic status of stepfamilies. Findings agree with previous work on stepfamily households (Thomson 1994), and indicate that cohabiting stepparents are in a worse economic position than married stepparents. Considering such factors may be important for understanding stepfamily relationships that exist within these disadvantaged settings. For instance, some research suggests that stepparent-stepchild

relationships may be better among families in higher socioeconomic classes (Bowerman & Irish 1962; Duberman 1973; Santrock & Sitterle 1987).

There is also a considerable amount of instability in cohabiting stepfamilies (Bumpass et al. 1995; Graefe & Lichter 1999). Cohabiting stepparents have particularly short union durations, which may impinge upon the developing stepparent-stepchild relationship (although some cohabiting unions “end” by marriage). Cohabiting stepparents’ unions are unlikely to survive long enough for stepparent-stepchild relationships to become stable and reliable (Papernow 1993). Moreover, cohabiting stepparents are less likely than married stepparents to have previous parenting experience with their own children. That, combined with their relatively young age, may have implications for issues such as parenting style and skill at handling the needs of children.

Because the results presented here are based on cross-sectional data, stepparents’ union transitions cannot be observed. However, the likelihood of divorce among married couples with stepchildren is over twice as high as those with no stepchildren, and the majority of children living in a remarried stepfamily will experience their parents’ divorce or separation (Hofferth 1985; White & Booth 1985). The implications of multiple family transitions for the well-being of children and stepparent-stepchild relationships are not yet clear. Additionally, very little is known about the effects of changes in stepparents’ residential status. Recent work suggests that nonresident stepmothers must renegotiate their parenting role when stepchildren move into the household (Bray & Kelly 1998). Longitudinal studies are necessary to fully investigate these processes.

Expanding our traditional view of stepparents increases the prevalence of stepparenting and diversity in the stepparenting context. This is made possible by moving away from the stepfamily household as the unit of analysis and instead focusing on the stepparent as an individual. Although stepfamily research will become more complicated under a revised view of stepparents, future studies must begin to reflect the current realities of stepfamily life. This diversity leads to questions about how the various sociodemographic conditions within which stepparents live may affect important life course decisions, stepparents' commitment to parenting, and stepparent-stepchild relationships. Results presented here indicate that stepparents' parenting circumstances, union status, and residence may play a particularly important role with respect to these issues.

## Notes

1. This is a once-revised definition of an even more traditional view of stepparents. Some studies have limited stepparents to remarriage, excluding stepparents in first marriages whose stepchildren were born pre-maritally (e.g., Cherlin & McCarthy 1985). Rapid growth in nonmarital childbearing in recent decades has lead researchers to routinely include first-married couples in addition to remarried couples in studies of stepfamilies.
2. This estimate includes stepchildren age 18 and older.
3. This sample contains 33 respondents who have adopted their stepchildren. These children are considered the shared children of the couple rather than stepchildren, because after adoption stepparents become legally responsible for their stepchild (Bray & Berger 1993). However, some researchers classify adopted stepchildren as stepchildren (Moorman & Hernandez 1989; Norton & Miller 1992).
4. It is difficult to compare these estimates to previous work because most studies are from the perspective of resident stepfamilies and stepchildren, rather than stepparents. When I shift my analysis to stepchildren and stepfamily households, results are similar to previous work that uses the same data (e.g., Bumpass et al. 1995). However, estimates of stepfamilies based on the NSFH tend to be somewhat lower than estimates from other data national sources (e.g., Moorman & Hernandez 1989; Norton & Miller 1992).
5. In analyses not shown, the parenting configurations of stepparents vary by residence and union status. With respect to residence, a lower proportion of

- nonresident than resident stepparents have no biological children of their own (20% compared to 34%) whereas a higher proportion have had children with their current spouse or partner (39% compared to 31%). About one-quarter of both resident and nonresident stepparents have stepchildren and previous biological children. With respect to union status, whereas only 28% of married stepparents have no biological children of their own, 44% of cohabiting stepparents have no biological children. Cohabiting stepparents are less likely to have had a biological child with their current partner than married stepparents (14% compared to 35%), and are less likely to have complex parenting configurations that include stepchildren in addition to biological children from previous and current unions (6% compared to 13%). These results are similar to previous work on the parenting configurations of cohabiting stepfamilies (Wineberg & McCarthy 1998).
6. With the exception of stepparents' race, testing the demographic profile of "traditional" stepparents (N=318) versus "nontraditional" stepparents, i.e., cohabitators and nonresident stepparents, (N=472) yields similar results. One exception is that significantly more nontraditional stepparents are nonwhite compared to traditional stepparents (30% compared to 21%) at  $p < .05$ . The racial difference between the "traditional" and "revised" groups failed to achieve statistical significance at the .05 level.

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*Table 1. Stepparent Status of Married Adults with Minor Children (Percent)*

	Stepchildren	No Stepchildren	Total
Traditional <sup>a</sup>	6.0	94.0	100.0
(N)	(318)	(3,479)	(3,797)
Revised <sup>b</sup>	13.7	86.3	100.0
(N)	(790)	(3,385)	(4,175) <sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Married stepparents with resident stepchildren. <sup>b</sup>Married or cohabiting stepparents with resident and/or nonresident stepchildren. <sup>c</sup>Sample includes 378 cohabiting respondents.

*Source:* 1987-1988 National Survey of Families and Households. Weighted percentages and unweighted Ns.

