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HEADING A HOUSEHOLD AND PARENTING ALONE

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Polly Ann Fassinger

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of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in Sociology

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TRANSITIONS IN THE LIVES OF SINGLE PARENTS:

HEADING A HOUSEHOLD AND PARENTING ALONE

By

Polly Ann Fassinger

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Sociology

1987

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ABSTRACT

TRANSITIONS IN THE LIVES OF SINGLE PARENTS:

HEADING A HOUSEHOLD AND PARENTING ALONE

By

Polly Ann Fassinger

Parents's lives can change dramatically when they divorce or are widowed and become solely responsible for running a household. They may find themselves doing new tasks around the house, managing a budget alone for the first time, spending less time at work, and/or feeling greater parenting and decision-making pressures. I designed this grounded theory study to explore the nature of single parents' transitions with respect to decision-making, financial management, paid work, housework, and parenting and to uncover patterns within parents' varied responses to their altered lives.

The data for this qualitative study came from transcribed interviews with a convenience sample of thirty-two single mothers and fifteen single fathers. The interviews were semi-structured, eliciting men's and women's reactions to changes in their daily lives since they became single parents. Through the constant comparative method of data analysis, I discovered that adults' feelings about

single parenting often varied according to the type of marriage they once experienced, or their "marital history type." Drawing upon parents' descriptions of their pasts, I identified four marital history types: "segregated," "modified-segregated," "integrated," and "primarily wife-shaped." The division of labor of the married couple is central to the typology. For example, in segregated marriages husbands were the sole wage-earners, financial managers, and dominant decision-makers, while wives were full-time homemakers responsible for the care of the children and the house. In integrated marriages men and women worked full-time and shared equally in decision-making, financial management, and housework. While parenting in integrated marriages was mother-centered, the husbands were highly involved with their children.

Comparing and contrasting the experiences of single parents who had different "marital history types," I discovered that single mothers' responses to being household decision-makers, financial managers, paid workers, and single parents varied reliably by their marital history type. Women's feelings about their daily lives also were influenced by their mothering ideology and by whether or not they had initially wanted to end their marriages. Men's perceptions about being responsible for a household, decision-making, and some parenting matters varied predictably by their marital history types. Other factors, such as the father's degree of job autonomy, also affected men's responses to single parenting.

To Rich

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Good advice and support are essential for any task. I have had an abundance of both and owe thanks to many persons. Barrie Thorne has worked long distance with me for years. I greatly appreciate all the help and encouragement she has offered me. Many thanks also are due to the committee of Harry Schwarzweller, Marilyn Aronoff, Craig Harris, and Margaret Bubolz for their thoughtful and insightful comments.

The single parents with whom I spoke changed my life in many ways. I thank them for helping me with this project. I feel most indebted to them for showing me the richness and complexity of my community. With every unknown face, I now wonder about the personal struggles and joys that have shaped its past.

My colleagues at Concordia College, Larry Falk, Nick Ellig, Martha Ice, and Jo Engelhardt, have been understanding and generous in their assistance. Many thanks especially to Nick and Martha for making my teaching load a bit lighter while I was working on this project.

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CHAPTER I

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Like many children nowadays, I was raised in a single-parent home. My mother and father separated when I was in the sixth grade. As I grew up, I could not help but notice that my family experiences fell outside the norm and contrasted with our culture's ideal. Perhaps as a result of this, I developed an interest in understanding many kinds of family forms. However, as time passed, I realized that my insight into and interest in single-parent families was heavily skewed towards the vantage point of the child. This dissertation project is a reflection of my desire to obtain a more rounded view. During the past few years I have read the research literature, spoken with single parents, and conducted and analyzed interviews in an effort to get a better grasp of the circumstances that shape the lives of adults in single-parent homes.

In the fall of 1982, while working on a term paper for a course on work and the family, I began my more formal exploration into this intensely personal topic. After I completed a literature review, I slowly tried to formulate a series of research questions about how single parents organize their work and family activities. I was quickly stymied and frustrated because it seemed to me that much of the research on single parents was seriously flawed by both

methodological and conceptual problems. In the next chapter I will review existing research on single parents and outline my numerous concerns about our present research-based knowledge.

I developed and redeveloped plans for a research project that would build upon the current literature on single parents. Yet, for months I could dredge up little confidence in or enthusiasm for my ideas because of my discomfort with the quality of most of the past research. That stumbling block was removed when I realized that I did not need to construct a traditional hypothesis-testing study but could develop understanding in a more inductive way. As described in Chapter III, this project was not intended to test hypotheses that have been derived from earlier research. Instead, I followed the model of grounded theory investigations, drawing on loosely structured interviews with thirty-two single mothers and fifteen single fathers.

I set out to discover the similarities and differences between single mothers and single fathers with respect to their work and family activities. In the course of my inquiry, I also sought to probe the nature of, and possible reasons for, variations in the experiences of single parents. While the interviews touched upon numerous facets of single parents' lives, they focused on the parents' perceptions of transformations that had occurred in their work and family activities after they became single parents. Our discussions emphasized: 1) alterations they experienced in their daily activities as heads of households, and 2) changes that transpired with respect to their parenting after they became

divorced, separated or widowed. In Chapter IV through Chapter VIII, I describe the parents' reactions to their daily household, parenting, and paid work responsibilities and explain how behavior and sentiments differ between women and men and vary according to the type of marriages the parents had experienced before they became single parents.

The ninth and final chapter of this report offers an assessment of the typology described in Chapter IV through Chapter VIII and outlines the findings of this research. It concludes with recommendations for future study of the lives of single parents.

CHAPTER II

MACRO-LEVEL AND MICRO-LEVEL RESEARCH ON SINGLE PARENTS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

There have always been single-parent families in the United States. How common this family form was in earlier times is not easy to ascertain, but evidence indicates that about one in ten families were female-headed from 1850-1880 (Seward, 1978), and many of these were undoubtedly single-parent households.

Within the past two decades, the number of single parents in the United States has grown substantially, and parents who raise their children alone have become a relatively common sight. Government sources indicate that these predominantly female-headed families comprised 11.4% of all families (with own children)[1] in 1970 and 21.4% in 1980 (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1971, 1981a). In fact, the number of two-parent families that contained children at home actually decreased slightly (-3.3%) during the 1970s while the number of single-parent families grew dramatically (+181%) moving from 7.3% to 11.6% of all family households (with and without children) (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1971, 1981a).

The swelling ranks of single-parent families have been documented by a growing body of research, and the effects of this family form on its members have been described by countless studies.

Three perspectives have dominated these sociological investigations. The earliest works, originating in the 1950s and 1960s, may be best categorized under the rubric of "single parents as a social problem." Research in this vein attempted to document the deleterious effects of growing up in a single-parent home and called for social programs which would facilitate stability and reconstitution of nuclear family units (Schorr and Moen, 1979). A plethora of such inquiries provided us with clues about how single parenting affected for example, delinquency rates, gender identification, and children's independence (Blechman, 1982). However, most of this research was riddled with methodological problems ranging from reliance on clinical samples to poorly controlled or uncontrolled variables, such as income (Blechman, 1982; Brandwein et al., 1974; Levitin, 1979).

Nonetheless, research based on the pathological perspective has been profuse. Through such studies single-parent homes commonly came to be called "incomplete," "broken," "fatherless," and "deviant" (Brandwein et al., 1974; Colletta, 1979b; Schlesinger, 1979). Households headed by single mothers, in particular, were seen as the source of their own numerous problems rather than as victims of a set of societal programs, institutions, and laws which were formulated under the belief that each family has two adult caretakers and that women predominantly rely on men for life long support (cf. Pierce, 1980).

Early in the last decade, Jane Burgess (1970) was one of the first to recognize the potentially stigmatizing effect of the

pathological perspective for single parents. Burgess thought of single parents not as a social problem, but rather as a sociological problem. She called upon sociologists to explore the everyday lives of single-parent families for evidence of normal functioning, adaptation to difficult circumstances, resourcefulness, and coping mechanisms. Out of such ideas, two other major approaches to the study of single parents evolved.

The second perspective, which permeated much single-parent research in the 1970s, assumed that single-parent families were mainly short term, or transitional, family units. Ross and Sawhill (1975), perhaps the leading advocates of this perspective, recognized that for most persons, single parenthood is a normatively brief (five to six years) experience, in part because about one-half of all divorcees remarry within three years after marital disruption (Cherlin, 1981). More recent studies contain a third perspective which acknowledges single-parent families as transitional and as long-term experiences for many households (see Smith, 1980; Verzaro and Hennon, 1980; for an early recognition of this, see Sprey, 1969) and focus on the stable, daily patterns exhibited by these families as well as their initial transitional experiences.

As a body of literature, studies of single parents in the United States and Canada include both macro-level and micro-level analyses. Macro-level inquiries provide us with demographic and economic portraits of single parents in the 1970s-1980s. Micro-level analyses inform us of single parents' emotional stresses, experiences with social networks, and their social and familial roles and

activities. The following literature review examines dominant themes in both macro-level and micro-level research on single parents. Its goal is to summarize current social scientific information on single parents and assess the strengths and weaknesses of this literature. This review focuses on the characteristics, experiences, and behaviors of single parents rather than on the effects of growing up in a single-parent household. By concentrating on adults' experiences, most of the studies utilizing the pathological perspective have been excluded, since these studies tend to focus on the behavior of children and neglect the single parents' reactions to their daily lives.

Macro-Level Analyses

Demographic Patterns

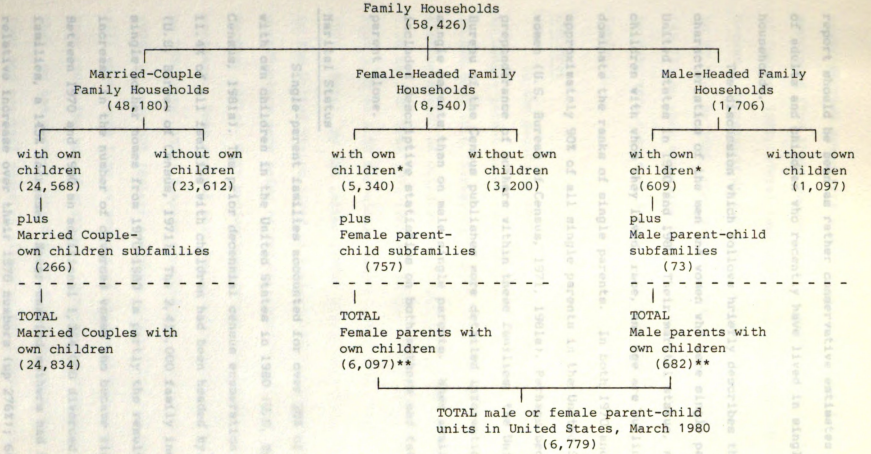
The best source for demographic information on single parents in the United States is the United States Bureau of the Census. In order to make the following discussion and statistics comprehensible, it is important for the reader understand clearly the definitions employed by this bureau and distinguish between single-parent families and other household units. Single-parent families, for present purposes, include all family households headed by women or men who a) have either never married or are widowed, divorced, or married but have an absent spouse and who b) reside with their own children. Of course, the households of single parents may contain other adult members who are not householders[2]. Unfortunately, this definition excludes all parent-child subfamilies[3] (that is, single

parents and children who reside in households that are headed by another adult relative) because the Bureau of the Census does not provide detailed information on the characteristics of adults in subfamilies. Only for 1980, in fact, are published data available on the number of mother-child and father-child subfamilies in the United States (see Figure 1).

"Single-parents" are not synonymous with either "female householders" or "female family householders," according to the Census Bureau. "Female family householders" do not necessarily reside with their own children, but may live with siblings or other relatives. "Householders" do not live with their own children, by census definition, because the coresidence of parents and children constitutes a "family household" and not a "household"[4].

Only those female or male family householders whose own children live with them are considered single parents in this report[5]. Although some researchers have referred to noncustodial parents as single parents (e.g., see Rosenthal and Keshet, 1980), I distinguish between parents who reside with their children most of the time and "visiting parents" who do not.

It is important to remember that census data is cross sectional by nature and thus cannot reveal the longitudinal flows of persons into and out of single-parent families (see Ross and Sawhill, 1975; Slesinger, 1980). Because single-parent families often have a relatively short longevity, static cross-sectional information no doubt underreports the number of families who are ever headed by single parents. Because of this, census figures utilized in this



*Single parents.
**Family householders who reside with their own children and parent-child subfamilies.
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1981a), Tables 1 and 14.

FIGURE 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES IN THE UNITED STATES, BY TYPE, MARCH 1980
(in thousands)

report should be seen as rather conservative estimates of the number of adults and children who recently have lived in single-parent households.

The discussion which follows briefly describes the personal characteristics of the men and women who were single parents in the United States in 1970 and 1980. Their marital status, number of children with whom they lived, race, and age are outlined. Females dominate the ranks of single parents. In both 1970 and 1980, approximately 90% of all single parents in the United States were women (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1971, 1981a). Perhaps because of the preponderance of mothers within these families, the United States Bureau of the Census publishes more detailed information on female single parents than on male single parents. When available, I have included descriptive statistics on both mothers and fathers who parent alone.

Marital Status

Single-parent families accounted for over 20% of all families with own children in the United States in 1980 (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1981a). The prior decennial census enumeration indicated that 11.4% of all families with children had been headed by one parent (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1971). The 2,415,000 family increase in single-mother homes from 1970-1980 is partly the result of a dramatic increase in the number of divorced women who became single parents. Between 1970 and 1980 an additional 1,384,000 divorced mothers headed families, a 145% increase. Never-married mothers had the greatest relative increase over their 1970 numbers (up 276%); 644,000 more

never-married women were single parents in 1980. Women who were separated from their spouses grew in number by 509,000 (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1971, 1981a) (see Table 1). During the 1970s, widows became a decreasing proportion of all female single parents (from 22% to 12.5%). By 1980, most single-parent women were either divorced (43.7%) or were separated from their spouses (23.9%). Male single parents were also most likely to be divorced in 1980 (47.1%) (see Table 2).

Children

In the decade of the 1970s, the number of children being raised in single-parent homes rose by 3,319,000 (from 7,571,000 to 10,890,000) (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1971, 1981a), although the average number of children per single-parent household declined from 2.36 to 1.87 from 1970-1980 for single-mother families and declined from 2.02 to 1.52 for single-father units (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1971, 1981a). By the latter 1970s, almost one child in five (18.9%) in the United States lived in a single-parent home and 15% of all preschoolers were being raised by a single parent (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1981a). Many projections assume that these patterns will continue. Some suggest that for children born in the 1970s, as many as 30% (Bane, 1977; Bumpass and Rindfuss, 1979; Moore and Hofferth, 1979) or even 50% (Schorr and Moen, 1979; Moore and Hofferth, 1979) will spend some time as members of single-parent households before they reach the age of eighteen. Bumpass and Rindfuss (1979) project that, on the average, children of single parents will spend about four and one-half years in single-parent homes before age eighteen.

TABLE 1

MARITAL STATUS OF SINGLE PARENTS* IN THE UNITED STATES, BY GENDER OF THE PARENT, PERCENT CHANGE 1970-1980

Marital Status	Gender of Parent	
	Male	Female
Widowed	-10.6%	2.8%
Single	181.0%	276.4%
Other (spouse absent, divorced, and separated)	124.5%	**
Divorced	**	145.4%
Spouse Absent	**	-43.1%
Separated	**	66.3%

*Single parents are family householders who reside with their own children.

**Not available.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census (1971), Table 13; (1981a), Table 13.

TABLE 2

MARITAL STATUS OF SINGLE PARENTS* IN THE UNITED STATES, BY GENDER OF THE PARENT, 1980
(in thousands)

Marital Status	Gender of Parent	
	Male	Female
Widowed	101 (16.6%)	665 (12.5%)
Single, never married	59 (9.7%)	877 (16.4%)
Divorced	287 (47.1%)	2,336 (43.7%)
Spouse Absent	162 (26.6%)	185 (3.5%)
Separated	**	1,277 (23.9%)
TOTAL	609 (100%)	5,340 (100%)

*Single parents are family householders who reside with their own children.

**Not available.

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1981a).

Race

The likelihood of being a single parent varies dramatically by race in the United States. Blacks are disproportionately represented among female single parents. In 1970, 30.6% of all female single parents were Black; 32.7% were Black in 1980 (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1971, 1981a). Black male and female single-parent households represented one-third of all Black families with children in 1970; by 1980 they constituted almost half (49.7%) of all Black families with children while white single parents represented 15.3% of all white families with own children (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1971, 1981a). In comparison with white single mothers, Black single mothers are younger, more likely to be separated or never married, less likely to be employed, more likely to be unemployed, less educated, and have more children (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1971, 1981a; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1978). Their children are often younger at the time of marital disruption (for those with ever-married mothers) and tend to live in single-parent homes longer than do white children (Bumpass and Rindfuss, 1979).

Age

The greatest increases in female single-parents have been among younger women. The age cohorts of single mothers which expanded the most between 1970 and 1980 were women between thirty and thirty-four years of age (+ 156.5%) and those 25-29 years old (+ 119%) (see Table 3). Divorced or separated women usually become single parents when their children are in preschool or elementary school, inasmuch as the

TABLE 3

AGE OF FEMALE SINGLE PARENTS* IN THE UNITED STATES,
1970 AND 1980
(in thousands)

Age	1970	1980	Percent Change 1970-1980
Under 25 years	372 (12.7%)	657 (12.3%)	+ 76.6%
25-29	436 (14.9%)	955 (17.9%)	+119.0%
30-34	444 (15.2%)	1,139 (21.3%)	+156.5%
35-44	919 (31.4%)	1,671 (31.3%)	+ 81.8%
45-54	637 (21.8%)	766 (14.3%)	+ 20.3%
55-64	108 (3.7%)	133 (2.5%)	+ 23.1%
65-74	9 (0.3%)	17 (0.3%)	+ 88.9%
75+	- --	1 --	--
N =	2,925 (100%)	5,340 (100%)**	+ 82.6%

*Female family householders who reside with their own children.

**Numbers are those given by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Due to rounding, sum is not exact.

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1981a), Table 3; (1971), Table 6.

median years of marriage for divorced women with one child was 5.4 (in 1975) and for those with two children, 9.2 years (Aldous, 1978). About half of all marriages break up when the children are under six years old (Bumpass and Rindfuss, 1979).

Economic Patterns

Single-parent families have a unique and largely disadvantaged position in the United States economy. Their standard of living is lower than that of married-couple families, they are often impoverished, and their labor force participation rates show greater employment and unemployment rates than among married women.

One economic fact which is difficult to refute is the adverse position that women have had in the United States economy in comparison with men. It stands to reason then that the economic resources of families which are headed mostly by women would reflect this disadvantaged economic position. The median income of single mothers stands far below that of husband-wife families. In 1975, single mothers had a median income of $6,023 which amounted to 36.7% of the median earnings of husband-wife families with children ($16,430). Single-parent fathers also fare better than do single mothers; their median income was $12,797 in 1975 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1978). By 1983, female single parents had gained minimal ground; they earned approximately 37.6% of the median income of husband-wife families with children. In 1983, female single parents brought home a median income of $9,153 while married couples with children earned a median of $24,324. Single-parent fathers earned a median of $19,950 that year, which was 82% of the median

two-parent family income (Norton and Glick, 1986). Economists explain single mothers' low family income by pointing to characteristics that correlate with reduced income: their youth, race, labor force participation, presence of children, and occupation. In addition, single mothers' homes are more likely than are other family households to have no income earners and less likely to have two earners or more (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1980). In 1979, for example, for every four single-mother families, one of these households contained no income earners while for every ten single-father families, only one suffered similarly.

Upon divorce, mothers and their children tend to suffer a substantial drop in their standard of living (Weiss, 1984; Weitzman, 1985). Most never fully recover economically from the impact of marital dissolution. Hoffman's (1977) longitudinal analysis of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics suggested that upon divorce, men's economic situation improves, relatively, while divorced women's economic well-being declines. The divorced or separated women in his representative sample experienced an almost 30% drop in income between 1967 and 1973. By calculating the ratio of the family's income to the family's needs (a figure based on the government's estimate of necessary food budgets, adjusted to family size, and ages and gender of family members), the depressed conditions of single-mothers' homes became clearer. Married couples' income/needs ratio increased between 1967 and 1973 by 20.8% and divorced men's rose between 1967 and 1973 by 16.5% which means both groups experienced real income gains in comparison with the amount of money

they needed for subsistence. However, divorced women lost economic ground between 1967 and 1973; their income/needs ratio declined by 6.7%. Even more disconcerting is Weitzman's (1985) finding that, one year after divorce, men in her sample had experienced a 42% increase in their standard of living while divorced women had sustained a 73% decrease in their standard of living. Thus, particularly for divorced women who are single parents, the economic picture is often bleak. The losses in income are often staggering.

But more than income is lost upon marital disruption. When a family with two parents evolves into a single-parent unit, the family loses the economy of scale it possessed and thus expenses multiply for rent, transportation, and food (Vickery, 1978). In addition, when families contain only one parent, members no longer benefit from the unpaid labor which another parent may have contributed to their emotional quality of life and material standard of living.

Poverty

Families headed by mothers are the most impoverished families in the United States. In 1982, 48.7% of all female single-parent families were poor while only 9.6% of married-couple households with own children were impoverished. Black single-parent women have been hardest hit by poverty; in 1982, 65.6% were poor while 40.3% of all white single-parent women were poor (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1984).

Families of single mothers are not only often money poor but they are also frequently time poor. That is, of the 2,463,000 female single parents in 1980 whose incomes were below the poverty level, 41.2% worked during the year for pay; 24.5% of poor single mothers

TABLE 4

WORK EXPERIENCE OF FEMALE SINGLE PARENTS* BELOW THE POVERTY LINE IN THE UNITED STATES, BY RACE, 1980

Work Experience	Race		
	White	Black	All
Employed in 1979 (in thousands)	608 (44.7%)	380 (36.2%)	1,014 (41.2%)
Employed full-time in 1979 (in thousands)	345 (25.3%)	243 (23.1%)	604 (24.5%)
Average number of weeks worked in 1979	27.3	31.6	29.1
Total single parents below poverty level (in thousands)	1,361 (100%)	1,051 (100%)	2,463 (100%)

*Female family householders who reside with their own children.

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Census (1982d), Table 29.

worked full-time during the year 1979 (see Table 4). In addition to suffering from the plight of living with little money, these families also had to endure constraints on the time their householders could devote to the unpaid labor (e.g., cooking, cleaning) needed for family survival (Brown, 1982) and spend with other family members.

Labor Force Participation

The labor force participation rates of single mothers have been consistently higher than those of married mothers, in part because women commonly have sought work following marital disruption (Espenshade, 1979). In 1950, 18.4% of all married women with children were in the labor force, while 54.9% of all widowed, divorced or spouse-absent mothers worked (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1976)[6]. Since 1950, both married mothers with children at home and single-parent women have become more likely to join the labor force. By 1979, 54.5% of all women with children at home were in the labor force, including 54% of all married mothers and 65.7% of all single mothers. Divorcees are the most likely of single mothers to be employed or looking for work (79%) while widows are the least likely (49.6%). Unemployment, however, also has been consistently higher among single-parent women. In 1979, 20.7% of all never-married mothers, 12.6% of husband-absent mothers, 9% of all widows with children, and 7.6% of divorcees with children were unemployed versus 6.2% of all married mothers (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1980). Like most women, these mothers mostly work in low paying, gender-segregated jobs where women predominate.

Summary

Demographic and economic trends are clear. Single parents are becoming more common, and the rise is closely tied to the growing number of divorces in the United States. Children are increasingly likely to spend some time living in a home that contains only one parent. This is especially true for Black children inasmuch as about one-half of all Black families with children were headed by single parents in 1980. Single mothers are often impoverished, have median incomes well below that of two-parent households, often are employed, and have higher unemployment rates than do wives who live with their spouses.

This macro-level portrait furnishes a valuable description of the socio-demographic and economic characteristics of single parents in the United States. With it, we can locate single parents' dominant characteristics, the components of their growth, and identify their over-arching economic circumstances. While this backdrop is necessary, it delivers only part of the picture. To gain insight into the daily lives of single parents and discover single parents' reactions to their experiences, we must turn to a separate body of research. Thus, our attention now moves to a micro-level set of inquiries into the work and family lives of single parents.

Micro-Level Analyses: Work and Family Concerns

Micro-level analyses of single parents' work and family experiences focus on parents' perceptions and daily interactions[7]. This body of research clusters around three basic foci. The first, personal adjustment studies, explore the emotional and psychological

well-being of parents during their transition to single parenthood. This is relevant to single parents' work and family concerns because emotional adjustment can have a significant impact on parenting and family activities. Second, there are numerous inquiries into single parents' social support networks. The third - most extensive - body of literature focuses on the single parents' performance of their numerous roles (such as parent or homemaker). Of course, many pieces of research incorporate a combination of these three foci. However, for the purposes of this review these areas of concern will be separately summarized.

Adjustment Literature

Divorce is an emotionally wrenching experience. Great emotional upheavals are common, particularly within the first year (Hetherington et al., 1976) to second year of being single (O'Brien, 1980; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Weiss, 1979c). Stress that results manifests in both physical and psychological forms (Bloom et al., 1979).

Most studies of single parents' emotional adjustment focus on two common problems. First, single parents often have lingering feelings of attachment to their prior spouse; the sensations of bonding and connection with one's ex-mate often dwindle slowly (Spanier and Casto, 1979; Weiss, 1975; 1979a). Second, loneliness is frequently mentioned in this research (George and Wilding, 1972; Luepnitz, 1982; O'Brien, 1980; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Smith and Smith, 1981; Weiss, 1979c). Strains from uncomfortable feelings of solitude are frequently felt as much as one and one-half to two years

after divorce (Hetherington et al., 1976; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980). Following separation or loss of a spouse, men and women struggle with distress, anger, and an array of confusing, often ambivalent feelings. For most single parents, it seems that the loss of partner and thus the transition to being an unmarried person is much more difficult to adjust to than is single parenthood (Smith and Smith, 1981; Hipgrave, 1982; O'Brien, 1980).

Single parenthood often results from divorce, and many have recognized that divorced women's usual, rapid economic decline can significantly affect single parents' emotional well-being (e.g., see Buehler and Hogan, 1980; Colletta, 1979a). Unfortunately, there is little empirical information on the emotional effects of many single parents' depressed living standards. We have just hints of the strong effects of economic problems on separated women (Spanier and Casto, 1979). In one study of divorced women, Grella (1985) discovered that not all of women's reactions to economic downward mobility following divorce are negative. Women who feel greater control over their lives after divorce are often satisfied with their situations. Having more say over one's personal life and over how and when money and time are spent may be quite liberating for women who have lived within the confines of a restrictive marriage. In addition, Grella (1985) studied the effects of economic decline on divorced women's construction of self. The women she interviewed compared themselves with three different kinds of reference groups. They experienced negative feelings and devalued self-assessments when they compared themselves with reference groups to which they had

previously belonged (e.g., married women); on the other hand, some women elevated their self-esteem by comparing themselves with other disadvantaged divorced women and seeing themselves as luckier or different than these women.

Emotional adjustment and satisfaction may be more difficult for those who feel helpless, and single mothers feel powerless more often than do heads of two-parent families. The single mothers in Smith's (1980) study felt they had less control over their lives and less ability to plan for the future than did the heads of two-parent families. Of course, males are usually the "heads" of two-parent families, thus Smith's findings may actually reflect gender differences in men's and women's feelings of control over their lives. However, it also may be that economic decline following divorce may be shaping women's perceptions of their ability to mold their fates. The importance of one's economic circumstances is highlighted by Bould's (1977) study of the relationship between women's sense of control over their personal fate and their amount and sources of income. Poorer women and women who rely on such government funding as Aid to Families with Dependent Children report feeling less able to control their lives. Thus, feelings of autonomy and security are negatively related to two things which many single parent women experience: poverty and dependence on funding from Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

A final impediment to some single parents' emotional satisfaction is the stigma of being a single parent in a society in which nuclear families are supported both ideologically and

materially. Many single mothers and fathers report feeling isolated from and stigmatized by neighbors, friends and members of their communities (e.g., see Brandwein et al., 1974; George and Wilding, 1972; Ferri and Robinson, 1976; Schlesinger, 1979; Smith and Smith, 1981; Sprey, 1969). (In contrast, Luepnitz (1982) found that over half of the single fathers she interviewed felt their social status had been enhanced by single parenthood.) In light of all of the above, it is not surprising that single mothers are less satisfied with their lives than are married mothers (Colletta, 1979a).

