I feel at home but I am not at home: The experience of home among mothers in blended families

The perspective of non-biological mothers in a relationship with widowers who are raising young children, has received very little research attention. To fill this void, the current study examined the unique experiences of women who were in a relationship with a widower with young children. A secondary analysis of 25 in depth interviews with women living with a widowed spouse and his young children was carried out. One of the key themes that emerged from the interviews focuses on the non-biological mothers’ home experiences. Participants described a constant switch between two worlds that have been combined with the physical home and the emotional one, underscoring the complex relationship between these realms. Their stories reveal that upon entering a home that has experienced a mother loss, the women were both extremely cautious in the home environment with all that was associated with the lost mother figure, while making a huge effort to be present. They shared an internal and external dialogue with the house walls and objects and had ambivalent emotional experiences of loss and joy, acceptance and rejection, empathy and guilt, which created psychological distress and stress in the women’s lives, as well as in their relationships with their partners, and their partners’ children. The findings may help scholars and family therapists to understand such women’s process of attachment to the family’s home and the stress which may evoke within the entire family.

Biography
Talia Aizen-Piechich is a Doctoral student in Social Work at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Israel. She is Lecturer at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. She is a Psychotherapist and licensed Clinical Social Worker working with adolescents, adults and couples.

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