*Table 2. Characteristics of Stepparents (“Revised” View)<sup>a</sup>*

	Percent (N=790)
Total	
Traditional <sup>b</sup>	40.8
Nontraditional <sup>c</sup>	59.2
Union status	
Married	74.5
Cohabiting	25.5
Residential status	
Only resident	47.7
Only nonresident	46.8
Resident & nonresident	5.5
Biological children	
None	31.8
Only previous	27.6
Only current	29.4
Combination	11.2

<sup>a</sup>Sample is comprised of married or cohabiting stepparents with resident and/or nonresident stepchildren. <sup>b</sup>Married stepparents with resident stepchildren.

<sup>c</sup>Cohabiting stepparents and stepparents with nonresident stepchildren.

*Source:* 1987-1988 National Survey of Families and Households.

Weighted percentages and unweighted Ns.

*Table 3. Characteristics of Married or Cohabiting Respondents with Minor Children, by Stepparent Status*

	Stepparent Status			Total (N=4,175)
	Traditional <sup>a</sup> (N=318)	Revised <sup>b</sup> (N=790)	None <sup>c</sup> (N=3,385)	
<b>Parent Characteristics</b>				
Sex*				
Female	20.8%	48.1%	51.5%	51.0%
Male	79.2	51.9	48.5	49.0
Age (mean)*	36.3	34.5	36.1	35.9
Race				
Nonwhite	20.8	25.9	19.3	20.2
White	79.2	74.1	80.7	79.8
Education				
Less than high school	16.8	16.8	13.9	14.3
High school	41.4	42.7	39.2	39.7
Some college	25.2	27.3	22.6	23.2
College degree +	16.7	13.3	24.3	22.8
Employment*				
Full-time	80.4	71.8	61.7	63.1
Part-time	3.4	6.7	12.7	11.9
Not employed	16.2	21.5	25.6	25.0
Church Attendance				
Never	27.9	31.0	18.7	20.4
Yearly	26.9	27.0	22.1	22.8
Monthly	19.2	18.4	17.5	17.6
Weekly	26.0	23.6	41.7	39.2
<b>Union Characteristics</b>				
Union Status*				
Cohabiting	----	25.5	3.5	6.6
Married	100.0	74.5	96.5	93.4
Times married*				
0	----	12.4	1.5	3.0
1	42.9	43.7	82.7	77.3
2	41.7	34.0	13.7	16.4
3+	15.4	10.0	2.2	3.2
Duration of union (mean)	5.0	4.8	12.4	11.4
Age gap between partners (mean)	5.5	5.5	3.4	3.7
Couple earnings (mean)	34,581	33,527	39,010	38,257
Total number of children (mean)	2.7	2.7	2.0	2.1
Age of youngest child (mean)	7.5	7.2	6.7	6.7

<sup>a</sup>Married stepparents with resident stepchildren. <sup>b</sup>Married or cohabiting stepparents with resident and/or nonresident stepchildren. <sup>c</sup>No stepchildren.

\*Statistically significant differences exist between "traditional" and "revised,"  $p < .05$  (with the exception of sex, statistically significant differences exist between "revised" and "none,"  $p < .05$ ).

Table 4. Characteristics of Stepparents, by Union Status (N=790)

	Married (N=579)	Cohabiting (N=211)
<b>Parent Characteristics</b>		
Sex		
Female	49.1%	45.4%
Male	50.9	54.6
Age (mean)*	35.2	32.4
Race*		
Nonwhite	22.4	36.3
White	77.6	63.7
Education*		
Less than high school	13.8	25.6
High school	42.6	43.1
Some college	28.7	23.1
College degree +	15.0	8.3
Employment		
Full-time	71.8	71.5
Part-time	6.8	6.4
Not employed	21.3	22.1
Church Attendance*		
Never	28.8	37.5
Yearly	24.5	31.5
Monthly	19.6	14.9
Weekly	26.2	16.2
<b>Union Characteristics</b>		
Times married*		
0	----	48.4
1	45.7	37.9
2	41.3	13.1
3+	13.2	0.6
Duration of union (mean)*	5.5	2.8
Age gap between partners (mean)*	5.3	6.4
Couple earnings (mean)*	35,688	27,227
Total number of children (mean)	2.7	2.7
Age of youngest child (mean)	7.3	6.9

\*Statistically significant differences exist between married and cohabiting stepparents,  $p < .05$ .

Table 5. Characteristics of Stepparents, by Residence (N=790)

	Resident <sup>a</sup> (N=415)	Nonresident (N=375)
<b>Parent Characteristics</b>		
<b>Sex*</b>		
Female	19.6%	80.6%
Male	80.4	19.4
Age (mean)*	35.5	33.3
<b>Race</b>		
Nonwhite	24.3	27.7
White	75.7	72.3
<b>Education*</b>		
Less than high school	20.3	12.9
High school	41.9	43.5
Some college	23.9	31.1
College degree +	14.0	12.5
<b>Employment*</b>		
Full-time	80.9	61.5
Part-time	3.3	10.5
Not employed	15.9	28.0
<b>Church Attendance</b>		
Never	29.5	32.7
Yearly	28.2	25.7
Monthly	18.3	18.5
Weekly	24.1	23.1
<b>Union Characteristics</b>		
<b>Union Status</b>		
Cohabiting	23.3	28.1
Married	76.7	71.9
<b>Times married</b>		
0	11.6	13.3
1	41.4	46.4
2	35.1	32.7
3+	12.0	7.6
Duration of union (mean)*	4.4	5.3
Age gap between partners (mean)	5.7	5.3
Couple earnings (mean)	33,108	34,003
Total number of children (mean)	2.7	2.8
Age of youngest child (mean)	7.3	7.0

<sup>a</sup>A small proportion of resident stepparents also have nonresident stepchildren.

\*Statistically significant differences exist between resident and nonresident stepparents,  $p < .05$ .