Social Networks

Under the rubric of social networks, I include research that merely mentions some of the sources of support that single parents may have, as well as those reports that have developed typologies of support networks. Single parents typically rely on kin, friends, ex-spouses and single-parent organizations.

Kin relations, especially parents and siblings, supply many single parents with material and emotional support. Stack's (1974) field study of poor Black mothers indicates that these women were immersed within and highly dependent upon a kin-based system of emotional and material aid. Anspach's (1976) study of divorced women suggests, not surprisingly, that upon marital dissolution, divorced mothers may receive less aid from and have diminished contact with their former in-laws. However, divorced mothers and married mothers are similar in the amount of contact they have with their own (consanguineal) kin. Thus, divorce may not result in women's greater reliance on kin[8]. In fact, fewer kin are likely to be contacted

since affinal kin contact is apparently curtailed. Unfortunately, Anspach did not explore the types of support procured through these contacts, or how they might vary by social class or ethnicity.

Research findings on single fathers' reliance on kin are mixed, at best. The men in Mendes' (1976b) sample had little contact with relatives, but then few had kin in the immediate area[9]. In contrast, Orthner et al. (1976) found that most of the single-parent fathers they studied were in touch with their parents at least once a week. The aid these kin provided included child care, money, housekeeping, and emotional assurance. The single fathers in Risman's (1986) study had contact with their kin at most on a monthly basis (although one-third got regular baby sitting aid from kin). Gasser and Taylor (1976) and O'Brien (1980) suggest that kin were very significant for the single fathers they studied, although the type of aid the kin supplied to these men was not mentioned.

One study which clearly contrasted the experiences of men and women examined divorced persons' contacts with their consanguineal and affinal kin. Spicer and Hampe (1975) found that divorced women interact more with both kinds of kin than do divorced men. Single mothers actually are most likely of all divorced persons to see kin, while single fathers interact with kin less than single mothers or divorced men and women who are not parents. However, information on the aid these relatives provided, their dependability, or the single parents' desire for their aid, is not disclosed.

Thus, it seems that the picture is far from clear regarding kin support for single parents. We have some indication that mothers

tend to rely on kin more than fathers but we have no notion of what type of aid they request or receive. The reader should recognize, too, that aid from relatives is sometimes accompanied by costs to the single parent. Weiss (1979c) reported that parents' unsolicited advice or criticism caused stress for some single parents. The single parents Luepnitz (1982) spoke with also mentioned minor resentment of their parents' input.

Friends are another commonly cited resource for single parents (Risman, 1986). Divorced persons often grow away from their old friends (who are often married) (Hetherington et al., 1976) and develop new friendship networks with other single persons (Spanier and Casto, 1979; Gasser and Taylor, 1976; Luepnitz, 1982; Weiss, 1979c). The single fathers in the Gasser and Taylor (1976) and the O'Brien (1980) studies acknowledged either that they currently had more friends than when they were married or that friends were their most important source of aid. However, few studies hint at the dynamics of these friendship networks or what causes the variations in aid that they provide. For example, we know that the single fathers in Ambert's (1982) study were more likely than single mothers to report that their neighbors admired them and their friends were supportive of them. These men also received more baby sitting help and invitations to dinner from their friends. Unfortunately, Ambert's (1982) findings are difficult to interpret because the single fathers in her sample had much higher incomes and standards of living than did the single mothers. Thus, the effects of social class and gender can not be clearly delineated. Weiss (1979c) found

that friends, whose help is more spontaneous than that of kin, provided single parents with mostly emotional support. In addition, friends' favors and acts of aid were designed to be reciprocated by single parents.

Ample evidence suggests that single mothers have very strong friendship networks with other women (Greenberg, 1979; Stack, 1974). In contrast, Greenberg (1979) noted that single fathers more often report that women, not men, are their source of emotional aid; single fathers do not seem to develop same gender friendships as often as do women, nor are their friends usually as numerous (Weiss, 1979c). Additionally, because women are more likely than men to seek support during the divorce process, especially from friends (Chiriboga et al., 1979), it seems reasonable to assume that friendship systems are very important to single mothers. Still, we need more information on similarities and differences in the content and use of friendship support networks of single fathers and mothers.

A third social relationship which may serve as a source of support for the single parent is the former mate. Two researchers indicate that noncustodial fathers, for example, may be very important conduits between their children and their kin group. In the poor urban Black community that Stack (1974) studied, the mere acknowledgement of paternity by a man paved the way for his kin to include a child in their support system. Anspach (1976) discovered that children of divorced mothers have more contact with their paternal kin if they also see their fathers frequently. Although Anspach suggested that these former in-laws rarely provide assistance

for single mothers, the degree to which they support their grandchildren, emotionally or financially, is open for investigation.

According to Greenberg (1979), it is much more common for single mothers than for single fathers to report that they receive emotional or material help from their ex-spouse. While Greenberg does not describe the support these former mates may offer, Ahrons (1979a) found that an ex-spouse is often related to in one of three different ways. Some ex-spouses remain bitter enemies and avoid interaction with one another. However, a "best friend" type of relationship occurs when an ex-spouse is treated as a friend, sought out for advice and/or is a co-parent. This differs from the most common way that ex-spouses interact with one another, which is as "neither enemies nor friends," according to Ahrons (1979a). In other words, Ahrons discovered that the majority of the relatively affluent divorced parents she studied see one another on a limited basis and their interactions focus on parenting. Nonetheless, sharing the demands and concerns of parenting is a rare benefit which many single parents say they would welcome (Weiss, 1979c). Contact with a former spouse may have a disruptive or unsettling effect on a single parent (O'Brien, 1980) which may, in turn, translate into tension in the single parent-child relationship (Hetherington et al., 1976). On the other hand, there is also some indication that supportive interactions with one's former spouse (especially regarding child rearing) may enable a divorced parent to be a more effective parent (Hetherington et al., 1976) or that relatively frequent visitation by

the noncustodial parent may result in increased satisfaction for custodial single fathers (Greif, 1985).

While it is unclear how often former spouses may interact, we do know that contact among noncustodial parents and their children is often high at the onset of the parents' separation, that visits commonly become less frequent as time passes (Hetherington et al., 1976; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980), and that ex-spouses' interaction levels parallel the parent-child's initially high quantity and precipitous decline (Hetherington et al., 1976).

A final source of support for single parents comes from single parent organizations. The majority of the single fathers and mothers in Luepnitz's (1982) study and most of the single fathers in Gasser and Taylor's (1976) sample became involved in single-parent groups as did half of the above average income fathers interviewed by Orthner et al. (1976), many of whom reported that the groups were helpful environments[10]. Weiss' (1973a) year long observations of a Parents Without Partners chapter led him to conclude that this organization was responsive to four basic needs of single parents. The group provided a sense of community for these adults and combated social isolation (cf. Mendes, 1976b). Parents Without Partners was also an arena in which single parents were able to cultivate new friendship and support networks. Third, the organization's activities gave members a chance to build self-esteem, and finally, members of Parents Without Partners dated one another fairly often, which helped fill an emotional void in some of their lives.

Aside from suggesting which of these social relations appear to

be the most salient for single parents, few studies describe how the full constellation of single parents' networks function or discuss parents' motivations for developing various support systems. Mendes (1979) did provide a typology of five unique management styles of single parents and suggested the situations within which a single parent may seek support of either friends, relatives or his/her ex-spouse. For example, Mendes (1979) argued that there are "sole executive" single parents. These individuals feel solely responsible for their family, but may also decide to allocate some family tasks to other persons, such as friends, relatives or institutions (e.g., day care centers or churches). "Auxiliary parents" share parenting, usually with a former spouse. Those who share parenting with non-family members (e.g., a boyfriend) manage within the "unrelated substitute" style. Relatives are highly relied upon by a fourth subset of single parents. A fifth group, the titular parents, are relatively isolated and have generally abandoned their parental responsibilities. However, Mendes' (1979) failed to explain why single parents choose (if indeed they consciously do) one management style over another.

McLanahan et al. (1981) is the most noteworthy study of single parents' support systems. They discovered three unique support networks utilized by their sample of 45 white, divorced single-mothers, and explored the parents' motivations for creating these systems. Single parents' personal goals are catalysts for support system development. Those mothers who want to alter substantially their pre-divorce identity create an extended network

composed of many new female friends who provide direct services (e.g., baby sitting), emotional support, and new role models. On the other hand, those who want to keep their pre-divorce identity (whom McLanahan et al. call "stabilizers") form either a family of origin, or a conjugal network. Family of origin networks, consisting of parents and relatives who provide direct aid and emotional support, somewhat isolate single parents from other contacts and are not able to meet fully single mothers' needs for intimacy. "Conjugal networks," in contrast, have a boyfriend at the hub of the system. Intimacy is a major benefit of this particular network type, along with emotional support and direct services. Mothers who develop an extended network tend to be more educated (as college graduates) and affluent (with a median $20,000 income in the late 1970s) than are "stabilizers," who are largely high school graduates (with a median income of $8,000 in late 1970s).

Of course, the life span of support systems (e.g., transitional or long term) may vary. Because single-parent families apparently negotiate an initial period of crisis (Sprey, 1969), some of their support systems may be developed for only a limited, albeit critical time. Or perhaps new personal or familial goals may spark periodic renovation of support systems (McLanahan et al., 1981), including the sharing of a residence with another adult (see Smith, 1980; Slesinger, 1980).

Role Analyses

The majority of micro-level studies of single parents implicitly or explicitly employ role theory. Much of this research

examines single parents' perceptions of their abilities to accomplish the various duties (e.g., homemaking) of single parenthood. Roles mentioned most frequently in the literature encompass the activities of financial management, domestic tasks, decision-making, child-rearing, and paid employment. The findings relevant to each of these themes are discussed below.

Financial Management

As noted earlier, single parents are often in a financially precarious position. The greater financial distress of single-parent versus two-parent families has been noted from time to time in the micro-level literature (e.g., Schlesinger, 1978a; 1979; Brandwein et al., 1974). However, few studies have investigated how stressed finances affect single parents' ability to perform their various activities or roles, nor have many analyses examined how single mothers and fathers respond to their financial responsibilities. Spanier and Casto's (1979) study of separated men and women (which included nonparents) clearly suggested that gender distinctions are critical. They found that separated men and women differed dramatically with respect to economic well-being. In fact, Spanier and Casto found that economics colored many women's entire existence during separation. Unfortunately, these authors provided no qualitative elaboration or further description of these dissimilarities among women and men.

Luepnitz (1982) found that money was the greatest source of stress for single mothers and the third greatest source of stress for single fathers. Yet, she discovered that single fathers, regardless

of educational level, worried less about money than they did when they were married. The opposite was true for single mothers. Stress rose for these mothers due to unreliable child support payments, changing work demands, the need to move, the unfamiliar task of managing a household budget, and difficulty in obtaining credit.

Studies of other western societies, such as Britain, Canada and Australia, indicate that single fathers often suffer a drop in income with the loss of their spouse, and have difficulty managing to survive on their earnings or government benefits (Schlesinger, 1978a). One U.S. survey found that coordinating finances is difficult for single fathers; money was often tight according to the single fathers in Gersick's (1979) sample. Interestingly, though, in Gersick's study, the custodial fathers were described as being of a higher social class, and older and more "established" than the noncustodial fathers. Also, because men fare much better financially following divorce than do women, one might speculate that these men were far better off than most single mothers. The "tight money" experience of these men may have reflected their lack of expertise with managing a budget and household finances, which has been mentioned by other single fathers (Mendes, 1976b; Schlesinger 1978a).

Stack (1974) discovered that impoverished, Black single-mothers dealt with their oppressive economic conditions by developing a support system cemented by "swapping," or the exchange of services, aid, and material goods. Friends and relatives were the members of this survival mechanism in the community Stack researched. However, poverty was chronic among the families Stack studied, and systems of

exchange and swapping may occur less often among persons who have a lifestyle above a subsistence level.

In 1974, Brandwein et al. called for studies sensitive to the special problems of single mothers as economic providers. They urged social scientists to uncover the psychological impact of downward mobility and tap single mothers' reactions to their economic conditions. As noted earlier, Bould (1977) focused on the deleterious psychosocial consequences of single mothers' poverty and found that both the amount and source of women's incomes was related to their feelings of control over their personal fate. Women who were poorer and those with funds from Aid to Families with Dependent Children were less likely to feel as if they could plan their lives or control their experiences.

Domestic Activities

Perhaps because researchers have assumed that housework is a customary job for women, most studies of single parents' domestic activities have been studies of fathers (e.g., see Gasser and Taylor, 1976; Hipgrave, 1982; Keshet and Rosenthal, 1978; Mendes, 1976b; Orthner et al., 1976; Risman, 1986; Schlesinger, 1978a; Smith and Smith, 1981). Unfortunately, most of these probes into single fathers' homemaking have been framed simplistically and have yielded limited information. For example, we know that some fathers consider management of domestic activities to be stressful (Mendes, 1976b) while others have found that fathers appear basically comfortable with the demands of housework (Luepnitz, 1982; Greif, 1985). Contextual clues about what might cause these divergent responses are

missing from these reports.

The bits and pieces of insight into mothers' domestic activities have proven more fruitful. It appears that in the first year following separation, single-mothers' families are somewhat less organized in their domestic activities than are two-parent families (Hetherington et al., 1976) and are characterized by less regularity of events such as meals, less structure for allocating responsibilities, and more difficulty in accomplishing regular tasks (Hetherington et al., 1976). Housework routines, somewhat unlike those of two-parent households, eventually do emerge. For example, children apparently provide more aid to their mother in single-parent compared with dual-parent households (Colletta, 1979a; Luepnitz, 1982; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980). Single fathers also report that children are regular helpers (Gasser and Taylor, 1976; Luepnitz, 1982; Schlesinger, 1978a; Smith and Smith, 1981; Orthner et al., 1976; Weiss, 1979c). In fact, Greif (1985) reported that single fathers rely more on children than do single mothers. Aid from nonhousehold members is rare, even for middle to upper income single fathers (Gasser and Taylor, 1976; Greif, 1985; Keshet and Rosenthal, 1978; Orthner et al., 1976; Risman, 1986).

Housework is no doubt a qualitatively different undertaking in single-parent homes in comparison with dual-parent homes. Weiss (1979c) suggested, for example, that the meaning of homemaking changes for the mother after the loss of her spouse. What was once done as a display of love for a mate, such as cooking special dinners, may become less rewarding when only one adult remains at

home. As a result, less effort and creativity may be applied to housework. Of course, less effort may also be applied because of reduced time and energy.

Luepnitz (1982) extended the concept of housework to include overall maintenance of a home and found that women became more involved in household maintenance after they became single parents. Intriguingly, over one-half of the single mothers in her study derived a sense of accomplishment from these new duties. Feelings of greater independence and higher esteem appeared to be a by-product of these activities for single mothers. In contrast, the single fathers in Luepnitz's (1982) study spoke casually and rather disinterestedly about domestic activities; few felt they had to acquire new domestic skills after they became single parents.

Even though we know that children in single-parent homes do more housework and parents may feel less motivated to do housework, other major questions, which Brandwein et al. raised in 1974, remain unanswered. For example, how often do single parents take short cuts or drop tasks from their agenda as did some of Weiss' (1979c) respondents? How flexible are single parents' routines to special needs and demands (cf. Glasser and Navarre, 1965)? How much do they miss the lost household labor of their former spouse? In what ways do they sense and deal with the degree to which they are "time poor" due to their nonmarket housework demands (cf. Vickery, 1978; Brown, 1982)? Which activities do single parents juggle to distribute their time satisfactorily? These and numerous other questions await further inquiry.

Decision-Making: Acting as an Authority

For years, social scientists and policy makers have been concerned with single mothers' ability to be authority figures for their families. In 1965, Glasser and Navarre argued that children of single parents would grow up with distorted views of power and authority because they would associate familial power with only one gender. Brandwein et al. wondered in 1974 if women garner less training than men for their authority positions in single-parent homes. They saw this lack of preparation as especially problematic because they believed that women are taken less seriously by their communities and thus must overcome numerous threats to their legitimacy as family leaders. Thus Brandwein et al. wanted to know how successfully single parents negotiate the demands of being head of household both in and outside their homes. However, Weiss (1979c) argued that being an only adult at home, whether male or female, makes it difficult to act authoritatively.

Reports have suggested that some single fathers feel troubled by disciplinary decision-making (Schlesinger, 1978a). Single parents commonly mention experiencing stress from having to make decisions without the aid of another adult (Kopf, 1976; Orthner et al., 1976; cf. Schorr and Moen, 1979) and often feel rather ambivalent about the costs and benefits of this independence (Greenberg, 1979). Of course, some single parents do manage to share decision-making responsibilities either with their ex-spouse or with a reliable aide such as a grandparent (Ahrons, 1979a; Mendes, 1979). Weiss (1979b) believed that the membership structure of the single parent home

allows children to have a greater role in household leadership. He found that single parents often rely on offspring to shoulder some adult responsibilities.

There are some indications of major differences regarding the discipline of male and female single parents and of custodial and noncustodial single parents. For example, Smith and Smith (1981), Luepnitz (1982), and Orthner et al. (1976) found that fathers believe they grew less disciplinary when they became single parents. Hetherington et al. (1976) found that single mothers with custody are more restrictive and authoritarian than are fathers without custody. The mothers in Luepnitz's (1982) study said they became more strict with their children after they became single parents, especially due to changes in their time and energy levels. This difference highlights the complaint of many custodial single parents about noncustodial parents. Their concern is that "visiting parents" present a positive yet unrealistic authority figure to children because noncustodial parents do not need to enforce rules or be disciplinarians during visits (Spanier and Casto, 1979). However, these differences may lessen over time. Hetherington et al. (1976) discovered that the visiting fathers in their sample gradually grew more restrictive with their children. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) found that in the early months of single parenting, separated mothers with custody feared that their children would reject them if they tried to enforce much discipline. However, this concern lessened after the first year and one-half of single parenting.

Interview and observational studies have revealed that both

noncustodial and custodial fathers are more successful than single mothers at gaining their children's compliance (Hetherington et al., 1976; Ambert, 1982). Ambert (1982) discovered that children speak more appreciatively of their custodial fathers than do children of single mothers. Unfortunately, many of these findings are difficult to interpret because social class or income of the single parents were not carefully examined (e.g., Hetherington et al., 1976; Ambert, 1982)[11]. The problems of poor controls on important dimensions such as income also crop up in research that compares groups of single mothers. For example, although Colletta (1979a) initially discovered that single mothers use more physical punishment and expect quicker compliance from their children than do married mothers, her later study, which controlled for income, found that moderate-income single mothers have parenting styles similar to moderate-income married mothers. In contrast, low-income single mothers are the more restrictive and demanding parents (Colletta, 1979b).

Raising Children: Emotional and Physical Care

Researchers of the pathological perspective have voiced doubts about single parents' ability to provide adequate emotional nurturance for their children. In 1965, Glasser and Navarre argued that children from single-parent households are likely to be emotionally crippled because they learn to associate love with only one gender and they may feel less able to express themselves in these smaller households for fear of alienating others. While these claims are not substantiated, other concerns have arisen. For example, great emotional stress for girls and boys can stem from children's

relationship with the noncustodial parent. Ahrons (1980a), Leckband (1981) and Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) asserted that greater emotional problems appear in children who infrequently visit their absent parent. It seems that the best way for a divorced single parent to facilitate the emotional adjustment of his or her children is to develop a supportive and cooperative co-parental relationship.

Single fathers have voiced concerns about their ability to meet children's emotional needs. Some doubt their patience with children (Orthner et al., 1976) and wish they could be more emotionally involved with their sons and daughters (Hipgrave, 1982). Yet, the findings of Greif (1985), Smith and Smith (1981), and Risman (1986) suggest that such doubt is not commonplace among single fathers. Some single fathers' uncertainty about the quality of their emotional relationship with their children may stem from their lack of preparation for single parenting and lack of original desire to become a single parent (Mendes, 1976a) and may be reflected in their frequent reliance on others for help in these matters (Keshet and Rosenthal, 1978).

One upbeat finding regarding the emotional care of single parent children is that after they become single parents, custodial parents often feel they grow emotionally closer to their children (Greif, 1985; Leckband, 1981; Weiss, 1979c; Smith and Smith, 1981; Keshet and Rosenthal, 1978). Mendes (1976a) argues that fathers who actively sought to become single parents in the first place are most likely to feel this way (see also Risman, 1986). Even though single parents operate under great constraints on their time (Schorr and

Moen, 1979), the lack of a second parent in the household may allow for more parent-child interactions and facilitate children's emotional expression (cf. Weiss, 1979c). Missing from the literature is a clear sense of single mothers' and single fathers' quality of care, common parenting techniques, and descriptions of parents' communication and disclosure with their children.

Studies of arrangements for the physical supervision of single parent children describe the types of regular and occasional child care services use by single parents. According to Orthner et al. (1976), Kammerman (1980), and Turner and Smith (1983), single parents rely mostly on out-of-home care for their preschoolers, particularly day care centers (Mendes, 1976b; Turner and Smith, 1983). Although information is sparse, it seems that elementary school-age children of single parents often go unsupervised when not at school (Greif, 1985; Turner and Smith, 1983; Orthner et al., 1976; Mendes, 1976b)[12]. However, which child care services single parents would prefer may be a different matter. The choices of single parents are often severely constrained by their limited incomes and the costs and availability of care takers (Schlesinger, 1978a; 1979). It would be useful to know why single parents make these child care decisions and how satisfied they are with them.

Single parents also require occasional or irregular child care. Some studies suggest that relatives are an especially important resource for child care during the early transition to single parenthood (Orthner et al., 1976) but we can not say how often relatives are used in the more stable periods of single parents'

lives. Mendes (1976) suggests that the type of persons a single parent relies on for occasional child care depends upon the single parent's management style. Some seek little aid from other persons while others may share parenting with friends, siblings, uncles, or visiting fathers. An ex-spouse's participation in physical child care seems related to the quality of his or her relationship with the custodial parent (Ahrons, 1979a).

Paid Employment

Most single parents in the United States work to support their families, and yet we know little about this fundamental component of their daily lives. Few studies have garnered more than impressionistic data. Evidence we do have suggests that there are important differences in men's and women's interpretations of how single parenting influences them as employees.

A few studies indicate that single fathering is accompanied by a re-evaluation of work and family priorities and the decision to make career and job demands secondary to family needs (e.g., Gersick, 1979). How these new values might transform fathers' behavior is uncertain. Middle to upper income fathers acknowledge that single parenting means fewer hours at work (Luepnitz, 1982), fewer chances for job mobility, fewer transfers, and diminished earnings (Keshet and Rosenthal, 1978), although the extent to which these changes are self-imposed or ordained by employers is not clear. Greif (1985) found that fathers reduce work-related travel, are more likely to miss work, and cut more of their work days short after they become single parents. However, another group of economically advantaged

fathers did not feel that single parenthood had any impact on their work (Orthner et al., 1976).

Mothers, of course, usually face the labor market and work experiences from an entirely different structural position than men. Their lives are not filled with decisions about overtime or transfers. Single mothers are faced with such constraints as inflexible work hours, few chances for part-time employment with sufficient wages (Schorr and Moen, 1979), changes in jobs, and transformation from part-time to full-time work (Luepnitz, 1982). Most single mothers report much difficulty in managing work and family responsibilities (Greif, 1985). Pleck et al. (1980), in fact, discovered that incompatible job schedules and family schedules is the most common work-related conflict of single mothers. What we still do not know, however, is how single mothers handle the competing responsibilities of parenting and work. Based on interviews with single mothers, Kammerman (1980) argued that these women make their parenting conform to the needs of the work world. However, Kammerman's interpretation seems a bit shortsighted, for it ignores the ways in which single parents can violate their employers' rules or challenge employers' expectations for workers. For example, Kammerman's survey disclosed that single parents often, in violation of employers' rules, use their own sick days to care for their children. Single parents may use other informal or formal techniques to make their work lives complement their children's needs. Job choice, scheduling patterns, work location, and use of vacation time are all options about which married women have made decisions meant

to complement family commitments (Barrett, 1979). How single mothers and single fathers may make such decisions deserves our attention.

Assessment of the Literature

Macro-level research on single parents lays a solid foundation for understanding the social historical trends, material circumstances, and growth of this family form. Rampant poverty and poor labor market opportunities are only part of the dismal economic and social situations of many single parents. Micro-level images of single parents' social networks and patterns of daily family life are much less clear, in part because few questions have been well conceptualized or systematically addressed. Conclusions often fail to be supported by the data. I will now outline numerous methodological and conceptual limitations of this micro-level research.

Methodological Shortcomings

1. It is presently very difficult to locate a given population of single parents in the United States. Divorced persons move frequently, and addresses quickly become dated. Thus, representative sampling is a nearly impossible task. Snowball sampling or convenience sampling abounds in micro-level research on single parents. This would not be a concern if articles would assess the impact of such biases on their findings, particularly with respect to how samples compare with the general population of single parents. However, this is rarely done. Examples of studies which rely on nonrepresentative samples include Ahrons (1979a), Ambert (1982),

Anspach (1976), Colletta (1979a, 1979b), Defrain and Eirick (1981), Gasser and Taylor (1976), Greenberg (1979), Hipgrave (1982), Leckband (1981), Luepnitz (1982), McLanahan et al. (1981), Mendes (1976a, 1976b), O'Brien (1980; 1982), Orthner et al. (1976), Risman (1986), Rosenthal and Keshet (1981), Smith and Smith (1981), Turner and Smith (1983), Wallerstein and Kelly (1980), and Weiss (1973a, 1973b, 1979c).

2. The next common methodological shortcoming of this research is the lack of adequate or sometimes total absence of contrast or comparison groups within a study (e.g., Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980). Single parents are rarely compared with married parents (Ambert, 1982 calls for this) and single mothers are infrequently compared with single fathers. This practice would not be as problematic if researchers would clearly justify their sampling of only one gender or family type. If, for example, the parent's gender is thought to be very important, it should be directly analyzed through comparisons of men and women and not implicitly explored through samples of only one gender. Especially troublesome are single-gender studies that assert similarities or differences between women and men (e.g., Gersick, 1979; Risman, 1986; Smith and Smith, 1981). Projects containing groups which could be compared (e.g., women and men) but whose results fail to do so clearly or systematically are also unfortunate (e.g., Leckband, 1981; Weiss, 1979c).

3. The third substantial problem is the tendency to overlook important social factors in the lives of single parents. Researchers rarely control for length of time one has been a single parent (e.g.,

Ambert, 1982; Leckband, 1981), employment status of the single parent (Colletta, 1979a), presence of other adults in the household (e.g., Keshet and Rosenthal, 1978; George and Wilding , 1972; Rosenthal and Keshet, 1981), children's age (McLanahan et al., 1981; Leckband, 1981; Luepnitz, 1982), social class (e.g., Anspach, 1976; Colletta, 1979a; Ferri and Robinson, 1976; Gasser and Taylor, 1976; Mendes, 1976b; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980) and race (e.g., Anspach, 1976). Ethnicity is constantly ignored. When controls are instituted, imprecise operationalizations still flaw many studies. For example, Ambert's (1982) attempt to compare single-parent fathers and mothers of high socioeconomic status is marred by the fact that average incomes of men and women were highly divergent within her upper-income group.

As a result, we lack a socially situated appreciation of single parents' diverse circumstances as urban and rural dwellers, members of closely-knit enclaves or isolated, indifferent communities, or participants in varied ethnic life styles and networks. These serious omissions prevent us from understanding the rich variety that exists among single parents. Without a socially situated understanding of single parents, we cannot account for the many, seemingly contradictory findings in this literature. We should not search for or expect to find one typical, unitary pattern of behavior or perceptions among single parents, thus we need to examine the circumstances that give rise to diversity among single fathers and mothers in order to heighten the reliability and validity of our observations.

