

**Educational Outcomes in Stepfather Families:
Boundary Ambiguity, Race, and the
Significance of Marriage**

Megan M. Sweeney
Department of Sociology
California Center for Population Research
University of California, Los Angeles, 264 Haines Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90095
Voice: (310) 206-7290, Fax: (310) 206-9838
Msweeney@soc.ucla.edu

Abstract

Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, the current research investigates the significance of parental marital status for educational outcomes among youth living with a stepfather. I first explore levels of family boundary ambiguity among White and Black adolescents living with a stepfather, as reflected in discrepancies between mothers and their adolescent offspring in reports of family structure. I next assess the robustness of conclusions regarding effects associated with living in a cohabiting versus married stepfather family to the source of family structure reports. Preliminary results point to particularly high levels of disagreement between Black adolescents and their mothers regarding the experience of cohabiting stepfamily structures. Furthermore, among Black adolescents, my results suggest that the source of family structure reports has large implications for conclusions drawn about the association between living in a cohabiting stepfather family and youth educational outcomes.