Conceptual Weaknesses

1. Loosely defined or undefined concepts are common in this literature. For example, a common theme is the "adjustment" of the single parent to single parenting. However, it is practically impossible to find a description of what adjustment is or how one might validly measure it (see Mendes, 1976a; Gasser and Taylor, 1976; Orthner et al., 1976; Spanier and Casto, 1979). Similar questions may be asked about the use of such concepts as "coping" (Defrain and Eirick, 1981; Luepnitz, 1982), "single parent role" or "lifestyle" (DeFrain and Eirick, 1981; Spanier and Casto, 1979; Mendes, 1976a), "mother-child functioning" or "parent effectiveness" (Hetherington et al., 1976), "social life" (Orthner et al., 1976), "family harmony" (O'Brien, 1980), "task involvement" (Gasser and Taylor, 1976), "role strain" (Smith and Smith, 1981), "support" or "support systems" (Hetherington et al., 1976; Anspach, 1976), and "work involvement" (Orthner et al., 1976). Perhaps most frustrating is the failure to define social class or offer explanations of its relevance.

2. Concern with transitions and changes in the lives of single parents has led to a virtual neglect of single-parent families as stable, nontransitory units. Few investigations inquire about parents' current behavior without juxtaposing it with their patterns of marital behavior (e.g., Gasser and Taylor, 1976; George and Wilding, 1972; Ferri and Robinson, 1976; Defrain and Eirick, 1981; Smith and Smith, 1981; Orthner et al., 1976). While longitudinal research could best uncover information on the transitions of single parents, such studies are uncommon (exceptions include Wallerstein

and Kelly, 1980; Smith, 1980).

3. Single parents are often portrayed as a rather homogeneous group and many articles tend to distract readers from variations among single parents. Often this is done by reporting only frequency distributions of answers to questions, such as "Have your ways of disciplining your children changed since the divorce?" (DeFrain and Eirick, 1981: 271). A rather flat image of single parents' behavior is created by analyses which contrast single parents along only one characteristic (e.g., gender of parent, marital status) with respect to a number of isolated behaviors (e.g., discipline practices, frequency of dating) and fail to suggest any underlying patterns or holistic sense of single parents' responses. As a result, many reports conclude that "some" or "most" single parents act in particular ways or agree with select statements (e.g., as in the above case, "the vast majority of parents had not changed discipline practices following divorce," DeFrain and Eirick, 1981: 271). Usually the number of respondents constituting "most" or "some" is not specified. This pattern of data analysis robs the reader of the opportunity to explore connections between response patterns and single parents' characteristics. There seems to be no clear rationale for reporting data in this restrictive manner. Similar problems exist in studies by Ferri and Robinson (1976), Gasser and Taylor (1976), Greenberg (1979), Hetherington et al. (1976), Keshet and Rosenthal (1978), Leckband (1981), Luepnitz (1982), Mendes (1976b), Orthner et al. (1976), Rosenthal and Keshet (1981), Smith and Smith (1981), Wallerstein and Kelly (1980), and Weiss (1975,

1979a, 1979b, 1979c).

This method of reporting data is particularly frustrating when single parents' multiple family responsibilities are discussed. For example, when homemaking, child care tasks, and decision-making are considered, they are usually described separately. Few researchers systematically explore interrelations among parents' reactions to their duties. For example, it seems likely that single parents' activities and goals as employees are shaped by homemaking and child care duties, yet those interdependencies are usually ignored. This impedes developing typologies of single parents' behaviors or reactions to their multifaceted lives (e.g., see Rosenthal and Keshet, 1981; Weiss, 1979c; Ferri and Robinson, 1976; Luepnitz, 1982; Orthner et al., 1976; Gasser and Taylor, 1976).

4. Social support networks of single parents (such as friends, relatives and neighbors) are often vaguely portrayed as "safety nets" for single parents. Numerous studies assert that single parents rely on these affiliations for child care, financial aid, emotional support and even help with housework (Weiss, 1979c; Ambert, 1982; Ferri and Robinson, 1976; Orthner et al., 1976; Risman, 1986). However, we know little about how support is actually used, how patterns of support may be interrelated, which conditions may facilitate or impede the creation of these networks, or how support systems may vary by social class, ethnicity or race (for an important exception, see McLanahan et al., 1981).

5. Single parents are usually thought of as sole parents and the role of absent parents in single-parent families is rarely

considered. Thus, a rather simplistic conceptualization of "parental absence" permeates this literature (e.g., see Weiss, 1979c; Glasser and Navarre, 1965; Colletta, 1979a, 1979b; Gasser and Taylor, 1976; Risman, 1984). It implicitly equates divorce and separation with the severing of all practical ties between former spouses. However, noncustodial parents vary in the amount and kind of contact they have with their children and ex-spouses (Rosenfeld and Rosenstein, 1973). Connections between ex-spouses may merely dwindle or take on new directions, rather than break off (e.g., see Holley and Rankin, 1979). There are only occasional reminders that divorced parents may engage in forms of coparenting (see Ahrons, 1979a, 1980a; Greif, 1985; Luepnitz, 1982; Schlesinger, 1979). Although ex-spouses are sometimes recognized as direct or indirect sources of support or conflict in single-parent households (e.g., see Anspach, 1976; Ambert, 1982; Keshet, 1980; Gersick, 1980; Greenberg, 1979; Hetherington et al., 1976; Mendes, 1979; Leckband, 1981; O'Brien, 1980, 1982; Weiss, 1979c) the effects of their support are rarely illuminated. Fortunately, Ahrons's (1979a) conceptualizations of the binuclear family and patterns of coparenting have helped initiate more complex portraits of single parents' familial relationships (cf. Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980). However, these typologies will remain limited unless we gain further insight into how and why these forms of coparenting develop and how they influence single parents' reactions to their responsibilities.

These methodological and conceptual weaknesses should not direct our attention completely away from previous research, for

there is still much to learn from this literature. The most fruitful way we can build upon present knowledge and devise more sophisticated methodological and conceptual frameworks is to appreciate the dominant thrusts of existing perspectives in the literature which attempt to explain the causes of diversity among single parents and between single-parent households and nuclear families.

Perspectives in the Literature

Research on single parents contains numerous interpretations of what shapes these parents' experiences and creates differences either among single parents or between single-parent and two-parent households. Most believe that variety among single parents stems from either the parent's gender, social class, marital status, motivation for becoming a single parent, or length of time as a single parent. Other researchers frequently argue that the differences between single-parent and married-couple family structures lead to divergent behavior patterns within each of these family forms. While some authors have argued that a combination of these factors mold single parents' lives, I touch upon each separately, in order to lend clarity to each argument.

To begin with, gender socialization and a system of stratification based in part on gender are believed to create numerous circumstances whereby women and men behave differently as single parents. One explanation for this difference is that women and men are prepared differently for the responsibilities they assume as single parents. For example, Brandwein et al. (1974) wondered if women are less prepared to be authority figures in the family. Smith

and Smith (1981) asserted that the child rearing problems experienced by the single fathers in their sample arose because fathers lack preparation for single fatherhood and are confronted with nebulous, changing role expectations for men (cf. Mendes, 1976b; Weiss, 1979c).

The importance of gender also arises in discussions of single parents' social networks and social supports. For instance, Spicer and Hampe (1975) found that single mothers have much more contact with their kin than do single fathers, thus they also possess more potential sources of aid. Greenberg (1979) discovered that single mothers have more extensive networks of friends than do males, and receive help more often from their ex-spouses.

Two other factors also point to the significance of gender differences among single parents. To begin with, single fathers and mothers reportedly receive unequal social pressures and dissimilar acknowledgement for their actions. As Ambert (1982) noted, single fathers are more likely to say that their co-workers, neighbors, and children's teachers admire them and that their friends are supportive of them. Brandwein et al. (1974) argued that divorced mothers are heavily scrutinized by society and that these women are often seen as the sources of their own problems. Greenberg (1979) recognized that single fathers seem to have greater freedom with regard to dating and sexuality than do single mothers. Finally, male and female single parents usually have greatly disparate economic resources at their disposal (Schlesinger, 1979; Brandwein et al., 1974) which can adversely color women's entire existence (Spanier and Casto, 1979). The above findings, in combination, present persuasive evidence that

single fathers experience single parenting differently than do single mothers.

A second theme which emerges in this literature is the belief that social class creates important differences among single parents. Single parents and married parents are often seen as similar, as are single fathers and single mothers, given the same income, educational, and/or occupational characteristics[13]. Those single parents who are impoverished are believed to experience the problems and stresses common to all poor families (Bilge and Kaufman, 1983). Researchers who espouse this perspective argue that we really know very little about single parenting because these fathers and mothers rarely have been compared with properly matched couples of the same socioeconomic background. The two studies that most directly support this thesis were designed by Ambert (1982), who was unable to study matched samples, but found that higher income was related to better overall family situations (including e.g., health, satisfaction) for single mothers, and Colletta (1979b), who found that social class was related to differing child rearing practices of single mothers.

A third trend in this literature asserts that differences among single parents reflect the pathways individuals took into single parenthood. This viewpoint assumes that, for example, widowed single parents have qualitatively different experiences from divorced or separated single parents (Greif, 1985; Rosenfeld and Rosenstein, 1973; Schorr and Moen, 1979; Weiss, 1979c). Some also postulate that motivations for becoming a single parent are significant. For

example, Mendes (1976a) found that some divorcing fathers aggressively seek to become single parents, often against the wishes of their wives, while others are more conciliatory and negotiate the arrangement with their spouse. Widowers, in contrast, do not seek to become single parents but assent to the situation, as do some men who are deserted by their wives. Mendes argued that whether a father chooses single parenthood or not and how actively he chooses it influences parent-child relationships and the father's satisfaction with and perception of single parenting (cf. Gasser and Taylor, 1976). Risman (1986) found that single fathers were more satisfied with parent-child relations if they fought for and obtained custody of their children.

A fourth explanation for variation among single parents is the belief that an adult's behavior modifies according to the length of time one has been a single parent. Hetherington et al. (1976) discovered that mothers and fathers have early experiences with single parenting that are markedly different from later ones. For example, mothers' contact with the noncustodial father, although originally quite frequent, declines steadily with time. During the early, transitional period, single mothers may feel quite isolated and social contacts and new friendship networks may build only slowly. Conflicts between ex-spouses may be particularly high early in single parenting; one year following divorce was apparently the most stressful period for Hetherington et al.'s (1976) sample and was a time when parent-child relations were very strained. Indications are that one to two years following divorce, the single parent's

situation greatly improves (Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980; Weiss 1979c).

Additionally, several other factors are believed to create variety among single parents. Calls have been made for greater attention to such factors as race (e.g., Schorr and Moen, 1979; Weiss, 1979c), age and gender of children (e.g., Schlesinger, 1978a; Ambert, 1982), number of children at home (Colletta, 1979a), and employment status of the single parent (e.g., Colletta, 1979a).

Those who concentrate on understanding differences between single parents and married parents usually assert that single-parent families are unique in comparison with two-parent families because of their one-parent family structure. Three differences commonly surface. To begin with, single parents seem to frequently feel socially isolated (see Weiss, 1973a; Hetherington et al., 1976; Gasser and Taylor, 1976; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980). They know fewer of their neighbors and participate in community affairs less than do married parents (Smith, 1980). Feelings of being socially rejected or ostracized are not uncommon and no doubt exacerbate this isolation (see Smith and Smith, 1981; Gasser and Taylor, 1976).

Second, because they are the only parent in a household, single mothers and fathers are thought not to have reliable, accessible adult aides; as a result, they experience numerous time pressures and role overload (Gasser and Taylor, 1976; Glasser and Navarre, 1965; Weiss, 1979c; Smith and Smith, 1981; Kammerman, 1980; Spanier and Casto, 1979; Wallerstein and Kelly, 1980)[14].

Finally, single parents generally engage in more egalitarian

relations with their children than do married-couple parents (see Weiss, 1979c; Glasser and Navarre, 1965; Keshet, 1980; Colletta, 1979a). Of course, this perspective does not recognize that some single parents do share housing with other adults (Smith, 1980; Rosenthal and Keshet, 1981; Slesinger, 1980) or that ex-spouses may be involved in coparenting.

In sum, parents' gender, social class, marital status, and tenure at parenting are seen in the literature as the most crucial factors shaping variations among single parents, while family structure is seen as the root of the different life styles of single-parent and two-parent families. Much less frequently mentioned and researched are the relevance of age, gender, and number of children, race, and employment status of the parent for differences among single parents. We have not determined the relative importance of each of these factors for parents' behavior and reactions to single parenting and the combined effect of these factors has yet to be examined even initially.

Foci of This Study

As noted in Chapter I, this study was not designed to test hypotheses emerging from the research literature. However, I did use this body of research on "micro" themes as a catalyst for ideas. Major facets of single parents' work and family lives that I originally decided to examine (e.g., responsibilities of parenting, decision-making, financial management) were clearly brought to my attention through this literature review.

The one definite conclusion I could make based on my summary

and assessment of this literature is that single parents do not respond uniformly to their work and family responsibilities. However, I could not comfortably hypothesize about which factors seemed to cause the divergent responses or why these characteristics played significant roles in single parents' thoughts and behaviors.

My research assessment helped me to develop an informed guess about which variables most influence single parents' reactions to their work and family responsibilities. To begin with, it seemed to me that we need a more careful investigation of the effects of gender. Too often studies have made assumptions about single mothers and single fathers without collecting comparable data. From analyses of married couples we know that for reasons of both socialization and social structure, men and women experience family life in different ways. For example, social scientists have distinguished the "two marriages" that Jessie Bernard (1972) calls "his" and "hers." Discussions about the division of labor in families are usually framed within a gendered context (e.g., see Vanek, 1974; Hood, 1983) as are analyses of conjugal decision-making and authority in couples (e.g., Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Scanzoni, 1982), studies of the legal bases and ramifications of marriage (e.g., Weitzman, 1981), investigations into communication among intimates (e.g., Fishman, 1978), and examinations of family violence and abuse (e.g., see Breines and Gordon, 1983; Russell, 1982). In sum, there is a strong tradition of research and theory which asserts that women's and men's experiences in families are frequently dissimilar. Thus, it seemed reasonable to assume that gender plays a large role in how single

parents organize their work and family lives, even though the literature on single parents provides only scattered insights into the importance of gender. As a consequence, I designed this study to explore if and how single mothers and single fathers experience their daily work and family activities differently.

My literature assessment also indicated that a second major factor, family structure, seemed to shape parents' responses to their daily activities. Family structure is a concept that incorporates patterns of family composition (e.g., number of adult family members), decision-making, and familial division of labor. Most studies have found that father and mothers recognize vast differences in their married experiences in comparison with their experiences as singles (e.g., Greenberg, 1979; Weiss, 1979c). The importance of family structure for single parents may seem obvious, yet a number of studies have also asserted that no substantive differences exist between married and single parents (e.g., Luepnitz, 1982). While many researchers seem fairly certain that parents' lives change when they divorce or are widowed, to date they have failed to conceptualize "family structure" in more than a very elementary fashion. That is, the literature has contrasted two-parent experiences with single-parent experiences as if they represented two homogeneous family groupings. In contrast, I thought it best to remain sensitive to differences between married and single parents and differences among married parents and among single parents in order to provide a more complex portrait of family structure and further delineate its possible effects. This means that, among other things, the

post-divorce involvement of noncustodial parents has to be taken into account when assessing the family structure of single parents.

Thus the focus of this study is on the effects of gender and family structure on the work and family experiences of single parents. Before I describe the study further, however, let me clarify what I mean by "gender."

Gender has been conceptualized in numerous ways (see Thorne, 1978). Some focus on gender as a personal trait or characteristic that shapes individuals' behavior and self-concepts. This creates the impression that gender has a relatively static, yet encompassing, effect on individuals. Second, and most common among sociologists, gender has been perceived as a role. Role theorists believe that gender is a status with a corresponding set of expectations for appropriate behavior. Thus gender is one role among many that human beings play. For example, women's gender role is sometimes described as encompassing behavior such as nurturance, emotionality, and sensitivity. Third, gender may be understood as a part of one's self that is shaped through social action and interaction. Instead of being a static component of self that one brings to interaction or a role one plays, gender may be thought of as a malleable part of one's self-concept that develops and changes over time and in different social contexts. Finally, gender may be thought of as a social category[15] that is used to place persons in various institutions or situations (e.g., in stratification systems, labor forces, or familial divisions of labor). In this sense, gender is a part of the social structure whose relevance is manipulated by those with the

power to do so.

These formulations lead to strikingly different interpretations of gender's effect on adults' behavior and self-concepts. Those who argue that gender is a personal trait would assume there are overwhelming parallels in the behavior or self-concepts of females, regardless of the kinds of families in which they live. Role theorists could expect married mothers to behave differently than single mothers since in single-parent homes the complementary adult gender role is absent from family dynamics. Those who argue that one's gender is reformulated through daily interactions might anticipate that adults in nuclear families develop different perceptions of themselves and their behavior than do single parents in part because they have different daily responsibilities, kinds of interaction patterns, and because different cultural ideologies may be invoked. The fourth interpretation of gender reminds us that the larger social structure (which the other three interpretations tend to ignore) incorporates a differential allocation of positions and resources based on gender.

I believe the third and fourth conceptualizations of gender are most useful for the study of single parents. To begin with, it is unhelpful to perceive of gender as a fixed trait because it is a part of one's self whose salience or meaning may vary in different situations or over the life course (Thorne, 1978). Thus, the relevance of gender for behavior is often in flux. If we considered gender a trait, we would remain insensitive to circumstances within which a single parent's gender is more or less germane to daily

life. Second, role theory is often criticized for its failure to adequately conceptualize the effects of gender on daily behavior (see Lopata and Thorne, 1978; Thorne, 1978) and to illuminate how and why power and inequality are gendered phenomena (Connell, 1983). Role theory also does not appreciate how gender molds expectations and evaluations of the performance of all roles, such as parent or sole provider (Thorne, 1978), which may be essential for understanding single parents. A role theorist assumes that the loss of one parent makes (or allows) a father or mother to play the role of the other parent. This is the assumption of researchers who ask questions such as "Can men mother?" (e.g., see Risman, 1986; Luepnitz, 1982). Answers to such queries usually entail an enumeration of the behaviors of single fathers that are parallel to those of mothers. However, this is a rather simplistic approach to examining the effects of gender on parents. If men successfully diaper and clothe babies, it does not necessarily follow that they feel more androgynous or have even accepted this behavior as anything but a temporary aberration in their normal patterns. Nor does it imply that the meanings men attach to their activities or their behavior patterns are identical with mothering. How single parents interpret their behavior contains far more telling information about their self-concepts and daily lives. The fourth conceptualization is necessary, too, because it continually reminds us of the effects of gender on women's and men's placement in families and the labor force. Because I believe that gender is a part of one's self-concept and a part of social situations whose meaning is modified through

social interactions, I anticipate that single mothers and single fathers will acknowledge changes in their self-concepts and behavior in light of changes in their family structure (due to death of a spouse or divorce) and their different patterns of daily interaction.

The following pages outline the original statement of the research problem developed in light of my summary and assessment of the literature. The next chapter also describes the transformation of the study problem; the initial research focus shifted during the course of my interviews to encompass better the concerns and responses of the single parents upon whose lives this study was based.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHOD

Initial Statement of the Research Questions

The initial question which this research project addressed is, "What strategies do single parents develop for performing their daily paid work and family activities?" I thought of family activities as encompassing domestic work, child care, decision-making for the family, and household financial management. I wondered about the effects of paid work activities, particularly as they overlapped with or affected family life for single parents. For example, scheduling of work and the ability to contact children while at work might be significant. Critical additional questions held my interest, including what single parents' varied strategies were for finding outside help, why they followed the patterns they had developed, how satisfied they were with their patterns of daily management, and what they perceived to be the costs and benefits of their strategies.

Method

This study has both initial and revised research questions because it was designed to be a grounded theory investigation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) into the daily lives of single parents. This approach allows the researcher to develop a theory that emerges from the interests and concerns of the subjects of investigation. In

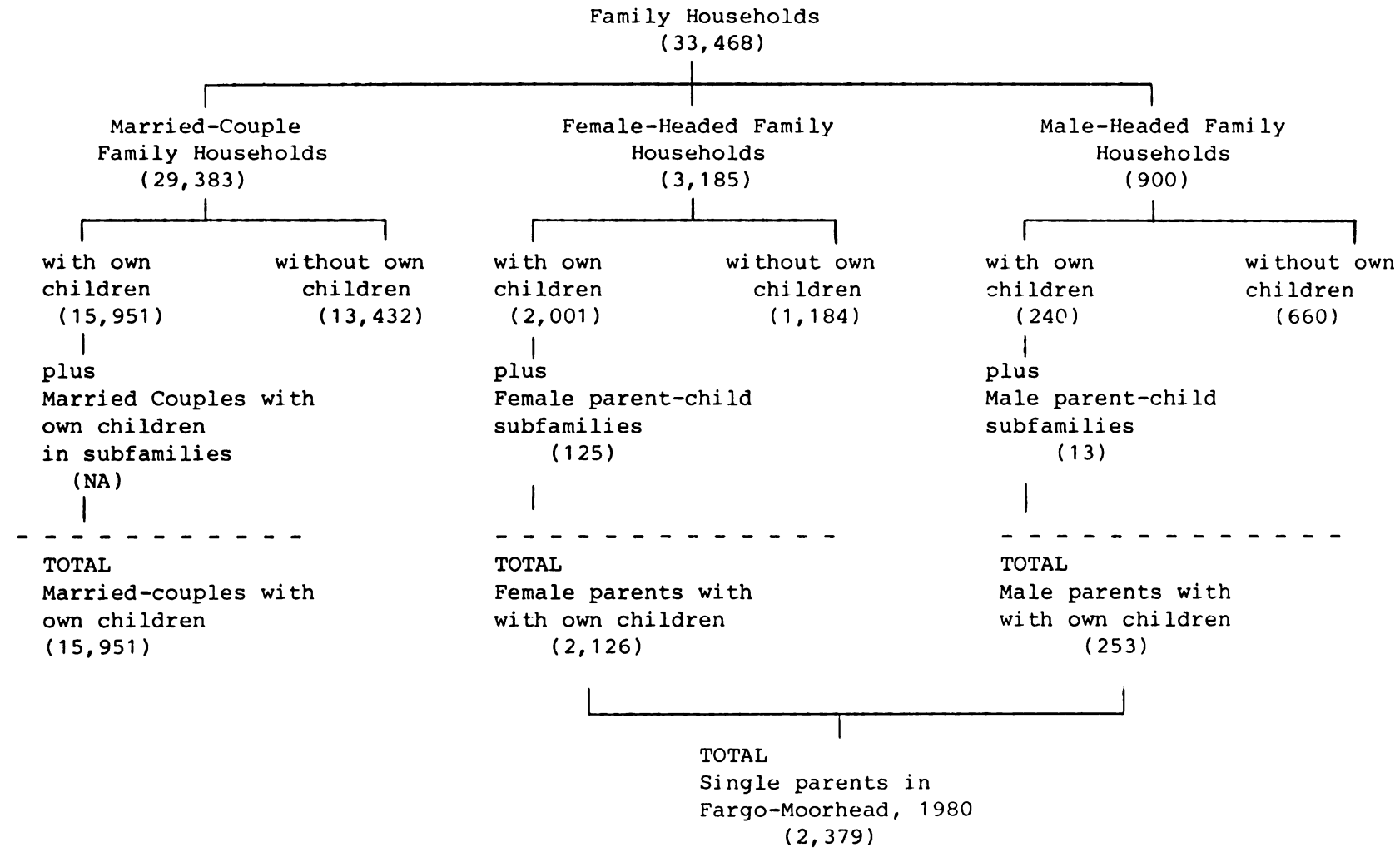
other words, the goal of this study was to develop inductively an understanding of varied ways single parents manage their daily activities. I also felt that our understanding of single parents could be greatly enhanced by more case studies. In contrast with the preponderance of closed-ended survey research on single parents, such in-depth interviews could help us probe single parents' perceptions, uncover the texture of single parents' days, further illuminate the meanings single parents give to their experiences, and provide more holistic, contextually rich portraits of single parents' daily lives. Accordingly, I used semi-structured questions to interview single parents and analyzed the data with a version of the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 1983) as explained in the data analysis section of this chapter.

I began this study with the broad goal of discovering patterns in single parents' management of their daily lives. However, in keeping with the grounded theory approach, I sought to remain sensitive to unexpected themes or patterns in my data. I tried to incorporate into my developing framework unanticipated themes which could shed light on my research questions. It is not uncommon for grounded theory research to take on new directions during the data gathering and analysis. My data, the transcribed words of single parents with whom I spoke, persuaded me to revise my original study focus in order to grasp issues of major concern to those I interviewed. I will now describe my subjects and methods of study, and then outline the analytic focus that emerged in the course of my research.

Study Site

This study was undertaken in the midwestern Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) of Fargo, North Dakota - Moorhead, Minnesota, whose population was approximately 138,000 in 1980 (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1982a). This area, although quite typical of the central United States, differs from the country as a whole in that it is predominantly white (98% of the population in 1980, U.S. Bureau of Census, 1983a) and the proportion of all family households with children that are headed by single parents is below that of the nation as a whole (14% versus 21% in 1980, U.S. Bureau of Census, 1981a, 1982a; see Figure 2). This difference, in part, may be traced to the small percentage of Blacks living in this SMSA and the lower than national average divorce rates of both Minnesota and North Dakota (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1980a).

My purpose was not to test hypotheses with representative samples of the population but to develop a detailed case study. Thus, although the proposed site is sociodemographically unlike the United States as a whole, this is not inherently problematic for the goals and purposes of this grounded theory investigation. Typologies and hypotheses developed from this project, of course, could be examined later with representative samples. One would expect that the findings of this project would be most applicable to other white single parents who reside in the central United States and who have characteristics similar to those of my sample.



NA=Not available.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Census (1982b).

FIGURE 2: CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILIES BY TYPE, FARGO-MOORHEAD AREA, 1980.

Sample and Interviews

The sample of single parents was obtained through published notices in four types of newsletters, including those of the twenty-seven public and parochial elementary schools in the three area school districts, the Big Brother/Big Sister Program, the area vocational technical school, and Parents Without Partners. Letters and notices were distributed through a family counseling service center, two day care centers, the Head Start Program, and a support group for the widowed and divorced. In addition, I made personal appeals at two meetings of a local support group for the widowed and divorced. The divorce records of this two county area are not computerized, nor do they list custody information or current addresses. Thus to use them to develop a sample was impractical.

Volunteers responded to my notices and letters by telephoning my home phone number. I interviewed all but three of the forty-one single parents who contacted me. The remaining three had schedules that would not permit a two to three hour interview. In addition, I obtained the names of nine fathers from referrals from the various contact sources. I interviewed each of these men. In total I spoke with thirty-two single mothers and fifteen single fathers. I interviewed five parents on two separate occasions; the rest were interviewed once. By their choice, most of the parents met with me at their homes, while six asked to meet me at their offices. My contact sources for the forty-seven single parents with whom I spoke is provided in the Appendix. Each interview, which lasted an average of two hours, was taped and fully transcribed. In each initial

interview I used a consent form approved by the Michigan State University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (see Appendix).

Interviews were relatively semi-structured and initially focused on the single parent's strategies for organizing and carrying out work and family activities. However, as I went along, I redesigned questions to probe more fully themes that emerged in earlier interviews. As a result, my questions eventually focused on changes in single parents' lives, especially changes in daily responsibilities as the head of a household and changes in parenting. Although the questions varied from interview to interview, a copy of the basic interview guides are provided in the Appendix.

Parents were told that the interviews were being done for doctoral dissertation research. With the exception of a few professionals, the parents seemed rather unconcerned with the final form the research would take. They asked almost no questions about who might see the final product, although a number were personally interested in reading the results.

I am married and wear a wedding ring. Many of the single mothers noticed this quite quickly. I worried that single parents would doubt whether a married woman could understand their situation, thus I told the first few parents I interviewed that I was raised in a single-parent home. I hoped this information would make me seem familiar with single-parents' experiences. I stopped telling single parents that I was raised in a single-parent home (unless they asked)

after one woman told me that this information intimidated her. She believed that children of single parents have strong opinions about the quality of single-parent homes. After that, I decided not mention anything about myself (other than that I was student doing research) unless single parents asked for the information. Most did not. I believe my anonymity made most single parents feel comfortable. Because I was a stranger they knew almost nothing about, they could feel relatively uninhibited around me. They could not imagine many of my experiences or possible viewpoints, and therefore did not need to think about them or deal with them in the course of our conversations. I am white, as were almost all of the intervievees, and am young (30 years old). I think these factors also led single parents to feel comfortable and not threatened by my presence.

My impression is that the single mothers were much more comfortable with me and enjoyed the interviews more than did the single fathers. My interviews with fathers were shorter in duration than my interviews with mothers, and men's responses tended to be much less elaborate than the women's answers. I also had to do more probing with the fathers to clarify their ideas. These variations may have resulted from a number of factors, including the men's uncomfortableness with my gender, the tendency of men to do less self-disclosing than do women, and the fact that I initially contacted most of the men I spoke with through referrals.

Initial Controls

My notices and letters stated that I was interested in speaking with only custodial parents who were employed and/or in school and who resided with their children. I wanted to eliminate single parents with only weekend or minor amounts of custody privileges because I felt that their single parenting experiences would not be comparable to those of mothers and fathers who usually resided with their children. Because my study focused on work and family responsibilities, I wanted to exclude parents who were either not employed or not in school. The race of the sample is predominantly white, as is the population of the geographic area of the study (one minority group member volunteered for the study).

Emergent Controls

Through my interviews, I evaluated the influence on single parents' daily lives of marital status (never married, widowed, divorced), income, and age, gender, and number of children. During data analysis, I discovered that the type of marriage a person had experienced influenced her or his reaction to single parenting (as described in Chapter IV through Chapter VIII). Because this difference among single parents became a major element of the analysis, the data suggested to me that the experiences of never-married single parents were not comparable with those of the widowed and divorced with respect to changes in responsibilities and changes in parenting. Thus, while my understanding of single parents greatly benefited from interviews with three never-married women, the

findings of this report do not incorporate their experiences.

Sample Subset

One of the advantages of the grounded theory method is that researchers can be confident that their investigations focus on subject matter of concern to the persons being studied and that the researchers' preconceptions do not fully circumscribe the study. However, one of the drawbacks of this method is that researchers only slowly realize which data they need for analysis and which questions best elicit such information.

My study reflects these two characteristics of grounded theory research. As a result, my final interviews touched on numerous dimensions of single parents' lives that were overlooked in earlier conversations. In particular, later interviews inquired about the relationship between men's and women's previous marital experiences and their reactions to their daily responsibilities. This association was particularly useful; my data analysis and findings focus on the differences among parents with various "marital history types," as described in Chapter IV through Chapter VIII. However, since I did not consistently collect information on this topic during my interviews, the size of the sample upon which I have based the analysis of "marital history types" is smaller than my entire sample. Therefore, the parents whose experiences are described in Chapter IV through Chapter VIII are a subset of all the parents I interviewed. Let me briefly describe the sample subset and the entire sample.

The "marital history types" sample (i.e., the sample subset),

described in Chapter IV, is composed of twenty single mothers and fourteen single fathers (see Table 5). The mothers' mean age was thirty-four while the fathers' mean age was thirty-nine. Mothers had been single parents for a somewhat longer time than had the fathers (4.7 years in comparison with 2.8 years). Prior to divorce, fathers had been married slightly longer than had the mothers (10.9 years in comparison with 8.4 years). In addition, these fathers' families were slightly larger; they had an average 2.1 children at home while the mothers had an average 1.75 children living with them.

Information on the incomes, educations, and occupations of this sample subset indicates that men in this sample were, on the whole, more advantaged than were the women. The men's mean income[16] was about $27,800 while their median income was $22,000. Women's income averaged $16,100 while their median income hovered around $16,800. All these single mothers and fathers had at least a high school education and many had attended trade school or business school (see Table 6). In addition, 40% of the mothers and 43% of the fathers had at least a four-year college education. Occupationally, a high percentage of women were professionals (45%); most were nurses and a few were teachers (see Table 7). Fathers were mostly found in professional (29%) and administrative positions (29%).

Tables 8-10 may be used to compare the sample subset (Tables 5-7) with the characteristics of the entire sample. Only one father from the entire sample was not incorporated in the data on marital history types. Nine interviews with widowed or divorced single mothers were omitted from the sample subset. Still, their

TABLE 5

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE SUBSET,
BY GENDER OF THE PARENT

	Gender of Parent	
	Female (N=20)	Male (N=14)
Age of Parent		
Mean	34	39
Range	26-40	33-46
Years of Single Parenting		
Mean	4.7	2.8
Range	0.33-13	1-7
Years of Marriage		
Mean	8.4	10.9
Range	2-16	4-16
Number of Children Living at Home		
Mean	1.75	2.1
Range	1-3	1-3
Income*		
Mean	$16,100	$27,800
Median	$16,800	$22,000

*See note 15.

TABLE 6

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF THE SAMPLE SUBSET,
BY GENDER OF THE SINGLE PARENT

Educational Experiences	Gender of Single Parent	
	Female (N=20)	Male (N=14)
High school graduate	5%	21%
Technical school and/or some college	55%	36%
College graduate (B.A. or B.S.)	20%	14%
Graduate degree	20%	29%
	100%	100%

TABLE 7

OCCUPATIONAL POSITIONS OF SAMPLE SUBSET, BY GENDER OF THE SINGLE PARENT

Occupational Positions	Gender of Single Parent	
	Female (N=20)	Male (N=14)
Professional	45%	29%
Administrative/Sales	10%	29%
Clerical	30%	0%
Service	5%	14%
Skilled/Trade	0%	7%
Unskilled/Laborer	0%	21%
Not in Labor Force (Students)	10%	0%
	100%	100%

TABLE 8

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ENTIRE SAMPLE, BY GENDER OF THE PARENT

	Gender of Parent	
	Female (N=29)*	Male (N=15)
Age of Parent		
Mean	33	39
Range	23-40	33-46
Years of Single Parenting		
Mean	4.6	2.7
Range	0.33-12	1-7
Years of Marriage		
Mean	8.3	11
Range	1.5-16	4-16
Number of Children Living at Home		
Mean	1.8	2.1
Range	1-6	1-3

*The three never-married mothers with whom I spoke have been omitted from this description.

TABLE 9

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF THE ENTIRE SAMPLE,
BY GENDER OF THE SINGLE PARENT

Educational Experiences	Gender of Single Parent	
	Female (N=29)*	Male (N=15)
High school graduate	14%	20%
Technical school and/or some college	41%	40%
College graduate (B.A. or B.S.)	28%	13%
Graduate degree	17%	27%
	100%	100%

*The three never-married mothers with whom I spoke have been omitted from this description.

TABLE 10

OCCUPATIONAL POSITIONS OF THE ENTIRE SAMPLE,
BY GENDER OF THE SINGLE PARENT

	Gender of Single Parent	
Occupational Positions	Female (N=29)*	Male (N=15)
Professional	41%	27%
Administrative/Sales	17%	33%
Clerical	24%	0%
Service	10%	13%
Skilled/Trade	0%	7%
Unskilled/Laborer	0%	20%
Not in Labor Force (Students)	7%	0%
	99%**	100%

*The three never-married mothers with whom I spoke have been omitted from this description.

**Sum does not add to 100% due to rounding error.

characteristics are very similar to those of the mothers incorporated in Chapter IV through Chapter VIII. Compared with the entire sample, the subset of mothers is slightly better educated and they are relatively more likely to be in administrative/sales positions and service positions, and a bit less likely to be clerical workers or students.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the information from the interviews using a version of the constant comparison method, as outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The general purpose of this type of analysis is to generate theory and hypotheses inductively, not to test preformulated hypotheses. Accordingly, the original goal of the project was to develop insight into the array and pattern of strategies single parents use for organizing their work and family activities. I wanted to remain sensitive to single parents' interpretations of their experiences and to eventually develop hypotheses that arose from in-depth, contextually rich interviews. I felt the grounded theory approach was most appropriate because the literature on single parents contains few conceptually well-developed theories from which hypotheses might be deduced. Keeping with the goals of grounded theory, I also followed up on themes which emerged during the interview conversations.

Analysis with the constant comparison method began well before the completion of my interviews. After the first five interviews, I began data analysis by reviewing all themes that arose during conversations (or "incidents," as Glaser and Strauss refer to them)

and coding them into relevant thematic categories that emerged from the data. For example, a single parent's remarks about how she saves an hour out of every evening to phone her friends could reveal many things about how she uses this time: e.g., develop friendship networks, fight loneliness, tap information flows, coordinate cooperative services (such as car pools, etc.). Because my focus was on the single parents' techniques for managing work and family life, I gave special attention to and coded all examples of relevant daily behavior mentioned by parents. Aside from the previously mentioned example of the nightly phone conversations, such activities might have encompassed, for instance, ignoring housework, doing housework during "free time," or giving children household tasks. The inductive nature of this study, however, meant that themes arose from the parents' own perceptions and descriptions of their behavior rather than from a preconceived list of hypotheses or options. I used their self descriptions and the themes they mentioned most frequently to guide the analysis.

During this initial stage of coding I began to realize that my focus on single parents' daily behavior was not as interesting to my volunteer subjects as were their feelings about their changing responsibilities. Patterns for doing housework, for example, were difficult for parents to explain easily or with interest and parents saw techniques for paying bills as so routine as to defy description. The single parents I spoke with were more interested in discussing how they felt about being the only bill payer than about the strategies they had developed for making financial ends meet.

After my initial coding, I wondered if strategies for handling daily work and family activities would be of greater interest to the next five single parents. I found these next men and women to be most interested in describing their attitudes about their new duties, as well as their current relationships with their children. As a result, I decided to recode all interviews in order to get new insight into the themes that were being stressed. I utilized a strategy suggested by Charmaz (1983) of line-by-line coding of the data. Although laborious, this coding technique forced me to examine numerous topics I had previously ignored.

The coding of every line of data enabled me to see that single parents displayed a great deal of interest in parenting matters (e.g., children's security, discipline) and in the nature of their children's' relationship with the noncustodial parent. In addition, many women spoke of the personal evaluations they made of their lives after the end of their marriages and the changes in self-perceptions that ensued.

Following the line-by-line coding of the data and additional interviews, I attempted to compare similarly coded themes in order to create thematic groupings of responses. I discovered that the single parents I interviewed emphasized two major topics: changes in daily responsibilities as heads of households and, in particular, changes in parenting. I then began to refine the coding to fit within these two themes.

The third time I coded the data I created subtopics within the two themes of changes in daily responsibilities and changes in

parenting. The subtopics that developed under the heading of "changes in daily responsibilities" included changes in a) decision-making, b) housework, c) financial management, d) work, and e) overall responsibility for a household. I then compared examples within the subtopics with other similarly coded examples in order to determine the properties of the subtopics (e.g., their dimensions, their effects, what made them pronounced or not). For example, I compared incidents coded "decision-making changes." The comparison revealed that some single parents found this change to be overwhelming, some were proud of their new duties, and some seemed rather nonchalant about it. I created a separate coding sheet containing the common reactions of parents and coded all interviews with respect to common and unusual responses within the subtopical areas.

As I incorporated more interviews into the data analysis and crystallized the properties of the thematic categories, I compared incidents directly from the interviews to the coded subtopics on the code sheet to determine the "fit" with the grouping. I continually refined classifications on the basis of logical clarity and the consistency with which single parents responded similarly to the changes in their lives. The goal was to create subtopic groupings which were nonoverlapping, parsimonious, and contained only relevant properties.

The most difficult step, and one which I performed continually throughout the coding and analysis of the data, was to integrate the subtopic categories by spelling out the underlying uniformities or

connections among them. I struggled with this task for months. Particularly with respect to "changes in daily responsibilities," I searched for a lead that would suggest a predictable pattern in single parents' responses. I examined trends in the subtopics with respect to single parents' reasons for becoming a single parent (e.g., desertion, death, own choice), tenure at single parenting, income, age, marital status, education, number of children, and gender of children. With the exception of gender of the parent and to some extent the age of the children, I could find no consistent patterns with respect to these characteristics (which had been cited in many studies as related to significant variations among single parents). My interview transcriptions and notes contained a complex web of responses that were not predictable along these lines.

At that point in the data analysis, I realized that I would have to move beyond the suggestions offered in the research literature if I was going to discover any patterns in the variability among single parents. Thus, I examined differences based on tenure as a married parent, reason for custody, beliefs about why the marriage ended, previous personal investment in the marriage, and commitment to work. My frustrations rose until I spoke with one mother whose experiences as a single parent were very clearly influenced by the type of marriage she once had. While it sounds quite reasonable to me today, the relationship between single parents' responses to changes in their daily responsibilities and their previous experiences when married has not been discussed systematically in the literature to date.

My next task was to discover what types of marriages the single parents had when they were married and see how their experiences translated into and possibly affected their current feelings. It seemed to me that the single parents often described their marriages in terms of the division of labor and decision-making structure. Thus, I focussed on these two dimensions of past marital experiences in order to uncover the types of marriages these parents had experienced. I determined that the single parents with whom I spoke described four basic marital history types which differed according to how the spouses participated in decision-making, parenting, housework, and income-earning. These types included what I call segregated marriages, modified-segregated marriages, integrated marriages, and primarily wife-shaped marriages.

Marital History Types

Segregated marriages are what many sociologists would call traditional marriages. Parenting and housework are the responsibility of and carried out by the mother. The men are thought of as the heads of these households with responsibility for income-earning and most decision-making. Women in marriages of this kind are usually full-time homemakers at the time of the separation or are homemakers during most of their married years. In my sample subset, eight of the twenty women and two of the fourteen men came from segregated marriages.

Modified-segregated marriages are slightly less male dominated with respect to decision-making and family finances. Mothers are usually part-time employees. The housework is seen as the

responsibility of the wife, yet her parenting is more likely to be supplemented by periodic aid from her spouse. Seven women and seven men with whom I spoke were from modified-segregated marriages.

Integrated marriages come closest to what some sociologists refer to as egalitarian marriages. However, none of these marriages were described as truly equal with regard to the division of labor or decision-making, nor do these men and women necessarily uphold an egalitarian ideology. Couples in integrated marriages are likely to have mother-centered parenting, yet fathers are highly involved in child care. Housework falls either equally on the shoulders of both spouses or falls slightly more on the shoulders of the wife. Decision-making is perceived as a mutual arrangement as is care of the family finances. Women in these situations are often employed full-time. While no women in the sample reported this type of marriage, five single fathers came from integrated marriages.

In primarily wife-shaped marriages the wives have a very active, if not dominant, role in the family. These mothers are often major decision-makers and are frequently in charge of finances. Parenting and housework are usually the mother's domains, but she receives some aid from her spouse with these activities. It would be inappropriate to call these families wife-dominated because men in primarily wife-shaped marriages seem to have significant veto power and influence over their wives' decisions. These men usually are not active in their families, yet wives from primarily wife-shaped marriages often attempt to involve their husbands at home. In these families fathers are full-time workers and mothers usually work

full-time. Five women in my sample came from primarily wife-shaped marriages; none of the men suggested that their marriages had been primarily wife-shaped.

The fact that none of the single fathers in the sample subset suggested that they had a primarily wife-shaped marriage and none of the mothers felt that they had an integrated marriage may stem from perceptual differences between husbands and wives. For example, some of these single fathers' ex-wives might actually describe themselves as having been dominant in their marriages. The men in these situations (as would many persons, no doubt) may have thought of themselves as having a more active role in the family than their wives felt they did. Or men who had primarily wife-shaped marriages may have been reluctant to admit that they did not have more power in their families. Finally, men from primarily wife-shaped marriages might been very unlikely to ever become single fathers with custody because of women's strong control over these families' lives.

I created this typology and allocated single parents into these categories solely on the basis of one spouse's (the single parent's) perception of his/her marriage. While this technique is not the most valid way to describe actual behaviors in a marriage (Safilios-Rothschild, 1969), my focus is on single parents' perceptions of their past and present experiences. I believe it is valid to rely on the parents' own constructions, because they utilize these images to assess their past and present situations. I argue that single parents' perceptions of their marriages serve as reference points for their reactions to single parenting.

The above four marital history types are ideal types. None of these forms perfectly represents the single parents' past marriages. The characteristic I relied on to most clearly delineate among the various marital history types was a couple's pattern for decision-making. Thus, segregated marriages always had male-dominated decision-making. In modified-segregated marriages wives had some input in decisions, even though husbands usually had the final word. Participants in integrated marriages felt they had egalitarian decision-making pasts, and decision-making in primarily wife-shaped marriages was controlled by the wife. While decision-making was the main factor I used to distinguish among marital history types, involvement in parenting, housework, and paid work were secondary, discriminating factors.

In order to verify that marital history types were related to variations among single parents, I created a second type of coding sheet which contained all the topics and subtopics I had uncovered in the course of my interviews. I made six copies of this code sheet, grouped the single parents according to gender and marital history type, and coded their responses on these code sheets. This enabled me to compare all the responses of mothers from segregated marriages, for example. With the use of this code sheet I could easily judge how frequently a group of mothers or fathers gave similar, select responses (e.g., enjoyment of new decision-making control). This code sheet also allowed me to determine which responses deviated from the dominant patterns for each group.

Revised Statement of the Research Question

In light of the themes that emerged during data analysis, a revision of the original research question was in order. I shifted the focus of the analysis to address two questions. First, how are parents' reactions to their daily responsibilities as heads of households and to changes in their parenting related to changes in their family structure (as implied by their marital history type)? Second, how are single parents' experiences related to their gender? That is, what are the similarities and differences in the reactions of single mothers and single fathers to their responsibilities as heads of households and to changes in their parenting? Responsibilities as household heads include decision-making, financial management, financial support, and housework.

Contribution of the Study

This study is unique for four main reasons. To begin with, social scientists have rarely contrasted the behaviors and perceptions of single fathers and single mothers. While many studies imply that gender has a significant impact on single parenting, most focus solely on women or solely on men. In contrast, men and women were included in my sample, and I asked them essentially the same questions about their work and family activities. Thus, I obtained comparable information from mothers and fathers.

The second unique feature of this study is its exploration of the relationship among a number of work and family activities. From time to time other researchers have examined how single parents

handle one or more separate tasks, such as child care or discipline. However, the research literature provides few clues of the interconnections among single parents' work and family concerns. In contrast, this study lets us see, for example, how single parents' reactions to housekeeping duties are related to their decision-making or child care activities.

Third, this research examines the effects of a number of characteristics on single parents' daily lives. As soon as the theoretical categories were developed, I evaluated the impact of gender, marital status, age and number of children, for example. In addition, I conceptualized a factor previously undeveloped and unexamined in the literature on single parents -- marital history type -- and assessed its effects on changes in single parents' lives. The typology of "marital history type" gives added dimension to our understanding of single parents.

Fourth, the goal of this study is to develop grounded theory, an innovative approach to the study of single parents. Most previous research has been framed by questions and issues developed by researchers in a more deductive way that may or may not embody the concerns of single parents (for exceptions, see Greenberg, 1979; Weiss, 1979c). As a result, we have an abundance of information which outlines single parents' responses to select questions, but we have little sense of what they see as the most significant aspects of their experiences or how they perceive their situation, less encumbered by the social scientists' vantage point, interests, or structured questions. Through loosely structured interviews and the

data analysis technique of the constant comparative method, I was able to formulate a typology of single parents' responses to changes in their lives that arose from and reflected their perceptions. In the following chapters, I outline this framework, describing the impact of marital history types on single parents' reactions.

CHAPTER IV

CHANGES IN RESPONSIBILITIES AS HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS

> There's no doubt about it. It is fearful to be the only one. The first few times you go to bed and lock your house and you know, you're it. There's nobody else that's gonna take charge. [Jo, a divorced single mother of three]

Householders are responsible for an array of tasks. These duties can be cognitively divided into discrete categories, such as housework and parenting. (The next four chapters do just that.) However, householders also have a holistic sense of responsibility that encompasses all of their individual chores. The next few pages are devoted to a description of single parents' feelings about their overall sense of responsibility for their households. I include this separate topic because during our discussions some single parents spoke of having a rather diffuse (yet strong) sense of responsibility for their families. They did not always cut up their world into discrete sets of tasks, as I had.

In addition, this discussion touches upon single parents' comments about decision-making and general control of their household. Often single parents mentioned their feelings about decision-making without reference to specific types of decisions (e.g., parenting). When pressed for clarification, parents usually insisted that they were thinking of decision-making "in general." As

with their sense of overall responsibility, I believe these single parents were saying that decision-making simultaneously encircled various areas of their lives.

In this chapter, I describe the reactions of single parents to becoming sole heads of households in light of their marital history type, and contrast the experiences of single mothers and single fathers. A gender difference exists, I would suggest, because of men's and women's different positions within their previous marriages. For example, while I spoke with both fathers and mothers from segregated marriages, the past experiences of these men and women differed drastically. Accordingly, their current reactions to their daily responsibilities were quite disparate[17]. Keep in mind that while I discovered four different marital history types, the single mothers in the sample subset had experienced only three of these marital forms (i.e., segregated, modified-segregated, and primarily wife-shaped). The single fathers in the sample subset also described only three marital history types (i.e., segregated, modified-segregated, and integrated) (see Table 11).

The discussion begins with women's feelings about these changes in their daily lives. As with all subsequent sections of this report, I begin by describing the parents' marital history type in order to help the reader clearly differentiate among single parents' past experiences and to illustrate, in part, how I was able to classify parents according to their marital history type. I then describe the parents' reactions to their daily lives. (Reactions to responsibilities were not used to help classify single parents

TABLE 11

MARITAL HISTORY TYPE OF SINGLE PARENTS BY PARENT'S GENDER (sample subset only)

	Gender of Single Parent	
Marital History Type	Female	Male
Segregated Marriages	8	2
Modified-Segregated Marriages	7	7
Primarily Wife-Shaped Marriages	5	0
Integrated Marriages	0	5
TOTAL	20	14

according to marital history type.)

The Women

Of these three groups of mothers from segregated, modified-segregated, and primarily wife-shaped marriages (see Table 12), the eight mothers from segregated marriages experienced the most drastic changes in their sense of responsibility for family and household. These women had very traditional marital experiences, including a gender-segregated division of labor at home and a male-controlled family system of authority. Acceptance of a subordinate role for women was a part of many of their histories[18]. As a thirty year old mother of one observed,

> I was brought up in a home where a woman was to be submissive and that's the way it was supposed to be. And I believed that....I knew that males knew more when I grew up. They must know more cause they are male. What my dad said was what went. They were treated special. My mom waited on my dad hand and foot. Now I think that's terribly wrong. But I didn't when I was first married. 14-22,14

In the most extreme cases, mothers described their segregated marriages as places in which there was little room for a woman's voice. That was Marge's experience. Her husband was an oppressively domineering force in her family. She explained,

> I guess before it was almost like he had a lid on me. One of my girlfriends said to me, "When you first moved there, I thought you'd ask him how many times a day you could breathe when he was at work and you'd make darn sure that you didn't take that extra breath until he came home"....It was like being in a corner with nowhere to turn. I had nothing to say about nothing. He made the decisions to do everything and I was supposed to accept what he says, do what he said, and like it cause that was the way it was. I mean nobody was gonna change it. 29-2,3

These women also felt that their families' plans and activities

TABLE 12

SAMPLE SUBSET OF SINGLE PARENTS BY MARITAL HISTORY TYPE AND GENDER OF PARENT

Marital History Type	The Women*	The Men*
Segregated Marriages	(N=8) Nancy Ann Maggie Jane Barb Marge Marilyn Judy	(N=2) Carl Eric
Modified-Segregated Marriages	(N=7) Gwen Paula Pam Helen Jo Margaret Betsy	(N=7) Rod Gene Vince Fred Sid Steve Dave
Integrated Marriages	(N=0)	(N=5) Karl Irv Martin Roger Larry
Primarily Wife-Shaped Marriages	(N=5) Linda Grace Susan Carol Arlie	(N=0)

*All names are pseudonyms.

had revolved around their spouses. Judy explained:

> He was the one who had the power in the marriage as far as if I wanted to go somewhere or do something with us as a group. It just seemed like everything had to wait until he had time. 43-9

Their personal lives and friendships were often circumscribed by their mates, as Marilyn noted:

> He didn't like me to be around any friends except his friends. It was like seven men and me. And the only time I would run into someone I know would be when I was at [my parents'] home. 32-3

Being totally responsible for a household felt like an enormous task to mothers from segregated marriages. They had neither expected nor wanted to be the heads of their families. Some mothers communicated this by readily contrasting their new responsibilities against the backdrop of their segregated marriages. For example, Nancy told me that,

> I need to be taken care of. My ex-husband, he was always gone but I felt like we were taken care of. He took care of all of us naturally and his job, and I took care of my set of female-type things. There were things that I didn't have to worry about. [Now] I feel like I am always doing everything. And I have been for the past couple of years. 6-5

Maggie described her original shock at the loss of her husband by pointing out how much she had relied on him,

> I was a dependent wife...My first thought [when he died] was, how am I gonna survive? Not financially, but who is gonna make my decisions? They were almost made, I kinda knew what day to day would be. But when he was gone, I wondered, "Now, how is this gonna work? Where is my decision-maker?" I wasn't prepared for it. 23-8

The reactions of mothers from segregated marriages to their household responsibilities differed in three ways from the reactions of the other two groups of women. First, mothers from segregated

marriages were most likely to voice some early doubt about whether they could handle being in charge of a household. This was apparent when I asked Marge:

> Q: What was the most critical change that occurred when you became a single parent?
>
> I think it was not knowing if I could handle the responsibility of the job and the house and the kids and all that put together....[the fear] that lasted the longest was knowing that I had the total responsibility of the bills and the kids. 29-1

Such doubt was even expressed as an early, powerful fright of the prospects of being a single parent and a household head. Judy had a husband who traveled so extensively that he was home only a few days each month. Even so, her fear of single parenting was almost paralyzing:

> ...I got scared. I realize now that I was more afraid of being alone with the kids than I was of losing him, per se. That was my big fear. Then I begged him to stay.
>
> Q: What were you afraid of?
>
> Being alone with the kids, being 100% responsible for the household. Even if all he did was send in the paycheck and show up every once in a while, there was another person there that I could at least expect to do things. It wasn't like I had to do it all myself. I was really afraid of being alone, afraid of my competence. Really afraid. 43-19

Secondly, women from segregated marriages (especially those mothers with preschoolers) were most likely to feel overwhelmed by heading a household. As Maggie noted,

> It's all the roles a single parent has. Like duties, with a married couple there are certain roles a male plays. He takes the car for the oil change, the income tax, the bills, etc. They are often the money managers. The woman does the household duties. There are certain tasks delegated to one or the other. But knowing that I

> must do it all..... I don't know, it's not frustrating, cause that leads to anxiety. I think it can be overwhelming. That's a better word. Cause you don't always know what to do first. 23-9

Judy also felt inundated by these tasks,

> For me to go out and start a career at a minimum an hour job and at the age the kids were then, where they needed more day care, more physical care and things. And the housework. Everything just seemed so overwhelming to me. I just didn't see how I could do it all. And I sat around and watched my house get dirtier and dirtier and me more and more overwhelmed by it. 43-11

As Jane described being engulfed by new responsibilities, she exclaimed:

> I am not at work so I can buy almond appliances cause I am sick of my green ones. I am at work so I can buy underwear and toothpaste and so I can get my kid's teeth fixed when he is seven years old. And yet I am there cause I want nice dresses, too. And it overwhelms me. 24-3

In fact, many women from segregated marriages said that being totally responsible for a household was the most frustrating aspect of being a single parent. Maggie felt this keenly,

> Q: What is the most frustrating thing about being a single parent?
>
> Probably it's knowing that you are totally responsible. In keeping up the house to getting groceries, balancing the checkbook, everything. If I screwed up my life, knowing that what I do is going to affect my child. It's not really getting a break....It's a constant concern, a pressure to know there is really no one else to turn to. 23-8

Ann described how this responsibility crept into even minor everyday activities,

> The frustrating thing is that I am responsible for everything. That, not just her but everything, financial, everything I have to do. I was remembering once when my parents came up. [We drove somewhere] and I sat in the back seat and I thought, my God this is weird cause I am not driving. You know? I couldn't remember the last time that happened. And I remembered the first time my daughter

> could close the door herself and lock the seat belt herself. I thought, "This is great! I don't have to do that." 14-2

Mothers from segregated marriages also were most sensitive to how their gender and their past marital experiences had sheltered them from many of the tasks they faced as single parents. For example, Jane said:

> I know what it means now, I think I might, what a man feels like when he worries about bringing home enough money to pay the rent, make the house payment, whatever. To make sure the car is paid for each month and fixed. I don't have a lawn to worry about, but I worry about my health insurance, my life insurance. I worry about if something happens to me when I get sick. I worry about if the water softener goes out in the middle of the night. I worry about all those quote unquote men things that men have been conditioned to concern themselves with. 24-3

However, mothers from segregated marriages seemed to derive a fair amount of pleasure and esteem from their accomplishments. While they began single parenting with many fears and doubts, a number of these mothers were pleasantly surprised by their capabilities. For example, Nancy observed:

> The real satisfying part is the feeling of incredible accomplishment and, look at what I did by myself. At first it was just overwhelming and I thought I would never do it....But basically I have been responsible for all that I have been able to do. It's real source of pride in my life. 6-2

Ann seemed almost startled by her survival as a household head,

> You know I was working and I think one day I woke up and said, "I am doing this. I am raising a child and I don't have bill collectors calling me." And we slowly accumulated furniture and I thought, "I am doing this." It was the realization that I could do it myself. 14-23

Maggie communicated her pleasure in mellower tones,

> I feel like I have been successful. It is satisfying. It's a feeling of accomplishment.

Q: What have you accomplished?

> Raising a family on my own. Financially, we are quite secure...I feel like I have given my kids a lot. 23-2

As did Marilyn:

> As far as satisfying, it's knowing I can do it by myself. Handle the day to day responsibilities and having come as far as I have, I guess I feel pretty satisfied. 32-3

The seven women from modified-segregated marriages felt their new responsibilities as heads of households were burdensome particularly early on in single parenting. Most women from modified-segregated marriages had been involved in an array of household decisions and responsibilities in addition to working either part-time or full-time. However, they did not think of themselves as the main decision-makers for their families when they were married. Like Jo, they thought of their husbands as heads of their households:

> I thought of him as the head of the family. I thought that he was the one who should probably have the final say. Should have control of the situation. 30-18

Mothers from modified-segregated marriages usually saw themselves as junior partners in decision-making and responsibility for their families when they were married. None suggested they had been previously independent. In fact, a number of these women had never lived alone before. For Betsy, sole decision-making was a completely new experience,

> You have to remember that I went from my mother's house into marriage and I never really had to make any major decisions on my own. There was never anything another person didn't have some input on. 35-26

Pam also was accustomed to joint discussions of most family matters,

> I lived at home until I was married and I was married ten years. And this is the first experience I have had living alone. And this is the first experience I have had making decisions. Personal life decisions. I have had to make career decisions, but this is different. I guess before if I wanted our son involved in something, we would discuss it. Now Don isn't willing to discuss this. 18-4

According to Margaret, she became a "totally responsible adult" for the first time when she started single parenting. Even though for years she obviously played a major role in her family's activities, she only ambivalently recognized her previous contributions and responsibilities.

> I went from being my mother's daughter to Tom's wife. I was eighteen and still in high school. I went from one dependent stage to another.
>
> Q: Why do you think you were dependent in marriage?
>
> I didn't make any major decisions. I did make them. Many times I had to push Tom into making them. Cause I was the decision-maker. But the words came out of his mouth. I made the decision, but I always had someone to back me up. All of the sudden I was here with no support. 34-2

Thus, in their initial years of single parenting, mothers from modified-segregated marriages reacted strongly to the loss of their decision-making support or their senior partner. Many missed the assistance they had received from their spouses. Some of the tasks these women encountered as single parents seemed perplexing and difficult to tackle because of this. Paula recounted how arduous some decisions seemed in comparison to the past. For example,

> We were organized before and decisions were planned ahead. We knew what was going to happen. Before he went out and scouted about where we should move, looked into things and found the best deals. Now I think, how am I going to do all this if I move? Find a house? Get a job? Before there were two to do it. 11-10

Struggles with self-doubt and uncertainty about decisions were

common for mothers from modified-segregated marriages in their early years of single parenting[19]. They second-guessed their opinions and longed for someone with whom to hash over decisions. Paula explained these feelings well during a discussion about her children,

> I have made all the decisions [about them]. And it's always... I haven't talked it out fully? Did I miss something? Did I make the right decision? Did I not think of something? It's much easier to have someone there to talk it out with. Maybe somebody to say, "Yeah, you said this, too." And blame them a little bit. I don't know. But its a responsibility I am still not secure in. 11-7

Betsy also worried about most of her decisions in those early years,

> Right, it was just self-doubt....About am I doing what I should be doing. Is this the right decision? Then waiting to see. I always used to regret every decision I made. 35-27

Jo mistrusted her ideas in light of the only source of feedback she had available: her children. When I asked if she had liked becoming the primary decision-maker for her household, she told me,

> Well, it was kinda different cause I always wondered about if I did the right thing. Cause the decision I made wasn't always the one the kids wanted me to make. There were times when I wasn't perfect [smiles]. 30-17

This problem was most severe early on in single parenting. Pam had been separated from her husband for four months when we spoke. At that time she debated about some large issues, such as custody privileges. Yet, even everyday decisions seemed troublesome to her. When I asked her what was currently the most difficult thing she dealt with, she did not hesitate to say,

> Making decisions. I am finding decisions difficult to make....I plan to go slow. I know that I am going to have to make these decisions and no one else is going to make them. That's the most difficult thing. 18-7

This was not a chronic response of these single mothers,

however. Over time, many women from modified-segregated marriages slowly discarded their feelings of uncertainty and developed security and confidence in their decision-making and in their capabilities as heads of households. While mothers from segregated marriages also moved in this direction, they developed security and confidence much more slowly and tentatively.

As evidence of their increased comfort with decision-making, mothers from modified-segregated marriages cited their numerous achievements. For example, some were proud of their years of managing daily responsibility for a family. Others felt esteem about the way they upgraded their families' financial situation. While mothers from segregated marriages also communicated pride in their abilities as household heads, mothers from modified-segregated marriages were much more confident and less tentative about expressing these feelings. Paula noted:

> I am feeling better about myself....Part of it is building up my self-confidence in knowing that I can do this. I feel better about myself than I have in a long time. Because I am doing it... 11-9

And Helen also seemed pleased,

> I get a certain amount of satisfaction out of being self-sufficient. As far as a job and providing a home...I kinda like get off on being independent and taking care of us. I kinda like that...It's kinda neat to know that I can take care of myself. That's satisfying to me. 25-7

Margaret communicated esteem:

> I never thought I would ever feel this way. I didn't feel this way before he left. I feel very secure with who I am. My abilities and what I can do. I don't need to grab ahold of somebody to save me. I love rock and roll music, and [do you know] the song "I need a hero?" I don't need a hero. I am capable of just trudging through life all by myself. And I don't have to grab hold of somebody

to save me and to be a parent to the children. 34-2

Jo clearly contrasted her past and present sources of confidence:

> I think I am probably more confident, in achieving things for myself. I think when I was married my confidence lied in what could be provided for me and now I feel confident that I can get it for myself. That I can go out and get it for myself. Before I felt like maybe things came to me because I was married to such and such a person...I feel like I could probably handle situations better than I could before and I think maybe because I am the only one who can handle them now I have to. Where before somebody else probably stepped in and handled something for me. 30-26

One of the characteristics of a primarily wife-shaped marriage is that wives were a dominant, if not controlling, force in most family decisions. Arlie explained:

> I generally made all the decisions. All the way from the minor things like what we were having for supper to whether we needed a new stove or refrigerator. If we needed one we just got one cause I said we needed one. I wanted a microwave, so we bought that, too. He was real easy going, I guess....He like needed a mother-type to start with and I have always been really independent. And that really spiraled. And so, he didn't want to make any decisions. That was great as far as he was concerned. 33-3

Grace had a similar experience:

> When it came to the decisions in the household, I tended to make most of them. Peter would be part of the process but I would be the director most of the time. And I am strong willed and if I really wanted something, I would really want it. 9-10

A number of these women thought of themselves as heads of their households when they were married. When I asked Carol if she had felt this way, she replied:

> Yes, in a lot of respects. And I don't know where that started. I don't know if it was me being, I mean I never felt that I was a dominant person. I never felt like I was head strong. A lot of time I would sit back and wait for something. For him to do what I felt had to be done or should be done. And it would never get done. And it

> wasn't until I would get there and do it that it would get done. 31-5

Consequently, unlike the women from modified-segregated marriages, these women did not seem troubled or feel disrupted by the loss of a decision-making partner. Nor was their initial period of single parenting marked by much of the doubting or second guessing of decisions that typified women from modified-segregated marriages. At the most, mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages noted that they became a bit more thoughtful when considering their choices. For example, Arlie became more introspective:

> Being single, I have had to look at a lot of different things and decide what is best. And look from both sides of the issue. Maybe if I thought it was right and Joel thought it was wrong there'd be a balance in there. And now I have to contemplate every decision I make as to whether it's the right decision. I have always been one of those that had always wanted to just [go] full steam ahead on a project or something. Or if I wanted to do something, I want to do it right now. No matter what it would be. And now I have to stop and look at the outcome. 33-14

The five mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages contrasted strikingly with women from segregated marriages. Women from primarily wife-shaped marriages did not seem to feel overwhelmed by their responsibilities, unlike the women with more traditional situations. On the contrary, mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages seemed to derive pleasure from decision-making and heading a family. Some, like Carol, even regarded it as their source of greatest satisfaction:

> The most satisfying thing? .... I think it's kinda a reaction to the marriage I was in. That's, I'm the boss. I am the decision-maker. I was the decision-maker anyway, and now I don't have to convince somebody else that I think this is the way it should be done. .... Things are just easier. Now when I see something that has to be done, it

> can be done and its done the way I feel it should be. And that's a good feeling. 31-1

Susan echoed similar ideas:

> The best thing is that I don't have to consult anyone about decisions. If I want to do something, I'll figure out a way to do it and I will. I don't have to take anyone into account except my kids. 16-4

Decision-making was less conflict-ridden for a number of mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages who often felt caught in a bind during their marriages. Although ultimately the family decision-makers, these mothers felt they spent a large amount of time trying to incorporate their spouses' wishes in decisions. This, of course, was a very draining exercise; the husbands were often reluctant to participate in either crucial or mundane matters. Yet, these fathers frequently criticized or derogated their wives' actions and decisions. Carol said that after her separation, she felt like a ball and chain had been lifted from her.

> I think I felt a real stifling living with this person. So many times when I would suggest something it was laughed at or, "We can't do that." Well instead there should have been, there wasn't the moral support to go ahead and do it. I let him do that to me. I let him stifle me.....Now that that's not there, I don't have to worry about it. And if I want to do something, I do it. If I want to. 31-20

Similarly, Susan said:

> [in the marriage] I was making the decisions but I was, I was being double checked or checked up on just about every time. It was a no win situation. 16-13

I am not saying that mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages never tired of sole decision-making. A number remarked that having no break from decision-making was exhausting. However, mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages did not think that being

in charge of decision-making was a major obstacle or hardship. Unlike mothers from segregated marriages, these women were not surprised by their abilities to be decision-makers and be in control of a household. In fact, they rarely cited this as an accomplishment. If anything, mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages mentioned the positive impact that single parenting had on their already relatively high self confidence, as did Carol:

> I think I was always a positive person and had a lot of self-confidence, but I think that increased a lot. 31-19

In sum, mothers from segregated marriages had never expected to be solely responsible for their households. They doubted if they could manage the responsibility, often felt overwhelmed by all their duties, and felt that being a household head was a major source of frustration. Mothers from modified-segregated marriages felt less pressure and frustration from these responsibilities. Still, they longed for a decision-making partner and often second-guessed their own decisions, particularly in the early years of single parenting. Mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages were highly involved in decision-making and felt very responsible for their families when they were married. They did not feel taxed by having to head a household, nor did they seem to yearn for a lost partner. Women from primarily wife-shaped marriages who had either often disagreed with their spouses over decisions or had felt that their spouses had been rather passive participants in family life were the most satisfied with heading their households and caring for their families.

The Men

Women's responses to heading a household ranged from feeling burdened and overwhelmed to feeling satisfied and comparatively less stressed than when they were married, depending on the wife's marital history type. Is there also a predictable pattern in the men's reactions? I begin with the fathers whose marriages were most traditional.

As outlined above, women from segregated marriages often felt saddled with and engulfed by the demands of heading a household on their own. However, one could say that total responsibility for a family was not even an issue for men from segregated marriages; little changed in their lives with respect to heading a household. The two men from segregated marriages saw themselves as the leaders of their families when they were married and thought they were ultimately responsible for their households' well-being. If they felt some greater pressures, their concerns were specific and concentrated on housework and/or parenting. Neither father mentioned changes in a larger, more diffuse sense of responsibility, unlike the women from segregated marriages.

Men from segregated marriages were quite confident in their decision-making, especially with regard to heading a household, financial management, and parenting. Carl even seemed to feel adversely about any kind of advice or decision-making support. He explained that,

> I always [think] back to my old man. He won't give advice. It made me a better man. But it seems like I just do that naturally. I ask myself and I say, "What do I

do?" I'll figure it out. 8-7

Fathers from segregated marriages did not perceive their responsibilities as single parents as significantly different from their previous responsibilities. For example, when Carl described the impact of single parenting on his life, he remarked:

> It's a natural thing. Everybody says, "You have responsibility." But I don't feel it. It comes natural. A lot of people tell me that. 8-8

The seven men from modified-segregated marriages had rather traditional marital backgrounds, too. These fathers thought of themselves as heads of their previous families and believed they were the dominant family decision-makers when they were married. Like fathers from segregated marriages, most men from modified-segregated marriages seemed generally confident and comfortable with this aspect of their lives. For example, Vince remarked,

> Oh, I have no trouble making decisions. I mean that's just a part of my character to be able to make decisions. Sometimes maybe a little too impulsively, but I don't have trouble making decisions. 37-11

However, unlike fathers from segregated marriages, these men did not feel they carried all of the burden of decision-making responsibility and money management for their families when they were married. They believed they were senior partners, and described their wives in ways that made it clear that women were assistants in these households. For example, Gene was describing his marital responsibilities when he said,

> I felt like the stress was more on me than it was on both of us. I felt like the partner with the overwhelming responsibilities. 36-25

His depiction of his wife as a partner highlights an important

difference between the experiences of men from segregated marriages and men from modified-segregated marriages. Hints of wives' contributions crept into men's descriptions of decision-making in modified-segregated marriages. This happened, for example, when Dave qualified his original account of his marital decision-making patterns.

> I made all my own decisions. I made most of the decisions. I shouldn't say I made all my own decisions, but I made most of them. 47-2

Gene's experience was perhaps a bit unusual in that he felt his wife was reluctant to help with decision-making. Even so, he thought that she should have been involved as a helper or partner.

> I made most of the decisions with very little support or feedback from my spouse cause she was real passive and I didn't like that. I suppose she wanted somebody to make decisions for her....I kept pushing her to be more responsible and make more decisions or joint decisions. And if she wouldn't immediately I would go ahead and do it. 36-24

Vince was the one exception to this pattern among fathers from modified-segregated marriages. He gave his wife a lot of decision-making control in order to avoid conflict in his marriage. Yet, it was clear from Vince's description that he retained as much power as he desired.

> In the marriage, the path of least resistance was to let her make the decisions. Because we had a power struggle relationship, where she felt inadequate, down in relation to me. Not as much status in terms of job, career, income. And she was always struggling for control, control, control....I would play an active role in decisions I thought were important but in general I didn't play much of a role at all in day by day things. 37-11

Because they saw themselves as decision-makers and heads of households when they were married, many fathers from

modified-segregated marriages felt that the responsibility of heading a household changed little after they became single parents. When these fathers mentioned feeling more accountable for an area of their lives, they focused only on parenting or some other isolated duty, as did fathers from segregated marriages.

Becoming a sole decision-maker was often a very demanding and remarkable task for women from modified-segregated marriages, but these fathers took much less note of this change. Particularly in the early years of single parenting, mothers from modified-segregated marriages missed the decision-making support and guidance their spouses had provided. As a result, mothers from modified-segregated marriages were often full of self-doubt and uncertainty regarding the choices they faced. In contrast, the few men from modified-segregated marriages who spoke of lost decision-making help seemed less than emphatic about this change. They rather hesitantly suggested that they "guessed" the aid had been helpful or that they "kinda" missed having support[20]. For example, Sid seemed somewhat ambivalent about being a sole decision-maker. While early on in our discussion he sounded as if he enjoyed making independent decisions as a single parent, later he seemed nostalgic about the occasional help he once had. He admitted,

> Earlier I said it's nice to be able to make your own decisions, but I guess in some ways I kinda miss that [partnership] too. Share and talk and discuss. There wasn't a lot of that but.... 44-9

Steve believed that decision-making as a single parent was not problematic. However, he acknowledged that being a married parent made decision-making easier, because a helper enabled one to think

things out clearly. When asked if decision-making was different as a single parent, he replied,

> Oh, I guess in discussing it. I think I could sort things out easier, just discussing it. So I guess from that standpoint, yes, it's different. 45-3

Rod noted that without a decision-making helper, he took decisions a bit more seriously. Even so, he showed no doubt or stress about this responsibility, unlike many mothers from modified-segregated marriages.

> It occurred to me that when you have two adults in the house, maybe for the same reason that people feel that collective responsibility is easier to shoulder, when you make a decision, it's always easier if you feel like it was talked out and worked out in a group. I guess I do sometimes. You don't have that feeling when you are a single parent. Because all of your decisions are going to seem more arbitrary than if you had two people there to discuss it. I guess that makes me take them a little more seriously. To think about them a little more and to realize that what I decide on is going to be the way it is. 26-13

In sum, fathers from modified-segregated marriages reported no great transformations after becoming sole decision-makers. Yet, these fathers were more likely than fathers from segregated marriages to notice any lost aid, be more thoughtful about decision-making, and/or feel a bit of strain from this task.

Fathers from modified-segregated marriages also differed from fathers from segregated marriages in their appreciation of the added control they had over decision-making as single parents. While they were married, some of the fathers from modified-segregated marriages felt restricted by the ideas and opinions of their wives, as did Gene who believed that,

> Making those decisions is nov easier cause I don't

> have to worry about somebody not approving of the decision, even though I wasn't getting any feedback. 36-25

Rod also recognized the difference,

> Since becoming a single parent, I think that I do have more control over, I realize that what is going to happen is more my choice....Where we are going to live I will choose. If we buy a house I am going to choose. I will be able to sit down and look at my checkbook and my income and decide whether we are going to buy a house or not without anything extraneous interfering. 26-28

Vince made similar comments:

> In a sense I feel more control of my life overall than I did when I was married. And that's nice. I have more control over the tension I live with....I have more control over how to schedule my life....Marriage, depending on the circumstance I think, has to involve a lot of negotiations and common agreement about how to spend time, how much is jointly and not, and at least at the moment it's nice to be free of that. 37-1

While fathers from modified-segregated marriages had basically positive reactions to this change in their lives, most expressed only a minimal sense of enjoyment or relief about this control, particularly when one contrasts their responses with those of mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages. Unlike mothers from modified-segregated marriages, fathers from modified-segregated marriages did not seem to derive greater confidence and satisfaction from sole decision-making.

The five men from integrated marriages had much stronger feelings about their new responsibilities as single parents than did the other two groups of men. Integrated marriages were the most egalitarian of the four marital types. These fathers, for example, were least likely to believe that they were the heads of their households when they were married; most insisted that they coordinated their families' lives cooperatively with their wives.

They often saw themselves as partners in decision-making in their integrated marriages. For example, Roger described his marital decision-making by saying,

> The way I think it was like a kinda mutual thing. If I would suggest, then she would suggest and we discussed it and it went. 41-9

Even if the scales were tipped in the direction of decision-making dominance by one of the spouses, the men generally regarded both themselves and their wives as active contributors to household plans. Larry believed that:

> When we were married it was pretty much equal. We really had few arguments. We just got along....And we did most of the joint decision-making, I think we just kinda blended. I may have done a little more, my say did mean more, but how much more I couldn't say. We had give and take there. It surprises me to think about it, to see how balanced we were. 42-3

While men from integrated marriages commented mostly on parenting and keeping up a home, a number of them also felt increased pressure from a more diffuse sense of total responsibility. For example, I asked Roger what was most difficult about being a single parent. He looked puzzled; then he said,

> I don't think you can just pick one of them out for me, I can't. I can't pick one of them out, it's all together. It's all together anyway. You have to raise the kids and the household has to be kept clean and keep the kids healthy and feed them descent food to keep them happy. And it's all rolled into one. 41-15

Irv suggested he felt more overall responsibility as a single parent because his pressures and duties could no longer be shared. At one point he admitted,

> I guess one way to look at it is, there is nobody else to blame for what goes wrong except me. Whereas before I guess there was always a scapegoat. You could

always blame your partner for whatever. 15-20

Men from integrated marriages were the only fathers to acknowledge any skepticism about being able to manage a household alone when they first became single parents. This might seem odd, since men from integrated marriages had been the most involved with daily household activities (including housework and parenting) of the three groups of fathers. Yet, fathers from integrated marriages had been accustomed to doing these activities in partnership with another adult.

Uncertainty about being able to manage was most severe among those fathers from integrated marriages whose wives had left them unexpectedly. For example, Larry said that in the early months of single parenting, he was filled with anxiety about being a single parent. He described his early litany of self-inquisition:

> It's very devastating at first. How in the world am I gonna do it? Can I? Am I gonna be able to? And I was rock bottom at the time. 42-1

While fathers from integrated marriages may have begun single parenting with some self-doubt, of the men they expressed the strongest feelings of esteem about their families' survival and their success as household heads. Martin displayed some of this self-admiration. He had been a single parent for only a year when he told me:

> I am proud of getting on day to day. I am proud of that. People come up to me and say, "I don't know how you are doing it." And I say I don't either, frankly. It's just a hell of a labor. A lot of effort to run a career with all that's attendant outside, and a family. 38-11

Larry showed his pleasure when he spoke of what was most satisfying about single parenting. At the time, he had been alone for over five

years.

> I have been able to realize that I can do it myself. That I don't need the other person to interact with. The kids know that dad can do it. Being able to totally, I suppose, be my own boss. I can come and go as I please, within reason. [And] I suppose it's just having them for 6 years. Having custody and just knowing that we are a family, even if there is one spouse missing. That we can do things together, the kids and I, other than the kids and us. And just knowing that, that you can still be a family, without half the family. 42-16,17

Men from integrated marriages also reacted to their decision-making responsibilities very differently than the other two groups of fathers. In fact, many of their feelings seemed rather similar to those of women from modified-segregated marriages perhaps because both groups felt they had valuable partners in previous decision-making activities. Fathers from integrated marriages readily acknowledged that they had relied on their spouses when married and keenly felt the loss of a decision-making partner. This was reflected in numerous comments on being unable to "check things out" with someone when facing a choice. For example, when I asked Irv about the biggest changes in his life since he became a single parent, he admitted that:

> I guess once in a while, you know, its nice to have somebody to bounce a problem off of. 15-19

Likewise, Roger said:

> I guess the biggest change would be making all the decisions on my own. Like, not the major decisions, but the everyday things. Cause usually like, I don't know it's kinda hard to give an example. Just everything. Cause like now this time of school year I have to find my youngest one a sitter. He is gonna go to kindergarten. I have to find a sitter for him and usually we had, we decided on where he was gonna be and she usually was the one that usually did all the arrangements on that....We were kinda, we kinda made decisions together. 41-1

Fathers from integrated marriages felt encumbered by all the decisions that fell on their shoulders, as did mothers from segregated and modified-segregated marriages. For example, Irv felt that sole decision-making was his biggest source of stress.

> Everything is just, is your decision. What happens to the house is your [his emphasis] decision. What happens to the kids is your decision. What happens to the color of the drapes is your decision. What happens if the house is clean is your decision. There is no sometime relief....It's, it's a lot harder, a lot more pressure. 15-19

While Martin commiserated about changes in his life, he admitted that making choices on his own was taxing:

> I think the worst part of that is being wholly responsible for the decisions and nobody really to try out those decisions on. To test them out and talk about them. To decide, to have someone else decide or have someone else help out and decide major things with you. That's really one of the tougher things. That really wears you down after a while. It's always on you. You are always the one that has to make this choice. 38-1

A number of fathers from integrated marriages even believed that having sole responsibility for all things was the most frustrating part of single parenting. While speaking about the source of his greatest frustration, Larry acknowledged:

> I suppose what I really miss in a sense is the sharing of the kids and the household. Being equal or discussing things that come up. About the kids and the household. Everything as a marriage would be. That's part of my little insecurity myself, is that I am not sure of my total judgment. 42-14

Roger felt that the strain of sole decision-making arose from both internal and imagined external forces.

> There's pressure on you cause you are a single parent. You have to make sure the decision you make is the right one, to your best judgment. You don't have a second opinion like you did before. And you are always afraid

> that someone is going to second guess you, something like that. Why did you do that? Or whatever. 41-14

Of the three groups of fathers, men from integrated marriages were most likely to be hesitant about decisions and show self-doubt, as did Larry:

> The question always come up in your mind, as to am I doing the right thing? Is my judgment good enough? In the marriage we could always discuss things. Now otherwise, as a single parent you can't really discuss it with the kids. Some things you can, some things you can't. 42-9

Martin agreed that he, too, was troubled about having to rely solely on his opinions and choices. When asked about the most frustrating part of his life, he replied,

> It gets back to decisions. Its always there. You, at least I do, always have some self-doubt about decisions. It would be so nice to have someone to bounce them off of, to test them out, give them a feel. 38-21

Two final reactions to decision-making by fathers from integrated marriages seem almost contradictory in comparison with the ideas mentioned above. However, these final comments become more understandable when placed in the appropriate context. First of all, even though many fathers from integrated marriages felt burdened and frustrated by sole decision-making and evidenced some self-doubt about decision-making, their self-doubt gradually declined over time and they gained feelings of esteem and satisfaction from being the family decision-maker (as did mothers from modified-segregated marriages). For example, while he admitted that sole decision-making was difficult, Martin felt that some positive changes had occurred in his first year of single parenting,

> I have been able to make decisions more quickly now out of necessity. And that's made me feel good about myself...I feel good about that. 38-20

Second, while fathers from integrated marriages missed the support and cooperation of another adult, they were most pleased with having greater control over their lives and decisions, in comparison with other fathers. Karl realized that as a single parent,

> One had only oneself to consult with. There wasn't any more negotiating about what was going to happen. When I made a decision, that was it. We are going on vacation. That's it. My daughter will go to this school. That's my decision. It's time for a checkup. I want to buy a fancy leather chair. I would just do all those things without, you know, it's real nice to have that kind of freedom. Just sort of charting one's own course without baggage. To do what one wants. What one would like. 10-14

Larry also enjoyed this independence.

> Now I have nothing to compromise with. I like it that way [laughs]. To a certain extent. I have more control over what I do. Like if friends call me up and want to go somewhere, if I feel like it I do. If I don't, I don't have to. Just answer to me and what I feel is best for me and the kids and the household. 42-15

Pleasure with independence and increased control was strongest among fathers from integrated marriages who had been single parenting the longest amounts of time. Of course, in relation to the other two groups of men, fathers from integrated marriages had less independence in their marriages. Thus, they had the greatest potential to gain control over their lives when they became single parents.

In sum, men from segregated marriages were confident in their decision-making and secure as heads of their families. Men from modified-segregated marriages had thought of themselves as household leaders when they were married, but did not believe they were sole decision-makers. Even so, fathers from modified-segregated marriages seemed to miss only slightly their wives' decision-making

participation. They felt that being a sole decision-maker caused them perhaps to become more thoughtful about their choices; at the most they felt just a bit more strained by this task. Men from integrated marriages had much stronger feelings about their new responsibilities as sole household heads than did other fathers. Fathers from integrated marriages were most likely to express a bit of uncertainty about their abilities to head a household alone in the beginning of their single parenting. They seemed to keenly feel the loss of a decision-making partner and missed being able to discuss and thrash out ideas with a spouse. As a result, fathers from integrated marriages reported that they sometimes felt taxed, frustrated, or over-burdened by all their decisions; they mentioned feeling hesitant at times and filled with some self-doubt, especially in the early years of single parenting. Still, in comparison with the other fathers, men from integrated marriages were most pleased with the control they gained over their lives as single parents and expressed the most esteem about their families' survival and their own success as household heads.

While I easily found similarities and differences in the responses of single mothers and fathers to their responsibilities, the only consistent pattern I could uncover among their reactions reflects the importance of marital history type for understanding single parents' lives. Whether professional or blue collar worker, a "new" single parent or a veteran, a middle income person or a lover income one, marital history type created the clearest parameters for single parents' responses to changes in their responsibilities.

Heading a household and being a decision-maker are rather amorphous activities that imply involvement in a range of activities. In the next chapters, I discuss changes in single parents' responsibilities by separating out the various dimensions of their daily activities, including financial management, paid employment, housework, and parenting. To begin with, I will describe the single parents' reactions to financial management.

CHAPTER V

FEELINGS ABOUT FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

No matter how meager its resources, every family has to deal with financial affairs such as bill paying and budgeting expenses. In the context of most single-parent families, this is no doubt a difficult task. Most single mothers have below average incomes and many are stressed by infrequent, unreliable child support payments and have obstacles to obtaining credit (Luepnitz, 1982)[21].

How do single parents feel about the tasks involved with financial management? The research literature suggests a variety of answers. Some parents seem to enjoy having independent control over their even severely curtailed budgets (Grella, 1985). Other parents may create elaborate support systems and avoid dealing with finances alone (Stack, 1972). While we know that single parents exhibit a range of responses to financial management, the research literature does not indicate why these differences among parents exist or in which contexts we might expect single parents to act similarly to one another.

In the following pages, I explore the feelings of single mothers and fathers of the sample subset to see if their reactions to such tasks as keeping financial records, maintaining a checking account, bill paying, and investing extra family funds differ

according to their marital history types. I begin with descriptions of the mothers' marital history types and their reactions to financial management.

The Women

Husbands handled the vast majority of financial matters in segregated marriages. Many mothers from segregated marriages had virtually no input into their families' finances. An example is Jane, who referred to herself as,

> the mafia wife. You know how the wives were in the "Godfather?" I identified with the women in that movie cause they were to look pretty and to be seen and not heard. That was the person I was married to. I never saw one of his paychecks. It was sad, it was pathetic and I am embarrassed to admit it. My lawyer said I was one of many who don't have any idea of their financial situation. I was totally in the dark. He took care of everything. 24-4

Barb's husband also had command of the family money (at least inasmuch as anyone did in her family):

> The finances were maintained almost solely by him. Because he was the bookkeeper, I felt that finances, he should have been more qualified to take care of the finances. Unfortunately, a plumber's sink always leaks. My checkbook was just incredibly bad. I never knew how much money we had cause he was always in control of it. Even though he wasn't in that much control, either. 28-11

Marilyn was one of the few who managed to obtain a little autonomy from her spouse's control of this area:

> He was in charge of finances. He had his checks and he would go cash them. That was another way for him to get out of the house. He would take the bills and say he would go to pay these...He always had the money. When I was working I opened a checking account. And he was upset about that, but I did it. I talked him into letting me have a checking account....He gave me so much to spend for groceries. He would say, "You can spend this much." 32-12

These financial arrangements were often the result of an

implicit agreement between the couple, as Ann noted:

> You see that was something we never talked about before we got married and I was so dumb. I just assumed that you get married and things work out. We did not talk about any financial, sexual, nothing. I was in a dream state where you get married and things work out. And your husband treats you well and you have kids. I never saw my parents talk about money. 14-21

A number of women from segregated marriages experienced very rocky financial conditions toward the end of their marriages. During those difficult times mothers often gained some experience with money managing. However, the situations were often so financially onerous that the wives' control of money matters was tenuous, to say the least. These mothers got experience handling money when their husbands abdicated this role, or, as one wife put it:

> He said he was gonna do the finances. So I assumed he was going to do it. Then a year later when the payments were late, he shoved it on to me. Then I thought, "What is this?" Then that's when I started reading those documents and paying attention. When things started getting rough it was, "You balance the checkbook." One month he had eighty dollars worth of overdrafts. 14-21

Until the time that her husband finally told her to take responsibility for bill paying, Marge had not even worked with a checkbook. Even then, she said:

> He wouldn't give me control enough to balance the checkbook. And there's really not that much to it. But I didn't know that. I didn't know nothing about that before. 29-14

The family incomes of all of the mothers from segregated marriages dropped upon separation, but mothers did not react uniformly to this change. Wives from segregated marriages who had decided to end their marriages seemed to feel more positive about their new financial responsibilities than did wives from segregated

marriages whose husbands' chose to leave them. While their single-parent lifestyles were materially less advantaged than their married lifestyles, women who chose to end their marriages felt relatively better off because they had obtained greater control over their financial resources. In a study of divorced women whose standard of living declined substantially after their marriages ended, Grella (1985) also discovered that many women cherish being able to control their own money matters. Jane (from a segregated marriage) had this reaction. Jane lived affluently while married, but when she left her spouse she took only a crib, clothes and a microwave with her. She described what she referred to as the insanity of her past financial situation:

> All the madness... I never have to live with that again. Knowing that financially, I never knew how much money we had or what was in the checkbook. He wouldn't keep a balance. So I always wondered if my checks were good or not. Worrying like that fatigues you. It got to the point where I had to charge groceries at the corner store and there was never any fresh things to eat. 24-9

When I asked Jane if her standard of living had changed, she said that she had not thought about it in the three years she had been a single parent. She said she preferred to think in terms of her quality of life rather than her standard of living. Jane felt that her quality of life had improved dramatically because she felt better about herself since she left her spouse. And she obviously felt very relieved about not having to live with the financial stress her husband had created.

Ann's experiences were somewhat similar. When I asked if her standard of living changed when she became a single parent, she

answered:

> Yes, it did. I left with nothing. My daughter had three outfits and I didn't get any of my clothes cause he wouldn't let me in. I started out with nothing.
>
> Q: How did you feel about that?
>
> Again, I was so relieved to be out of that sick relationship that I felt nothing but relief just getting away from him....It was just such a relief to be out of [the marriage], away from him. 14-24

Marilyn often felt financially strapped after she became a single parent. Yet she convinced me that her recent financial stress was preferable because she had also gained greater autonomy. She explained:

> Q: What has been your biggest source of stress as a single parent?
>
> I would have to say financial stress. Right now it isn't as bad but there have been times when it's been really tough. And I didn't think we were gonna make it. There were too many bills and not enough money.
>
> Q: How does that stress compare to the stress in your marriage?
>
> Well, it's not as bad cause it's something that I have control over. More so, even if I feel like I don't have control over it, it is more so than living under his roof. When he is in control of things, the money, and who does what. 32-10

For one mother in particular, being independent and in control of family finances was very important. As she recalls, her spouse used his position as family financial manager to manipulate her when they were married. She explained,

> I was making a good salary and I had a five dollar a week allowance. That was how tight money was kept for me. And it was a form of punishment or reward if I was behaved as a good wife. If I was well behaved as a good wife, I got a little extra spending money, which technically was my own....I feel real strongly cause money, I think, is used

> as a real definite source of control in the marriage. Kind of a power leverage to a great degree. 28-12

Even women with very few resources felt able, from time to time, to purchase things or make decisions that seemed forbidden during their marriages. For example, Marilyn went from a low-income marriage to living on welfare as a single parent. She told me:

> I remember feeling like I had money to spend that I hadn't before. I remember all the time we were married, I remember getting one new sweater and that was it. In all those years I got no new clothes. And I remember my first fall in school [after becoming a single parent] my sister and I went shopping and I spent like sixty to seventy dollars on clothes and I felt like, "Oh, my gosh I got all these new clothes and material to make them with." Things like that that I hadn't done for so long. It was really a treat. 32-13

Women from segregated marriages who chose to divorce were also more likely than those whose spouses' asked for a divorce to feel esteem regarding their management of family funds. A number of these women seemed pleasantly impressed by how well they had managed and "kept away the bill collectors."

Women from segregated marriages whose spouses initiated the divorce gained little pleasure from their financial responsibilities. Neither apparently did these tasks enhance their self-esteem. Both of these reactions seem to stem from the still very negative feelings these women had toward their ex-spouses. When these mothers married, they assumed that their partners would always care for the finances. It seemed a cruel hoax that the men who promised to provide such care would purposely alter their lives so drastically. For example, Judy reflected:

> I didn't want to take responsibility at all. I ended up in really bad financial shape....I don't know, have you read the book <u>The Cinderella Complex?</u> I thought that looks

> like a book I should read. In there the author talks about not balancing her checkbook, not thinking about it at all, blocking it out, ignoring it like it didn't exist. Then there was an eleventh hour instinct and she would peek in her checkbook. I thought, God, she is peeking in my windows. That's the way I had been doing it for, I must have been able to go on like that for five years...I just really really denied it. I wouldn't accept it....It just to me was not fair that all the sudden he was supposed to keep half of his income when he was one-fourth of the family and we were three-fourths of it. 43-2

Nancy also felt a great deal of stress from having to develop her own set of financial arrangements.

> The biggest problem is financial. Who do you run to? Unless you are financially wealthy, you feel so dependent. We are so compromised and so dependent on others....I was a basket case about, how am I going to make it? How am I going to pay for this? Now, I think that things have worked out. Most of my worries were, oh my God, what if this doesn't work out? It was a nagging fear. 6-12

Women from modified-segregated marriages were more involved in their families' finances than women from segregated marriages. When they were married, mothers from modified-segregated marriages usually helped their spouses balance checkbooks and plan budgets. Betsy described her past involvement in finances by saying:

> I played around with it. I dabbled in it. I kept the books and stuff like that. But he didn't care if I did it or not. And it really didn't matter, you know. 35-2

Women from modified-segregated marriages felt less of a disjuncture from their prior financial activities and had fewer skills to learn than did mothers from segregated marriages. As a result, mothers from modified-segregated marriages had muted feelings about their new responsibilities for financial affairs. While a few of these mothers felt they gained greater control over their finances, none felt quite as liberated by their new financial

authority as did women from segregated marriages. A minority of mothers from modified-segregated marriages spoke with pleasure of the advantages of sole financial planning and decision-making. One noted:

> What I like is finding myself being totally in the say of what to do with [my] money. Even though I was kinda, to a large degree anyway [before]. I really like that business of being the boss. 25-10

Women from modified-segregated marriages expressed pride in their financial abilities less often and in a fainter tone than did women from segregated marriages. And mothers from modified-segregated marriages seemed much less surprised by their developing skills. They thought of their performance of these tasks as neither unusual or outstanding and accorded themselves only muffled notes of self-praise. For example, one said she was feeling increasingly "comfortable" with her financial capabilities (34-2) while another congratulated herself by saying that she had learned to budget and was doing "fine" (30-4).

In sum, women from segregated marriages were more pleased with having enhanced control over their finances and were much more likely to feel esteem about their involvement in financial tasks in comparison with women from modified-segregated marriages. Of course while they were married, women from segregated marriages had very little financial input or autonomy; thus they gained a great deal more authority over financial matters when they became single parents. It seems that their esteem rose because they commanded a valued element of their lives and were doing a new task well.

Women from primarily wife-shaped marriages were often the bill

payers and money handlers of their marriages. As a result, when they were on their own, financial management was not new to them. For example, when asked who took care of the bills in her family, Arlie said:

> I did that, too. Yeah, he just handed me the check. I would take it to the bank. I would pay the bills. He never realized how much in debt we were when we got divorced [laughs]. Or what we had paid for, all those things. It was basically, usually, always me. He never looked at the checkbook. He would look at the checkbook every once in a while and ask me how much he could write it out for and that would be about it. 33-3

If they did not manage their families' finances alone, then they asserted that this was an egalitarian task in their marriages, as did Carol,

> I felt that our financial decisions that we made were mutual. But I was very used to making financial decisions, cause being on my own is no different, making financial decisions. 31-2

Women from primarily wife-shaped families felt that their lives changed little as a result of becoming sole financial decision-makers or managers. Only those who experienced conflict with their spouse over financial management had more than perfunctory comments to make about financial management. As you might imagine, women from primarily wife-shaped marriages who had memories of marital conflict and dissension over finances embraced the added control they gained over money matters after they became single parents. For example, Grace explained that while she was married she lived at a very stressful income level. As a single parent, her income declined even further. And yet because her financial conflicts with her spouse ceased, she said,

> Now I don't think I feel more stress about [finances]. In fact, maybe I feel a little less stress. Because now I only have to rely on myself for what my financial situation is going to be. And so if I am disappointed, I am going to be disappointed in myself. 9-9

Susan also had had many bouts over finances with her husband. When she became a single parent, she had two infants and a minimum-wage job. Even in her financially oppressive situation, she felt happier than she had when she was married. She explained,

> You see, you have basically the same stress if not more [as a single parent]. Cause I put myself in a very difficult situation. But I am in control of the situation. There's a difference. I couldn't control the other situation. 16-13

The financial management responsibilities of single parenting did not seem to influence the self-esteem of women from primarily wife-shaped marriages, in contrast with women from segregated marriages. If from primarily wife-shaped marriages, women's feelings about control of finances were influenced by whether they had disagreed about finances with their husbands while they were married. If from segregated marriages, women's feelings about financial tasks were affected by whether or not they had initiated their divorce. Mothers from segregated marriages were most proud of their management of finances; the other two groups of mothers rarely felt such esteem. Yet even in light of these two qualifiers, each marital history type seems to create a distinctive context which affect women's responses to this element of single parenting.

I must state one very important caveat. Single mothers who had been impoverished or on welfare at some point found that making financial decisions and making ends meet were enormously stressful tasks. I am not implying that these women's experiences did not

differ according to their marital types. On the contrary, they did. However, these mothers were much more distressed about financial management than were mothers who were not poor. I discuss these mothers' feelings about welfare in the next chapter.

The Men

Mothers' perceptions of and reactions to financial management varied clearly by marital history type. However, the overwhelming majority of the men in all three groups had either controlled or been highly involved with their families' finances. Thus, marital history type was not a source of diversity among fathers with respect to money management. Regardless of their marital history type, these three groups of fathers did not see bill paying, money handling, and financial planning as new obstacles or challenges. For example, Dave (who had a modified-segregated marriage) explained:

> I handled all the finances and wrote out all the checks, and really had more control than was healthy for the relationship, frankly. I mean it wasn't an equal partnership. 47-2

Sid (also from a modified-segregated marriage) controlled home and business funds:

> I did the bill paying. I would take care of the bills. I am self employed and we had a business account and a personal account. She would take care of the groceries. We would go grocery shopping together a lot. But I would pay all the bills. 44-5

Fathers from integrated marriages were a bit less likely to have had major responsibility for bookkeeping and money handling for their families, but this type of involvement in finances was clearly their

choice. For example, Roger explained:

> She just kept the checkbook. That's kind of a pain, I thought. Not writing checks out, but taking care of the checkbook and making sure it balances. I helped but she's the one that sat down with the adding machine and did it. I helped as much as I could. But she did most of that. 41-9

Irv had shared this task with his wife:

> I paid all the bills and took care of that stuff. But see then I got money for bills and money for us. And money for us, I always used to give to her cause she did a better job of hanging on to it. But the bills, I always took care of. No problem. 15-17

Most fathers from all three marital history types did not feel that financial tasks were worth exploring during our talks. I got the impression that they felt money matters were rather routine and mundane. The men's indifferent descriptions of these duties told me that they did not take special pride in or unusual note of this element of their lives.

Unlike mothers from segregated marriages, single fathers whose wives were in charge of finances when they were married did not regard financial management as bringing significant, enhanced control over their lives. Most men acted rather casually about this change, perhaps because they had been income-earners and thus had some exposure to financial matters. The men's response also might reflect the fact that some fathers had not really wanted to manage family money. Roger and Irv (cited above) suggested that their wives controlled the family finances because they, the husbands, chose not to be involved. Men who felt some newfound pleasure with managing their family's funds said their wives were either undependable, spendthrifts who wasted money needlessly, or alcoholics who used

family funds to buy alcohol. Vince was one of these men.

> I have always been a budgeter. It's just that now I can manage it. I can control it. Before my wife could just take money out of savings, and she would never enter what she had taken out. And by the time I would get the thing and try to balance it, she would never remember what she had taken out. So I never was in control of my bank stuff before. Now I am in control. And I am compulsive. No more than before, but I get more pleasure out of it now because it's not run amuck as it was before. 37-6

Rod explained that he now felt greater financial security because:

> I am in more control of my income now. As I say, there was a lot of money being wasted. I really didn't know what was going to happen. I think alcoholics try to buy things to combat their feelings. Either end of her binges there were problems with finances. We took vacations we couldn't afford. Because they were going to solve things. It's hard to plan cause I didn't know when these needs were going to come up. 26-28

A difference between men and women was prominent. Women who had wanted to handle their own finances displayed a greater sense of relief, pleasure, and esteem over the changes in financial management that single parenting brought. The men who had wanted more control over their money were comparatively nonchalant, albeit happy, about this benefit of single parenting.

Fathers most distressed and dissatisfied with caring for finances had wives who had contributed substantially to their families' incomes. Larry felt this strain,

> At first I knew it was gonna be very difficult with the house payments and the car payments. The house payments were like 42% of my take home. And I don't know how [we made it]. It did hit on the little savings we did have and then I got some when mother passed away. But it was tight. In fact, sometimes too tight. 42-2

Roger also lamented,

> We were living on her income and my income and that's the way we set up our, well, we never had a budget type

> thing where we went by the budget, but we never went out of that salary going in. Well, we never tried to go out of it. So then we had two financial bills that we had accumulated just prior to her leaving, so it put a real burden on me. Then we have high electric bills. Yeah, it did. It really hurt financially. 41-2

Of course, relatively speaking, these fathers did have the toughest jobs; they had to make the most adjustments in their families' standards of living in comparison with the other fathers. Yet as mentioned earlier, single mothers did not respond as uniformly to their depressed financial conditions.

In sum, it appears that the men's feelings about financial management did not vary significantly by their marital history type. Men who felt they gained greater control over finances seemed much more subdued about this change than did women in comparable situations. The primary distinction among men with regard to financial management stems from whether or not their wives had been major contributors to their families' incomes. Men whose family incomes dropped most precipitously (because of lost income from the ex-wife) were the most distressed about their financial management activities.

In the next chapter I describe single parents' reactions to a responsibility closely akin to financial management: income earning. In this discussion I focus on single parents' perceptions of the meaning of paid work and their feelings about being the primary financial supporters of their households.

CHAPTER VI

WORK AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

> I mean we really did go to college to prepare for the eventuality that some day in the distant future that you may have to fall back on a college degree to earn a living. You know, if you got divorced or your husband died. But you never really thought it would happen to you. [Judy, a 37 year old single mother of two]

Single parents must financially support their families. Some may get child support or briefly receive government aid, but this is rarely enough to keep a family afloat. Thus, for women especially, single parenting often brings about changed perceptions of financial responsibilities. Work becomes a necessity. Like Judy, mothers who had only vaguely thought about paid work suddenly find themselves searching through help wanted ads and pondering career plans.

The different relationship of women and men to the labor force played a prominent part in the sample subset's transitions to single parenting. Thus, their work and financial experiences must be understood within the context of the United States' economic structure. For example, even though most women are members of the labor force (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983a), women tend to design their work experiences to be complementary to their families' needs and schedules (Smith, 1979). Mothers often prefer part-time work near their homes and like job schedules that permit ample time with their

children. As a result, women often sacrifice higher incomes and job mobility for family priorities. Additionally, the average woman worker makes considerably less (about 40% less) than the average man (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1983a). Yet the reality of this wage gap no doubt seems much less onerous to women when they are supplemental earners in married-couple families. For these reasons, the financial plans of married women frequently change when they become single parents. Income, job mobility, and job security become increasingly important. In contrast, husbands usually do not design their careers or plan restricted work schedules to benefit their families. Thus, divorce or the death of a spouse results in more dramatic changes for women than for men with regard to their paid work and financial responsibilities.

Yet single mothers are not homogeneous and neither are single fathers. The sample subset mothers had three unique marital history types which corresponded with three different work history patterns, ranging from full-time homemaking to full-time paid work. These past experiences were closely related to the mothers' stress about the need to work, esteem gained from their jobs, personal investment in work, and re-evaluation of their mothering ideology. In addition, some mothers' feelings about work and financial responsibilities were influenced by their previous desire to end their marriages and by their receipt of low-income aid from the government. The major source of fathers' varied reactions to work and financial responsibilities stemmed from their job autonomy. Professional and self-employed fathers reshaped their daily schedules to better

complement their single parenting, in contrast with fathers who were laborers and service workers. Fathers with more job autonomy also felt less driven by their work after they became single parents. These patterns are described below, beginning with the experiences of mothers from segregated marriages.

The Women

When women from segregated marriages married, they assumed they would be supplemental contributors, at most, to their families' incomes. These mothers wanted to remain full-time homemakers particularly through their children's preschool years. Marilyn felt this way. When I asked if she had wanted to work while she was married, she replied,

> Somewhat maybe, but I wanted to be home with them at the same time. And when they were babies I didn't like to leave them with baby sitters. Like if I had to take them to the doctor, I would only let my sister or somebody in the family sit them...I had a big garden and plenty to keep me busy. 32-2

However, many of these women's marriages ended when their children were very young. Upon divorce, women from segregated marriages often quickly became enmeshed in a struggle between their new responsibilities as their families' breadwinners and their wish to remain at home with their children. In the context of this conflict, we can see some metamorphosis in mothers from segregated marriages.

The desire to stay home with their children was most tenacious among mothers from segregated marriages whose spouses asked for a divorce. These women were unprepared and unwilling to radically change their life plans. When they became single parents, they felt

angry and frustrated about their financial responsibilities. Nancy used up the majority of her savings to support her family while she stayed home with her preschoolers. She had been deeply concerned over the impact her daily absence would have had.

> My ultimate goal was that I wanted to stay home with the kids until they went to school. I think that's the hardest shock for kids, when they have a mother that stays home with the kids, and then dad walks out, mother has to go to work and then you end up with no parent instead of one...[You] work for eight hours a day and commute another two or three hours and you would never see them. I think they would really suffer in that respect. 6-2

When she was married, Nancy assumed that she would get a paid job when "the time was right." And even after a number of years of single parenting, Nancy's preference was to work at home. When she spoke of the few times she had worked outside the home, she reminded me that she blamed her ex-spouse for her situation:

> My savings ran out before I did my internship, and I called my ex up and said, "You'll have to pay for child care. You'll have to cough it up. If you'd been here in the first place, I wouldn't have to be doing this. You'll just have to pay for it." And he did. Money is no problem for him. 6-9

Judy's spouse also left her. She described her feelings about being responsible for supporting her family:

> I did not want to work...I had decided that I had not planned to work full time at all until the kids were a lot older. That wasn't my game plan when I got pregnant and made decisions to have children. I guess it was very hard for me to accept the fact that it wasn't gonna be my way. I really fought that. I really, really, really used a lot of energy fighting that. But I was just so against that. Just cause he wanted out. Cause he had another involvement emotionally that all of the sudden my lifestyle had to change so drastically...I think it was the idea that I was forced into it. [That] it wasn't my decision would have been more the problem than anything. I wanted more time with the kids, more time around the house, time to be an at-home parent. I didn't think I could handle the rigors

> of a job plus the responsibility of running a household and taking care of two kids by myself. 43-3,4

For the eight mothers from segregated marriages, becoming their families' primary financial support was a catalyst for a great deal of reflection and "soul searching" concerning their goals as parents and the attributes of mothering they most valued. For most women from segregated marriages, "full-time mothering" was their ideal. But staying home and caring for one's children was usually impossible for these single mothers. Thus, women from segregated marriages experienced two rather drastic and disturbing changes. First, they had to adjust to providing a steady source of substantial funds for their families. Second, they had to cope with their confusing emotional reactions to the impracticality of full-time mothering. Their responses included grief, resentment, lovered esteem, and guilt. For example, Ann described her feelings about work by discussing her daughter's reactions:

> I think I got really caught up, feeling guilty cause she had been at a baby sitters all the time ever since she was two years old. I really wanted to be home with her more, so that took me a lot of years to work through that. That guilt of not being a mother at home cause that's the way I was brought up and my mom still thinks that's the way to do it...When they are two years old they cry when you are gone. And you come home to the baby sitters and they come running to you like they've been waiting for you all day. It really tears at you cause you're thinking, "Oh, I'm not [a full-time mother] and this is my responsibility." Or when they get up in the morning and say, "Mommy, do you have to work today?" And it's Saturday, no, and they hug you cause they are so happy to spend the day with you. That was hard for me to work through. Then you meet a married person who doesn't have to work and that old guilt comes right back. I think maybe I should get married just so I can stay home. You know, that is a thought that a lot of single parents have. A girlfriend and I have talked about that. Maybe these women are smarter than we are. They are the ones that are home all day and don't have the responsibilities that we do.

14-7

Barb worked part-time during her segregated marriage but resisted working full-time because it would have cut into her highly valued time at home with her children. When we discussed her early single-parenting experiences, she mentioned that she had felt great resentment toward:

> Just perhaps the situation. The whole situation. With any loss the grief process sets in. There was the loss, the loss of the dream of Ozzie and Harriet living. That type of thing. Kinda the loss of a dream. Realism setting in that I have to be responsible for my entire life. 28-3

The lost dream she mourned was what she referred to as the ideal of the "traditional wife." For Barb's generation, Ozzie and Harriet represented an enormously happy, conflict-free family that was held together and cared for by a full-time mother. In her mind, families were knit together by mothers who could devote a majority of their time to nurturing others.

Thus, because of their investment in a particular kind of motherhood, women from segregated marriages frequently contested or felt extremely torn by the demands of paid work. Those mothers from segregated marriages who could not remain at home full-time and live within the guidelines of their mothering ideals grieved over their loss. They did not easily shed their identification with full-time wife-motherhood. More than three years after becoming a single parent, Jane described her frustration:

> I never thought of this. All my life I was conditioned to think I would be a wife and mother... I feel sort of trapped. Not really, but I wish I could be a wife and mom. How I perceive it. I am a mother, but I wish I could be that kind of person. I always thought that I would have lots of kids and be a Girl Scout leader.

24-4,5

Nancy, a mother from a segregated marriage, considered herself fortunate because she had been able to work at home and be with her children. She also remained fervent in her convictions about full-time mothering. She noted:

> I feel like if you are going to put your kids in a day care center or, I guess I am adamant about this or really old fashioned, [but] if you are going to have a baby sitter take care of them, then why bother [becoming a parent]? To each his own. I couldn't do that. 6-2

Yet, Nancy was unusual. For most mothers from segregated marriages, becoming a single parent entailed a dual transformation: an expanded paid-work life and reduced opportunities to be home with their children. As a result, most mothers from segregated marriages struggled to realign their ideas on mothering to be consistent with their new lives. Some wrestled with their changing views on parenting for long periods of time and searched for role models. Jane explained:

> The two toughest jobs in the world are parenting and being married. We aren't taught how to do that. We as women don't have any role models. My mom didn't work. I am winging it. I am going on what I feel in my heart and common sense. 24-12

But even as they grew to accept the end of their full-time mothering, women from segregated marriages still had to deal with their children's reactions to this change. Marge's children missed her deeply once she began her full-time job. She recalled one painful day when she went to her son's school program. She began by saying:

> I think it was harder on the kids cause I had never worked before. Mom was always here...I went to school and when I went to leave, he cried. I had the afternoon off, that day off and I said, "I will be home. I will see you after school." He cried, "Mom, I don't want you to go." I

> said, "I will be home when you get there. If you quit crying I will go home and make chocolate chip cookies." He said, "Mommy, you are never home when I come home from school." I told him I would see him right after school. I looked back and he had his head on his desk and he was crying and crying. God that hurt. 29-8

Only two of the eight mothers from segregated marriages were working when their marriages ended, but all of them since have become much more involved in paid labor. As they adapted to being their household's financial supporters, many mothers reassessed their skills and earning potentials. As a result, over half of the mothers from segregated marriages retooled for the job market by expanding their education. They thought their standards of living could not rise otherwise. Jane planned to further her education. She explained her motivation:

> I have had to start planning for the future and start thinking of my net worth, retirement, my child's education. A lot of things that I was not conditioned or prepared for. That is why the reality of the divorce is finally hitting me. I have spent the past three years getting my feet on the ground...And now I say, now what? What am I going to do? 24-4

Some women had vacillated between wanting to care for themselves and plan realistically for the future, and hoping they would get remarried. For example, Ann had thought that she would quickly remarry. But after two years of single parenting, she no longer felt that her situation would be temporary. She reevaluated her plans after many frustrations with dating and attempts to find a mate. Ann said she realized that:

> I went to the bars with my girlfriends and hated that. So I thought, what do I want to do? Do I want to work as a store clerk and look for a husband or what? I knew that wasn't what I wanted. I knew I wanted to go back to school. 14-32

Some mothers from segregated marriages, such as Nancy, went back to school to train for jobs that could complement their children's needs and schedules, such as teaching:

> I wanted to go back to school and I had a humanities degree and I thought hours wise it would be best to be a teacher. Summers are off and you have all your vacations with the kids. So really that's the only thing I like about teaching, the vacations [laughs] 6-3

Judy originally thought about being a computer analyst, and then reconsidered because:

> Then I thought that involves an eight to five [job] all the time. I thought, what are they gonna do in the summer? Then all of the sudden I started thinking about being a teacher again....I thought I would have the summers free with the kids. The money wouldn't be great. But I started thinking that in the back of my mind. 43-10

Other mothers had previously been educated in areas in which their opportunities were now limited. For example, nurses found that their two-year degrees were becoming outdated. The entry level requirements for nursing jobs often included four-year degrees.

In ways similar to their struggle to redefine their expectations for motherhood, a number of single mothers from segregated marriages debated internally about the significance work should have in their lives. These mothers seemed torn between the pressure to become deeply or at least more committed to their occupation (since it had become a long-term undertaking), and an opposing drive, which helped them resist these pressures. Yet the debate remained internally alive for quite some time. Mothers from segregated marriages often seemed ambivalent about their work. For example, Jane mentioned numerous times that she neither was nor wanted to be a "career woman" (i.e., very invested in her job). Yet

she also said:

> I had a job before. A job is a temporary thing you get up and go to and you don't have to put everything into it. You can quit and you know once your kids are born you will probably not work for a while. There is an end to it. Or there is more of an option. But with a career there really isn't. A job is something to do, to keep busy to bring in extra money. Something to add to the breadwinner's income. Sort of a helping thing. A career is someone [sic] that is emotionally, physically, intellectually, really into their jobs. It is more of a priority. 24-5

These mixed messages about work commitment were most pronounced among those women from segregated marriages who husbands had left them. These mothers had not developed or accepted images of motherhood which differed significantly from their pre-divorce ideas, and they were the most ambivalent about developing a career or an occupational commitment. In comparison with other women from segregated marriages, these mothers were less definite about their future occupational plans (even seven years post-divorce) and they were less personally invested in their occupations. Nancy was once of these mothers:

> I have been one of those people who has never really known what I wanted to be. I have never really known. I can't quite figure it out. I have done a little of this and a little of that and have gone to school for half of my life. 6-7

Judy, who had years of part-time work experience and a college degree, was completely puzzled about her occupational interests. As a result, she participated in a displaced homemaker program because, she explained:

> I think it was because I didn't know what I want to be. What kind of direction I wanted to take career wise. Cause I had not even considered making those decisions until I was well into my 40s. I figured when my kids would

> be grown up I would find my career and my thing...That was the kind of answer I wanted to find. And I still have as yet to find those answers. I still don't know what I wanna be when I grow up. 43-8

Finally, women from segregated marriages seemed to tell me spontaneously how proud they were of being able to support their families. They were pleased to "survive" and get along daily. They saw their months and years of being the financial heads of their households as signs of capability and accomplishment. Some, like Marge, were surprised by how well they managed. Because of this, Marge said that she felt:

> Terrific. Absolutely terrific. When he left all he took was his clothes and the water bed. And I think it was because he felt and really, really felt that I couldn't do it and would be pounding on his door to come back. But, the water bed has been replaced. I don't need him and I think that's what hurts him the most. Cause he didn't think I could do it. I don't think a lot of people thought I could do it. But I am doing just fine. 29-15

Jane did not really appreciate how well she was doing until someone asked her to marry him. Then she realized how stable she felt:

> He was nice and he said, "Marry me, I'll give you a home." I said, I have a home. "I'll give you security." I said, I am making more money now than I ever thought I would be. I ask no one for a dime. Then he said, "I'll be your chauffeur." And I thought, this is sick. Everything you are offering me, I can give myself. I will never marry again for those reasons. Because I can do that alone. 24-6

Some of these women were proud because they had surpassed others' expectations (as Marge noted above). Ann felt that many people had been and remained skeptical of her ability to manage financially. She described a recent conversation with her mother:

> She thinks that if I got married, my financial problems would be over and a man could take care of me.

> Well, that's wrong. I can take care of myself. She doesn't recognize that a woman can do that. I think I grew up thinking that I had to be married. So a man could take care of me. 14-23

One of the major differences between women in segregated marriages and women in modified-segregated marriages was that the latter were either employed when they separated from their spouses or were in school preparing for near-future employment. Thus, all seven of the women from modified-segregated marriages had some immediate connection or anticipated link with the labor force while they were married. Most of these mothers preferred or planned to work part-time. Margaret was a student when her marriage ended. She told me:

> I never planned on working full-time....He didn't want me to go on to school and he didn't want me working full-time. I figured well how can you work full-time and raise four small kids? Part-time would be perfect cause you could still be with your family most of the day. 34-4

Betsy also wanted to be home more than a full-time work schedule would permit:

> I have worked since I graduated. On and off mostly, but mostly on. I took a few years off to have the kids. I have always worked part-time...It's been just enough, a few days of the week. 35-3

Nonetheless, like women from segregated marriages, nearly all women from modified-segregated marriages quickly became more involved in paid labor and/or schooling after they became single parents. While some of their work loads increased rather dramatically, none of the mothers from modified-segregated marriages (even those with preschoolers) reacted as strongly or as negatively to this change as did women from segregated marriages. For example, Margaret had wanted to work only part-time. She described her reaction to

becoming a full-time worker:

> I don't know that I had any feelings. It's just, if you are gonna eat and if you are going to continue to drive a car and wear clothing, you are going to work full-time. There's just no choice in the matter. 34-4

Jo was tense about her new work schedule, but her concerns quickly subsided:

> At first it's hard because, you knew you had to work and yet I hated to leave them early in the morning cause then you wonder, will they get up? Will they accept the responsibility? So at first I worried if they were going to school. But when that all worked out, it made everything easy. 30-2

Like women from segregated marriages, these mothers worked more and saw less of their children after they became single parents. However, mothers from modified-segregated marriages did not seem very distressed by the change. Nor did most mourn the loss of their old method of mothering. Two mothers from modified-segregated marriages, Paula and Margaret, completed their college degrees soon after they separated from their spouses. They had anticipated they would be married and working part-time; then their spouses left them[22]. Paula and Margaret realized that they had to work full-time to support their children. Thus, they could not maintain their old patterns of parenting. And while they seemed to somewhat regret their lost time with their sons and daughters, they also were rather pragmatic. For example, Paula had been a single parent for a year when we spoke. She said that because of her new job, she now left her two elementary school-age children alone a lot with her young teenager. She remarked,

> Two years ago I would have been horrified if I had heard that someone left their children alone as much as I

do. [She laughs.] It seems to be working out. 11-1

Paula realized that she had to create new parenting standards as a single parent and full-time worker, but unlike the mothers from segregated marriages, she did not feel great remorse about it.

Other mothers from modified-segregated marriages also felt tension about their new work loads. Their greatest frustration was not being able to attend all of their children's activities and programs. Jo had wanted to participate in her children's affairs.

> I wanted to be where they were. I wanted to be a part of everything that they were in. If they had a concert, I wanted to be there. If they had a basketball game, I wanted to be there. And so sometimes I had to do a lot of changing around. I had to switch my shifts a lot to do that. 30-2

Most of these mothers accepted these frustrations rather philosophically. Margaret did:

> Because of my work schedule I may have gotten to go to two school plays but not the third one. I can't be there to plan Christmas the way I think Christmas should be, because I am working for a week before and the day of. Those are the frustrations. But you have to just go with the flow and do what you can. 34-19

The vast majority of mothers from modified-segregated marriages continued their education after becoming single parents. However, unlike mothers from segregated marriages (who usually attended school in order to create occupational or career paths), mothers from modified-segregated marriages usually furthered their education in order to get pay raises or be promoted in their current positions. For example, Helen was taking master's degree course work. She remarked:

> I sort of enjoy taking classes. But I sort of feel I have to. One of the reasons I have to is because I want to make as much money as I can. Cause social workers don't

> make tons of money. And so I am trying to move my way up the salary scale. 25-5

At face value, both groups of mothers appeared to engage in similar kinds of educational activities. However, women from modified-segregated marriages usually went to school to upgrade rather than redirect their current occupations, and they had a firmer sense of their vocational plans.

Mothers from modified-segregated marriages felt more dependent on their jobs after they became single parents. However, they did not feel differently about work and did not interpret their work as having greater personal (in comparison with financial) importance in their lives. Nor were they ambivalent about work, as were mothers from segregated marriages. Work became necessary for "survival," as some mothers from modified-segregated marriages put it, but it did not displace any of their other major personal priorities. Their children still remained their paramount concern. Margaret mentioned this. When asked if her feelings about work changed after she became a single parent, she replied:

> I don't know that it did. My children have always been the most important thing in my life. 34-4

Women from modified-segregated marriages never really thought that they would someday be their families' breadwinners. Most had been accustomed to dual-paycheck marriages in which they were secondary earners. Mothers from modified-segregated marriages often believed they worked when they were married "to pay for the extras," things beyond usual monthly expenses. For example, Jo originally went to work because she wanted to pay for the costs of her children's community involvement.

> We went to church and were involved with a lot of activities with the church and we were busy. I have always been a sports-oriented person, so my daughter got involved with that and that entailed practices. So it involved a lot of driving back and forth. And so in order for me to do that, without [depending] on Nick to provide it, which we didn't want to do, cause he felt that we did more driving than we needed to do, so in order to compromise for that, I got a job. 30-3

Even though mothers from modified-segregated marriages had not expected to be their families' main financial support, they rarely expressed feelings of accomplishment, pride, or esteem in their breadwinning activities. For example, Helen mentioned as an aside that she "guessed" she felt good (25-10) about being able to support her household. And Paula said she was pleased about doing things on her own as a single parent, including surviving financially. However, other mothers from modified-segregated marriages seemed rather oblivious to what most mothers from segregated marriages felt was an accomplishment. In fact, some mothers from modified-segregated marriages seemed rather self-effacing about keeping their families financially afloat. For example, Margaret mentioned that her self-concept improved after she became a single parent. When I asked her what led to this change, she explained:

> Just holding down one job for a period of years. And knowing that I may not get flowers or a pat on the back every day or every week or every month. The fact that they keep me around and they continue to give me a paycheck and nobody is screaming, "You screwed up," means a lot. 34-19

Of the three groups of women, <u>women from primarily wife-shaped marriages</u> were the most involved in the labor force both before and after their marriages ended. Most worked full-time while they were married. However, none of these women expected to be the major

financial supporters of their families. For example, Susan said:

> I was raised that men take care of the household....where the guy is supposed to go to work and bring in the money. I wasn't supposed to stay at home, though. I didn't want to do that. I worked, too, but I was not supposed to make more money than he did. 16-13

Even women who felt they were basically liberal and egalitarian had not thought they would shoulder the weight of financial responsibilities alone. For example, I asked Grace who she believed was going to financially support her household when she got married. She surprised herself when she answered,

> I assumed, for the staunch feminist I am....I never defined it in my mind that it was the male's responsibility for that financial stability, but really when I look at it, it pretty much was. Cause I sure wasn't being financially stable.....But as far as owning a home or having financial security in the bank and insurance and IRAs; I never thought about that stuff. And cause I never did the assumption was that the man did it. Pretty stereotypical. And that he would be, I can't believe that I held these beliefs, he would be the financial security. That he would be the sort of financial provider. 9-18

Like most women from primarily wife-shaped marriages, Carol felt like a supplemental income earner while she was married, even though she had been working full-time. She described the secondary place her job took in family decisions.

> I went through the first five years of marriage with a job that didn't mean much to me. It was a second income. Enough to get a second car, some money to make ends meet...Then the job started becoming more important to me. I had two promotions right away and I started to see that if I wanted to I could make a career of it. I knew that if I wanted to, I could go that route. Then we moved and you start all over again....So it was always the case where the moves moved him up the ladder, but every time I started over again. Which was no big deal for me. I mean I wasn't a real strong career person. I never wanted to. To me it was a second income and the family came first. 31-6

Unlike the two other groups of mothers, women from primarily wife-shaped marriages were used to working and supporting their families. Their incomes had been relied upon heavily when they were married. In fact, two of the five mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages had higher incomes than their spouses. Thus, even though they thought of their husbands as breadwinners, wives from primarily wife-shaped families had played an integral role in family finances for years. Yet, the mothers' rather traditional ideology led them to feel less financially responsible for their families than they actually were while they were married.

Though most women from primarily wife-shaped marriages worked full-time before their marriages ended, only one mother failed to put more time into her work and/or schooling after she became a single parent. (However, she was already working a forty-hour week.) Mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages had the heaviest work loads of the single mothers; three of the five worked fifty to sixty hours per week. And in contrast with mothers from segregated marriages, mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages did not seem to regret or be tormented by the amount of time their work demanded or took them away from their children. For example, Grace, a mother from a primarily wife-shaped marriage, would have preferred to work part-time while her son was young. Yet she was quite pragmatic about how her plans changed when she became a single parent. When asked how she felt about working longer hours, she replied,

> Work I am doing to provide an income for my family. I have to do that. That's different. And I can't give up my work time to be with Danny. And that's ok. He does fine at the day care center. 9-13

Unlike some mothers from modified-segregated marriages, mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages were unlikely to show any remorse about being unable to attend their children's programs or activities. In fact, of the three groups of women, mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages felt the fewest work-family time conflicts.

Women from primarily wife-shaped marriages seemed quite personally invested in their occupations. Apparently, their commitment burgeoned after they became single parents. Their jobs possessed a meaning unparalleled among the other single mothers. The large amount of time they were willing to devote to their work was only one indicator of its high value. This was exemplified by Linda, a clerical worker. She explained why she put in a great deal of overtime:

> I put in as many [hours] as I want to. I don't like being behind. I like being able to meet the expectations of other people. And I am expected to put out a lot of work. And if that means working an extra 20 hours a week, then I have to do it. There are Saturdays I will work 12 hours or more. This fall we had a situation where one woman was gone and I was trying to do both our jobs. I went 60 days without a day off. 4-10

Single mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages spoke of their jobs as a first or second priority in their lives; almost all other mothers felt that their children and their own selves were most important to them. And only one mother from a primarily wife-shaped marriage was a professional. Most were either in clerical or low-level management positions. Yet interspersed within our discussions were numerous reminders of how important their jobs were and how valued their career or occupational goals were. For example,

Susan envisioned herself on the way up her company's management ladder. She explained how crucial her current position was:

> To this day I can't afford to screw up on this job because I need this job so bad that I can't afford to have a "don't care" attitude. Even if I don't agree with some of the policies or things I have to do, that's tough. You don't say anything about it. You just do what you have to do. I am real afraid of being left behind. 16-7

Another mother who had just started a business with some associates had high expectations for her future:

> I have visions some day of owning a quarter of a million dollar house. It's a real vision to me, not just a dream. 33-7

The most common work-related stress among mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages seemed to be their own high work-performance expectations. Susan described the internal pressure she felt to "get ahead" at her job. She frequently let her boss know about her desires.

> It took my boss talking to me a couple of times. He said, "Look where you have been. Stop and see what you have accomplished. And then decide where you are going. But look at what you have and learn to enjoy that." It's not easy. But I feel more secure within myself now and I feel more happy with where I am but I also have a little clock in me that doesn't stay still in one place very long. 16-24

As one might expect, women from primarily wife-shaped marriages did not feel unusual esteem, pride, or self-appreciation for their accomplishments as their families' financial supporters. They were accustomed to working and providing for their families, so being a financial mainstay did not offer them a new avenue of positive reinforcement. Only women who had made very substantial improvements in their incomes or in the quality of their jobs since they became

single parents displayed any recognizable amount of self-praise. For example, Susan relied on welfare for a number of years before finishing school and gaining a lower-level management job. She noted:

> There's a self-esteem building in just being able to make it. To pay the bills, make sure there is enough food on the table, that the kids are clothed. You don't have the best of everything and you probably have lower than normal in standards, too. But you aren't starving. You know that you are making it. There's self-esteem building in that..... And also going back to work and progressing, there's a lot of reinforcement in that. 16-17

Carol described her unusual, esteem-enhancing experience from work. She explained the situation she was in a short while after her divorce:

> I realized that I had to do something about finances because I wasn't making enough money then. So I started looking for another job. And so I gave my notice at work. They were upset. They sat down and gave me a five-thousand dollar raise to stay; they redid my whole job description. I mean, that gives you a whole lot of self-confidence. 31-20

In summary, it seems clear marital history types created unique contexts in which single mothers reacted to their work and financial responsibilities. Being from either segregated, modified-segregated, or primarily wife-shaped marriages correlated with distinct kinds of work histories for these three groups of women and helped set the stage for varied changes (or continuities) in their feelings of esteem, interpretations of the importance of work, and definitions of mothering values and standards. And although my sample does not contain women of widely ranging socio-economic backgrounds, it appears that, overall, educational experiences and income levels (with one significant exception that is described below) do not

dramatically affect single mothers' reactions to work responsibilities or to being their families' financial supporters.

Women in Poverty

Poor women are an important exception to this general pattern. Single mothers who were impoverished, or lived on welfare or in low-income housing have had experiences that transcend some of the changes arising from the mothers' marital history types. Not surprisingly, these women were most likely to be and remain frustrated by finances. Marilyn was most sensitive to her financial situation when it impinged on what she thought her sons deserved:

> I would say the most frustrating thing is trying to give the kids some kind of quality life. I do the best I can, like giving them good day care and giving them things. They always want everything. But there are still some things. Like last year I couldn't even afford to have them join Boy Scouts. The year before they were in it. Things like that that come along that are really frustrating when I think, that's not fair. 32-3

Jo was impoverished but did not receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children while she attended school. Needless to say, money was tight for her family. Her sorrow also was for her children.

> I feel frustrated as to the point that I maybe don't always give my kids everything they should have. I know I give them enough love, I think. And they are satisfied and happy that way. But I sometimes wish I could say, "Oh, let's go shopping," and I could go out and I could buy them things. And not that that would make them any happier, but it would just be nice to be able to do that. Cause I think that they have probably sacrificed a lot of things to make it easier for me. They haven't demanded a lot of me. 30-22

Arlie was most distressed about the fact that there was no support or help available for women who did not qualify for welfare. She felt disadvantaged economically, but abandoned by social service

agencies.

> There are no organizations. Nobody wants to help. They won't even pay for the kids when I went to school. A buck and a half an hour [for baby sitting]. Well, I made three dollars an hour working at night and all that ever did was cover the cost of sitting to go and better yourself. And there's no agency in the world who wants to help. And they all said, no. You can't qualify for this and you can't qualify for that....And it's so frustrating. It's real frustrating cause nobody seemed to care. Either you are AFDC or [you are] financially well off, and don't call us. Don't talk to us. 33-4

In this sample, two of the eight mothers from segregated marriages, two of the seven mothers from modified-segregated marriages and three of the five mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages received some form of state or federal aid for low-income persons after they became single parents[23]. These mothers' responses were still influenced by their marital history types. However, because of their poverty, they lived within a set of circumstances that strongly affected their levels of self-esteem and feelings of control of their lives.

The mothers who had received aid used it either in an early transition period (once they had become single parents and were establishing new households) and/or relied on this support to help them complete a two-year or four-year college degree. It is not surprising that mothers who received some form of low-income aid felt that their self-esteem had been badly damaged during the experience. Marilyn did:

> I never told [my kids] that we got welfare.... That's something else that I didn't want anyone to know. I felt real bad about it. My dad always said that, "We always made it, never accepted a penny." The way that made me accept that somewhat was to say that we paid these taxes all those years, so that's what it was for. Still, it

> bothered me and I didn't want other people to know that about me or the kids. And I won't tell them until they are old enough to understand. 32-13,14

Ann felt that Aid to Families with Dependent Children was her only avenue for support while she attended school,

> I realized that if I was going to achieve what I wanted I was going to have to go on welfare. And that really did a lot to my self-esteem to do that, for me. Cause I didn't want to be on welfare and I don't even now. But it's a short term thing and I keep telling myself, it's only till I am done. 14-8

Susan applied for aid almost immediately after becoming a single parent. She was unemployed for the first time since she was 16.

> When I got divorced it was very very hard to apply for aid. It's something I had to do. I had no income, no job. 16-6

Women from segregated marriages may have been more comforted than other mothers by knowing that state or federal aid was available for them, if Ann's responses are any indication. This may be because women from segregated marriages were most likely to expect financial support from others (e.g., from their spouses when they were married). Ann worked grudgingly during her segregated marriage. She applied for Aid to Families with Dependent Children a few years after she became a single parent. Even though she felt that her self-esteem was negatively affected, she told me that being on welfare:

> was like having big daddy take care of me. I knew the check would come in. For once in my life I wasn't a breadwinner; the check came to me. Initially it was kinda nice....It was security cause I knew someone was going to take care of me for a change. I wasn't gonna have to do it. 14-11

All mothers who accepted low-income assistance felt less able to prove they were adequate supporters of their families. These

mothers tried to create psychological distance between themselves and "real" (i.e., long-term) government-aid recipients (see also Grella, 1985). Arlie was thinking about her past experiences with government aid when she told me:

> We moved into low-income housing. And that has got to be the worst situation to ever be in. The kids were just not happy there... It just wasn't the kind of life I am used to. I feel a little snotty saying that but I had never been put in that situation, where I feel low-income. I may not be making any money, but I don't feel low-income. It's just like people there, they didn't care. They were gonna live in these homes and not make any money and they had no goals in life. There was no future. They just, they're just fine plopped down in their little space of earth and waking up every day. Maybe they were happy, I don't know. But it wasn't for me. 33-7

Ann also insisted that she was not a "typical" welfare recipient.

> I know a gal that had been on [aid] for 12 years and she is happy. I can't imagine it. I am looking forward to the day when I can work again. I don't understand their thinking. It's almost as if they think they deserve it. And that really bothers me. But then, they have never worked....The people that I know that are on long-term are different. They are a different breed. 14-8

Mothers who had received low-income assistance felt that life on aid was stressful, regardless of their marital history type. The mothers felt two major points of stress. First of all, these mothers had great difficulty managing their meager resources. For example, Susan was often frustrated over the economic disadvantages of working while on welfare:

> Even the job I had wasn't enough [to live on]. I was paying out two hundred or so dollars a month baby sitting. That was without gas, etc. It didn't even seem like working pays off. And it doesn't for a while. It doesn't. But you have to let it, give it time. I can say that now, but when I was in the position of paying out more than I was taking in, it was a very hard decision. I liked what I was doing, but I couldn't afford to do it. 16-6

Second, mothers were frustrated by the control the government had over low-income aid recipients. In contrast with most of the single mothers in the sample subset who felt continued or greater control over their finances and financial plans after they became single parents, mothers who received government aid felt they were under the thumb of the state or federal agencies' rules and bureaucrats. For example, after Ann described a series of exasperating encounters with a local agency, she told me:

> It's like they are keeping me down. You have to play by our rules. And I have been honest with them. I haven't held back any information and they don't seem to respect that. It's their rules or nothing. It's always "You're gonna get cut off." 14-9

Widows who received Social Security after the death of their spouses had quite different reactions to government aid. They highly welcomed Social Security and had no sense of government intrusion. Maggie commented:

> I have been really fortunate because we have always had Social Security. And we lived on just that for a while. It was tough for a while, but we made it. Maybe that's why I have been fortunate more than other single parents. I have always had an income and a fair income. 23-8

In sum, as long as women remained independent of low-income aid (as it is currently administered), their reactions to changes in their work and financial responsibilities were highly influenced by their marital history type. Once dependent on state or federal aid, single mothers felt debilitated by lowered self-esteem, high stress due to meager resources, and restricted feeling of control over their lives. These patterns concur with Bould's (1977) discovery that mothers who received non-stigmatized income support (e.g., Social

Security) felt they had greater control over their lives and their futures than did mothers who received Aid to Families with Dependent Children and other related forms of aid.

The Men

While marital history type shaped single fathers' lives in numerous ways, men's perceptions of their work did not vary clearly across marital history types. Whether from segregated, modified-segregated, or integrated marriages, men in the sample subset thought of themselves as their families' main financial supporters when they were married. Vince, a father from a modified-segregated marriage, articulated these beliefs:

> I see myself as responsible for providing. I may not need to. Maybe that's the old world. But I see myself as responsible for providing and a definition of a man is someone who is at least prepared to carry the ball if it has to be carried...I think that a man should be personally prepared to support a family if that has to be. 37-18

Men from segregated marriages obviously had expected to provide for their households: their wives had been full-time homemakers. Yet even most men from integrated marriages believed they had been ultimately responsible for their family's financial well-being. For example, Karl (a father from an integrated marriage) called himself an "early feminist" because of his egalitarian behavior at home. Nonetheless, he admitted:

> Well, despite the fact, the [feminist] attitudes that I just attributed to myself, I guess that inside I thought of myself as the head of the family. But I struggled real hard against that.
>
> Q: What did it mean to be the head of your family?
>
> Greater obligation to make sure that the finances are

there, that things go along smoothly and that that's a success. 10-14

Because the three groups of fathers perceived their past financial responsibilities similarly, I touch on the importance of marital history type only once in the following discussion. For the most part, this section illustrates how men's reactions to their work and financial responsibilities often varied according to the fathers' level of job autonomy.

Marital history type was predictably related to the fathers' perceptions of their ex-wives' family income contributions and to how stressed fathers felt about being sole providers. Because their ex-wives had been full-time homemakers, fathers from segregated marriages clearly saw themselves as sole financial providers, both as married and as single parents. They had always felt like their families' financial mainstays. In this respect, single parenting brought few changes. Fathers from segregated marriages did not develop different feelings about work or create new work priorities after they became single parents.

Men from modified-segregated marriages thought of their wives' incomes as supplemental and often superfluous to basic household needs. Perhaps because of this, these fathers did not miss their wives' extra incomes and did not feel that their standards of living had been affected. Steve, a small business owner, explained:

Q: Was it a big change to lose your wife's income?

Oh, no. I guess I didn't feel that at all.

Q: What were you using her income for?

Well, she was buying things for the house. We had just bought the house. See, that was the time of the

> marital problems and I don't think the working was a financial thing. I think it was more to get out of the house...I guess I felt that when we were married, what I made was our money and what she made was her money. 45-3,19

Fathers from integrated marriages were most likely to depend on their wives' incomes to help support their households. The two fathers from working-class integrated marriages, in particular, believed they had supported their families in partnership with their wives while they were married. These men usually felt stressed about finances, especially in the early months and years of single parenting. Their concerns focussed on their lowered family income. These fathers did not feel differently about the value of work or about being their families' providers. Absorbing their ex-spouses' responsibility for support did not cause these men to rethink their parenting ideals or their investment in work. Instead, these men seemed most concerned about their financial stability. Roger was accustomed to a two-paycheck family. He explained:

> I never wanted to make lots and lots of money. It would be nice. I just wanted to make sure I got a secure job where I don't have to worry about getting laid off and make enough money where you could live comfortably and not worry about how are we gonna pay this bill. Stuff like that. Which is kinda the situation I am in now. And I hate that. I have never been in that situation before. It's been close, but I have always had an income. My wife got paid and I did, but now it's an income coming in every other week. I don't like that and that's really frustrating, makes me frustrated. Cause when she left, she left and I am paying the same amount of bills that I was paying when we were together. 41-17

Gene's wife had contributed nearly half of their family's income. He described his current feelings of:

> financial stress in general cause I was paying all the bills with less money. And I dropped my lifestyle down. I am still having trouble with that, dropping

> down... It reminds me of when I was going to college and working full-time and raising a family then. It was like going back eight or nine steps that I was working hard to get away from. So that was a big adjustment. 36-25,26

Aside from marital history type, the father's level of job autonomy was related to differences among men's feelings about work and being sole providers. When coding and analyzing the fathers' comments, it seemed to me that fathers who had high job autonomy and were very invested in their jobs (i.e., professionals and the self-employed) differed significantly from fathers who lacked autonomy and displayed less self-investment and interest in their work (i.e., service workers and laborers). The six men who were service workers or laborers seemed minimally invested in their jobs, nor did they imply that their interest might ever change. A few gave the impression that their work was perfunctory, boring, or even an irksome part of their lives, as did Fred who, in the course of our conversation, called his job a "lowly little thing" (39-13). These laborers and service workers clearly believed their jobs were inflexible and lacked autonomy. For example, Larry, a cook, described how he reorganized his life after he became a single parent. When mentioning his job, he noted:

> Of course, work is always work and there's not much you can do about that. And they don't exactly give you much give and take on that. 42-12

In contrast, professionals and self-employed fathers communicated a qualitatively different sense of their work. They highly valued their occupational activities and obviously derived much esteem from their jobs. Many of these men ranked work as the top priority of their lives. This was how Vince, a research

scientist, felt:

> Being a parent is just a small part of my life. If I had to do it over again I don't know if I would have kids. If I were twenty years old and getting married, I think there's be a fifty-fifty chance that I wouldn't have children, knowing what it's like to have kids. My career, my own personal life are as important to me as being a parent is important to me....For me, [parenting] is just a part of my life: twenty percent, thirty percent, forty percent. 37-3

If they did not see work as the most important thing in their lives, these men felt work and parenting were equally valuable. For example, Martin, a university administrator explained:

> Work is important...[pause] The children are a top priority. They [are] both, I don't know how to differentiate. They are both so high [on my priorities]. 38-22

Karl, a financial analyst, also placed parenting on a par with his work:

> Parenting had been a major aspect of my life, always. So it hasn't become more important to me. Still, it absorbs large amounts of time....I don't want to give you the impression that job satisfaction is more important to me.
>
> Q: What priority does work have in your life?
>
> Probably equal. I am about forty percent a financial analyst, forty percent Lilly's father, and a rare coin collector. 10-19

The six professionals and the two self-employed fathers autonomously determined the amount of time they devoted to their work. Their jobs could have absorbed an indefinite amount of time. In fact, when these fathers reflected on their pasts, they described themselves as having spent extensive amounts of time working while they were married. Some, like Sid, referred to themselves as workaholics:

> I enjoy my work. I guess I was somewhat of a workaholic. I kinda became, I don't know why, more and more I involved myself in work, as the marriage went on. Especially the last few years I became very involved in work, time wise. 44-6

There were numerous reasons for their enormous occupational investment. For example, Gene said that his job met some of his self-esteem needs:

> I am a workaholic and I sometimes worked fifty to seventy hours a week at my job...I made the priority to be here [at work], you know, for affirmation of self. Trying to do more than what's expected to prove somehow I am OK. 36-6

Martin felt he had been driven to work by loyalty:

> See, I come from an [organization] like this, and it's the old way of "all loyalty to it." It's just a total commitment to an institution. I was raised with that and that's what I thought was right. 38-22

Dave wanted to escape from his unpleasant home life:

> I think when we were living together I found a lot of excuses not to be home. I mean I just didn't like it there. So I did things more slowly [at work], and would go over them, and come back in....I used to come home at 7:30 or 8:00, even 11:00 or 12:00. It wasn't unusual for me to stay there. 47-11

Steve thought of his work as his duty as a husband:

> I guess I felt that my role of work was for the family. I mean we would get in a conversation and she would talk about things she would like to have. Then there would be things we had to have. The only thing running through my mind was that it all meant money. And it meant that I had to go get it. Cause that was my job. And we never talked about it in that sense, that it was my job to make the money. It was just something that I assumed was my role, whether I got it from my parents or whatever. 45-12

Once they became single parents, professional and self-employed fathers only slightly reprioritized their work's importance. In contrast with mothers from segregated marriages who ambivalently

struggled with increasing or enhancing their work commitment, after these professional and self-employed fathers became single parents their enthusiasm for their jobs dampened slightly and work became a bit less of a priority. Although I can not determine whether these changes arose in response to being divorced or in reaction to single parenting, these single fathers consistently revised their previous assessments of work. After they became single parents, professional and self-employed fathers replaced their old, vigorous work schedules with a slower pace that allowed them to enjoy life more. Steve explained the benefits of his new outlook:

> It's more important to live now. I guess I have seen an awful lot of people who worked all their life, and I enjoy my work, don't get me wrong. But I guess I don't want to sit there and work until I die. I want to enjoy life as I go along. Whereas for some of it, it was like you were at a grindstone all the time. 45-16

Sid also felt less pushed to work strenuously:

> I am starting to, I have cut back some now. I want to, I feel like less of a workaholic now. I guess probably there's less pressure. I feel I would like to enjoy life more, I guess. 44-6

Vince went to great lengths to describe his career and past professional activities during our conversations. He also discussed his transformed spirit:

> I think that [my] career is still important, it's just changed. And I guess I feel a little less driven. 37-5

As a single parent, Gene became less invested in work and sought esteem less from his job. While he was married, though, he was compelled to work because of these needs.

> My perspective has changed a lot. It's not proving how productive you are, it's becoming healthy...When you

> have your identity and your self-esteem through your work, it's a false god. That's what people think, that they can do twenty to thirty percent more in a year and be happy. So my perspective has changed a lot. I'm not production oriented. 36-27

Consistent with the slightly lessened significance of their work, the professional and self-employed fathers reduced the number of hours in their regular work days[24]. For example, Rod was a business manager. He contrasted his old and new work schedules for me:

> When I didn't have all the responsibilities of taking care of a child, I'd come back in [to work] and get stuff done about everyday. If I got involved in a project I would tend to keep working on it. Or I would tend to just expect to get things done out of the regular working day...And I think the greatest difference between the way I was working before when I would let things flow over into the evening and the way I am working now is that it is less sporadic. 26-25

Gene also cut down considerably on his work load:

> Now I see it's real nice to do forty to forty-five hours of work and feel that I have done maybe as much or more. That I feel better about myself as it pertains to my job. And it's real strange that I put all this extra time [in before]. 36-28

The two self-employed fathers believed they pressured themselves less at work. For example, Steve described his previously hectic work pace:

> I mean it was like before not only the job I was working on but the job that was waiting, it was like it had to be done cause it was there today. And the thing of it was like everything had to get done today cause I had so much work scheduled for the next day. I schedule work a lot different now [laughs]. You know, I allow for unscheduled customers who need something. Before I didn't have any time for that stuff....Now I try to be a little more flexible to allow for that time. That takes the pressure off at work. 45-12

In contrast, the fathers who were service workers or laborers

reported basically no changes in their feelings about work or in their work hours after they became single parents. (One father restricted his overtime work a bit.) The curtailed work load of the self-employed and professional fathers is consistent with several other studies of single fathers (e.g., Luepnitz, 1982; Keshet and Rosenthal, 1978).

Most of these professionals and self-employed fathers reshaped their work days to complement better their new parenting activities[25]. Dave, who was an administrator of a hospital, explained that his daily schedule depended on whether his children stayed with him or his ex-spouse:

> When [my children] are here, I try to be home by 5:00 or 5:30. Which means that I don't usually take time off for lunch and I may go in at 7:00 or so and I work straight through. I don't take any breaks. But I have always kinda worked like that. I like working like that. So, it's not a big thing. So, I get my work done and I come home. And there are things that I don't do that I might have stayed later and done, paperwork and stuff. And I will pile that up. So, I tend to be more, oh, time wise in a sense than I was before. I didn't really care what time it was [before]. I would just stay until the work got done. Now, if it's getting close to 5:00, I will wind it up. 47-11

While the single mothers in this study also felt "time wise," as Dave put it, single mothers were sensitive to the <u>greater</u> amount of time their paid work consumed. Single mothers worked more and spent less time with their children after they became single parents. Most professional and self-employed fathers experienced the opposite phenomenon when they became single parents. While these single fathers and single mothers may actually spend similar amounts of time with their children, the mothers felt like their parenting time had diminished while the self-employed and professional fathers

felt as if parenting time had grown.

While shorter work days might have led these professional and self-employed father to feel that the quality of their work performance declined or see themselves as less productive, they did not. Instead, these fathers believed they acquired new, more efficient working habits which compensated for their shorter work days. Rod felt this way. He contrasted his present work patterns with those of the past twelve years:

> [For years] I have never been real strict about keeping within certain limits with respect to time. I guess I always felt that I couldn't do that. That it was impossible to be successful working a limited number of hours, forty or whatever. At first [when I reduced my work hours] I was sort of afraid that if I tried to get all things done and I left things undone that I wouldn't be very successful and would have real serious problems. It took me about four to five months to realize that I was doing just fine. That the reduction in productivity was either nonexistent or very slight. The regularity was probably better. 26-25

Gene, a counselor with a large number of clients, argued that he better utilized his limited work time:

> Before, of course, I had a parent there with the kids and they were ok. So I could stay [at work] till 8:00-8:30... Now I am getting work done during the day and getting out of here by 5:00-5:30. I am doing a better job and using my time better. Prioritizing my time for what's important. 36-6

Perhaps these men only reinterpreted their work habits to be consistent with their new situation. Whether or not they actually became more efficient is not really important for our purposes. These responses significantly show that professional and self-employed fathers did not struggle to revamp their notions of work quality. Nor did they scale-down their personal productivity

standards in light of their lessened work involvement. The self-employed and professional fathers maintained and even enhanced their work-related levels of esteem because they believed they had done the unlikely, if not the impossible; they expended less effort and saw little or no change in their work effectiveness. Thus, professional and self-employed fathers experienced two significant developments. They devoted greater amounts of time to parenting while they remained productive at work. This increased their feelings of efficacy in two pivotal areas of their lives.

Aside from the differences mentioned above, fathers' experiences contrasted with mothers in that none of the fathers felt the need or desire to retool for the labor force after they became single parents. Of course, most men felt their standards of living changed very little, if at all. And the fathers were a bit older and often had better paying jobs than the mothers. Yet even the fathers who felt financially strapped did not entertain ideas of furthering their education, while mothers with two-year or four-year college degrees often felt this need. Fathers were not as concerned as mothers about their places in the labor force after they became single parents and their families' sole supports.

Summary

In sum, what are the qualitative differences between single mothers' and single fathers' perceptions of their changing work and provider responsibilities? Women from segregated, modified-segregated and primarily wife-shaped marriages varied in their feelings of esteem with regard to work, assessments of the

importance of work, and re-evaluations of their parenting standards. However, men from segregated, modified-segregated, and integrated marriages differed only as to whether they felt stressed by being a sole income-earner.

Overall, men experienced fewer dramatic changes in their work schedules than did mothers. And the professional and self-employed fathers did not believe their shortened work days affected work output. Mothers, on the other hand, usually had extensive schedule changes. And the activity they had to cut down on (i.e., time with and care of their children) was a pursuit (unlike the fathers' jobs) that lacked clear indicators of effectiveness or achievement. Thus mothers could not easily evaluate the impact of their new work responsibilities on their lives or their children's lives. What some mothers did notice (like those from segregated marriages) was the sadness, frustration, and anger of their children, who felt their mothers' lives change in jolting ways.

The crux of this contrast is that fathers (especially those who cut back on work) had more opportunity to be with their children and thus augment their previous levels of participation in fathering. Additionally, some men (i.e., professionals and self-employed) saw work, a high priority in their lives, in a new perspective. Thus for professional and self-employed single fathers, feelings of personal efficacy regarding parenting and work were elevated. For most mothers, however, the highest priority in their lives (parenting) was impinged upon by the provider responsibility of single parenting. Women lost parenting time when they became single parents. This led

mothers, especially from segregated marriages, to struggle with some doubts about their parenting effectiveness. And because few mothers (with the exception of those from primarily wife-shaped marriages) clearly felt that work was a high personal priority, it was difficult for them to offset their distress about parenting with esteem derived from their jobs.

CHAPTER VII

KEEPING UP A HOME

> I baked cookies once. That was an experience. My daughter told me I was doing it wrong. As it turned out, she was right. I didn't know that they expanded when you put them in the oven. I made them the size I wanted them to be when they were finished. She said, "They are going to get big when you put them in there." I said, "No, they aren't." Often she knows what she is talking about. [Rod, a single father of two]

Under the traditional division of labor, keeping up a home is a responsibility for women rather analogous to men's responsibility as financial providers. Just as the single fathers in the sample subset had assumed that they would always contribute an income to their families, the mothers always had expected to be major contributors to the daily upkeep of their homes.

However, the analogy between women's housework and men's financial support activities is not a perfect one because of the asymmetrical ways in which housework and paid work are valued, recognized, shared, and remunerated. For example, married couples readily acknowledge the value of their households' financial supporters and see paid work as a source of family authority. In contrast, housework accords less power to those who do it and thus seems to have less value (e.g., see Scanzoni, 1982). Additionally, housework often goes unrecognized, except when it gets neglected

(Oakley, 1974). Occupations bring workers visibility, prestige, and esteem from their communities. And paid workers are rewarded and thanked with paychecks. Housework usually is neither rewarded or recognized for its monetary worth (Glazer-Malbin, 1976).

In the following pages, I outline some of the mothers' responses to this integral area of their lives. I found that women felt housework became easier to manage and that mothers lowered their standards for homemaking after they became single parents, regardless of their marital history type. Fathers' reactions to housework varied according to their marital history type. Men from segregated marriages had the greatest changes in their housekeeping tasks and felt the proudest of their homemaking. While men from integrated marriages had to learn few new homemaking skills, they seemed the most fatigued and distressed about the upkeep of their homes. Housekeeping includes the sundry chores of cleaning, cooking, shopping, and household maintenance and repair work.

The Women

Regardless of their marital history type, mothers in the sample subset had done much or most of the housekeeping for their families when they were married. Housework seemed almost like second-nature to Margaret:

> As far as running a house, I can do it like a well oiled machine if I want to and if I don't, I can let it go. I can make curtains, bake, make clothes. I can do anything. And that was my source of self-esteem [when I was married]. 34-22

Betsy also felt familiar with the task of homemaking:

> Managing a household was my job. Taking care of the

> house and painting the house, whatever had to be done, I did it. 35-1

These women had never expected not to be a major contributor to this aspect of home life. In this sense, the mothers' past and current involvement in housework varied less among the three groups of women than did their participation in and responses to the three other responsibilities of heading a household, financial management, and financial support. Because of this, the three groups of single mothers had numerous similar responses to keeping up a home. The only way in which women's performance of or reactions to household care differed predictably by their marital history types was with regard to the mothers' set of housework standards when married. As indicated in previous descriptions, mothers from segregated marriages were the most "traditional" in their expectations and behavior as married women. Most were full-time homemakers when their marriages ended and some had high, even idealized, notions of their duties as wives and mothers. They assumed that women were most responsible for the upkeep of their homes and were to take special care with this task. The most remarkable example of these demanding expectations was described by Barb, a mother from a segregated marriage who said that she:

> bought into the whole picture of the traditional wife. It's the wife who has never bought any cookies. The one who makes chocolate chip cookies and has meals made from scratch, always garden fresh vegetables that are pulled in from her immaculately groomed garden....And when it's her kids turn to bring treats to school it would be specially made cupcakes with the kids' names written on it...I can tell you horror stories. I raised chickens cause I didn't want chicken with additives. I butchered chickens, canned fresh vegetables, made peach sauce, made my own baby food, made the girls' sweat suits. 28-9

Thus in comparison with other women, mothers from segregated marriages appeared to have had the highest set of standards for their household work when they were married.

While their husbands' degree of participation in housework differed for these three groups of women, it did not have much impact on the mothers' experiences as single parents. Most of the women in the sample subset thought they had received little or no help around the house from their husbands. However, even the mothers who felt that they had some regular aid from their spouses (i.e., those from primarily wife-shaped marriages) did not seem to miss or comment on the loss of their housekeeping helper. Of course, this reaction probably reflects the fact that these women had always seen themselves as having the vast majority of the responsibility for housework.

The three groups of single mothers with whom I spoke felt very little stress over being responsible for the upkeep of a home. In fact, many felt that housework became easier to manage after they became single mothers. Mothers felt less stressed about the upkeep of their homes because they no longer were frustrated by their spouses' participation (or lack of) in this task. Some of their husbands' delinquent or irresponsible involvement in household chores had caused these mothers considerable tension. Judy felt this way. When I asked if it was different to keep up a home as a single parent, she reflected:

> It was easier. Cause I don't expect him to. There isn't that anger that he should be home to do this for the kids once in a while. He should be home to take out the garbage. He should be home to get the cars lined up and

> get the services done on them....I just got mad that he wasn't. I would hire someone to mow the lawn, whatever. And after I was here alone with the kids that was one thing I noticed. That I wasn't angry about taking out the garbage and all that cause there was no one to expect to do it. It was a question of expectations. 43-6

Grace, a mother from a primarily wife-shaped marriage, believed that she and her husband shared housekeeping when they were married. Even though Grace lost her spouse's help around the house, she, too, was less distressed about housework after she became a single parent. During her marriage Grace resented her husband's failure to take responsibility for the housework. He was a helper, but she had wanted a partner. She explained the difference:

> The activity or the duty was shared but the responsibility was not shared. Do you know the difference? Someone said it's like the difference between going and buying a loaf of bread cause you are told to, or going and getting a loaf of bread cause you need it....He was very active with the housework. But again, I would always have to tell him what to do. The dishes need to be done, he needs to do that and the garbage needs to be taken out. He would do anything that I asked him to do, pretty much. But it wasn't that sense...that sense of total responsibility for the household work. That you just get up, do the dishes, scrub out the sink, make sure the stove is washed. Make sure the project is complete. Peter would often leave it half way. With maybe the dishes washed but the sink is filthy....There wasn't that lifting of the burden, that it was totally being taken care of by someone else. 9-10

Because Grace expected Peter to share the labor and the responsibility for upkeep of their home, his help was actually a source of frustration and disappointment. This strain was alleviated soon after she became a single parent. Grace recalled:

> At first I thought, Oh Lord, I have to do all these dishes. I did them, and they were done the way I wanted them to be done and the task was complete. It's a lot less stressful for me to know what has to be done and to do it than to feel like I am having to do it and then to direct and organize another person, like a supervisor...I don't

> know I always had the sense that whatever I did that, I always had this overwhelming sense that I was so God damned responsible for everything. And I think I felt resentful...And that build up of resentment is exhausting. 9-11

Carol also felt relieved because she was no longer being disappointed by another adult from whom she expected help. She felt that doing things around the house became much less complicated when she became a single parent. She told me,

> If things are going to get done now, I know that if they are going to get done I am going to have to do them. There is no waiting around with that attitude that, he knows that that's something that he should be doing and isn't doing for one reason or another. And I didn't feel like stepping in and doing his stuff. You know what I mean? Things are just easier. Now when I see something that has to be done, it can be done and it is done the way that I feel that it should be. And that's a good feeling. 31-1

A second common reaction of mothers to household care was to lower their standards for housework following the end of their marriages. Mothers told me that they put less effort into housework after they became single parents. Other studies have found that single women tend to devote less time to housework than do married women with similar size families (Morgan, 1978). Hartmann (1981) speculates that single mothers may need to do less housework than married women because husbands create housework. In other words, while husbands may help around the house, men cause more housework than the amount they routinely do. Of course, this may also explain why mothers thought household work seemed easier to manage after they became single parents.

The mothers of the sample subset provided four explanations for their lowered housework standards, but none is specific to any one of

the three groups of mothers. To begin with, mothers said they directed energy away from housework because of their changing values. While they believed that their children had always been the most precious things in their lives, after they became single parents many women realigned their other priorities. Of course, their spouses were necessarily purged from their lists. Then it seemed that care of their home often shifted downward a few notches. At the same time, many women had more appreciation for time spent with their children. When mothers commented on changes in their lives, they often spoke of a deeper commitment to being with their children. For example, Carol told me:

> I don't keep as neat a house. You know, I like a clean house, a neat house, but when you are choosing priorities, I would rather be out bike riding with the kids. And when I am out all day long and I come home and we have three to four hours in the evening, I don't want to spend them cleaning. And the same with cooking. I mean my cooking has just about come to a halt. 31-2

Jo also re-evaluated the importance of various components of her life after she became a single parent. She helped me understand the change that resulted in her daily routine by explaining that when she was married:

> I was a fanatic. When I was home, married. I almost drove myself mad about getting everything done. I always had to have all the housework done and all the baking done. And I have kinda eased off on that. I am not quite as pressured. Things have taken a different importance.
>
> Q: What is more important?
>
> Spending time with my kids and doing things with them more than staying in the house. I do a lot more things out and around than I used to....I was driven to that. I worked myself just crazy....I am more now that my house can be perfect when I am there by myself. I want to enjoy my kids. I don't want to be spending hours at home when I

> could be doing something with them. I'd rather be swimming with them or to a ball game or shopping for something. My house comes more second now than it did then. That was very important. People tell me that I was always cleaning the house. I was always ironing clothes. And I was. 30-21

While Paula still felt ambivalent about her new homemaking standards, she realized that her behavior reflected her changing values and priorities. When she became a single parent, she reassessed the time she spent with her children, time she utilized independently, and the effort she devoted to housekeeping. She admitted:

> I have slipped and don't have the kind of meals I used to. I don't have the time to shop the way I used to. I don't shop the specials. I used to be very good at that. I don't give myself the time to do that anymore. I would rather spend the time with the children or on myself. Before I would do the chores. 11-4

A second reason why mothers spent less time doing housework was their new, usually enlarged, work schedules and/or the demands of school. Women felt they had to re-evaluate what they could accomplish in a day after they took on these additional burdens. As a result, mothers became more tolerant of less rigorous and continuous household care. As Arlie noted:

> [At first] I figured I was a lesser person if I couldn't be supermom. [If] this house couldn't be clean and I couldn't study or find time, it was because I was doing something wrong. And now I know that's malarkey. So who cares if there are dishes in the sink until the next day? You'll survive....I just always had to do everything. I mean if the bathroom was dirty it was just a major disaster. 33-14

Sometimes mothers came to terms with these changes over a period of time, as Linda did.

> I've finally come to the realization that I can't be good at everything. I've chosen two things to be good at

> [parenting and my job], and I am good at both of them. It's made life easier. And that's why we are talking here [at my office] and not at my house, cause I don't clean house [laughs]. Something has to go, I can't do it all. I think if single parents would realize that, you can't be mom and you can't be dad and you can't hold down a job and you can't have a social life and a perfect house. I was exhausted when I was trying to do that. 4-3

Margaret also slowly resigned herself to the limitations of her new daily schedule:

> Yeah, I had to learn to be more lax. We have a tremendous amount of laundry. Put all of us together, you could have thirty loads of laundry. I could do five loads a day with all the blankets and the sheets. And the winter time with the shoes and the, the basement is where we live and we have a wood-burning stove and we bring in wood. And then there are pieces of wood all over. And you just have to tell yourself, "I will sweep that up tomorrow." Or, "I will give this child the job." 34-22

Barb described her reassessment of housework explicitly:

> I don't know, when you come to a break in your life, a real crisis point, it made me really look at priorities. I have X amount of time. I have studying to do, and that is usually done when they are in bed. I have time for work. And then I have time for the girls, that's in the middle. Well, then something has to go. I thought, well, one thing that is obvious is the house. 28-9

A third reason why mothers put less effort into housework in comparison with when they were married was because these women felt fewer social pressures about household care. Their friends' and neighbors' opinions of housework seemed to be less important to these single mothers. As a consequence, mothers' self-esteem and self-worth became less intimately linked with their household work. Jo explained:

> It used to be that if somebody came to visit me my house used to have to be just so or they would think I was really a bad person. Now I think they have to accept me for who I am and not how my house looks. And if they come to see me, they shouldn't worry about my house. Not that I would let it be a filthy mess, but there was a lot of

> that...Now I just feel like there are so many things I don't worry about. My house or to have something baked. Cause that was important in the small community that I lived in, that you had a bunch of goodies in your house and your house was clean. 30-23

Paula also admitted that she slowly distanced herself from others' (and her old) expectations about housework.

> I have had to calm myself down more and more. I can't get worked up over things that aren't important. If the neighbors come over and the house isn't perfect, I would be upset. Now it's quite a nice feeling. And the neighbors have gotten used to it, and they survive and keep coming back. 11-8

Judy felt her priorities changed when she became a single parent because she could no longer maintain the lifestyle of her husband's work peers. After she moved away from that circle of families, she felt less competitive about living up to other people's expectations.

> Who remembers if their house was spotless when they were home? They remember the feelings between people. I think there's too much emphasis placed on that anyway and I guess [when I was married] I felt caught up into the shoulds and shoulds and shoulds [i.e., the expectations of others], which I was, when I was married. More so than I am now. I even let their dad come in and see the place like this. And I thought that was a pretty big step, not to care who saw it like this. 43-12

A final reason why some women lowered their standards for homemaking was because they no longer felt constrained by their spouses. Through their requests and demands, husbands had put restrictions and pressures on women's behavior around the house. For example, Marilyn thought her husband was basically tyrannical about housework.

> He was just so picky. It was so bad that he would go around and inspect the house. He was always looking for something to put me down for. And it was so bad that after I left [him] I was used to keeping such a clean house that

> it made people uncomfortable. I had a friend come to my apartment one day and she said, "This is awful," and she picked up a burner [and it was spotless] and I moved out my stove and cleaned underneath, the whole thing, every Saturday. And she said, "There is not a speck on this stove. You've got to sit down and relax a little bit. You make me uncomfortable." So I realized that I was still doing these things cause he told me that things would change if I did things perfect. And I tried to do everything perfect. I had four hours of sleep at night and I would work like crazy. It never did change, but that's what he had me thinking. And no matter what I did, it wasn't good enough. 32-11

Marge's husband also dominated their marriage, as she described it; she felt compelled to live up to his standards.

> He was Susie Spotless. And it seemed like the only time he would ever have a smile on his face when he walked in the door was if I was scrubbing or pushing the vacuum cleaner around. It was just that the house had to be just so all the time. And it got to the point where I hated it. 29-2

Some wives believed their behavior at home was confined by their spouse's mere presence. Carol mentioned that:

> Every night I felt that I had to come home and had this family, this head of the household that I had to cook for. And I didn't like that. I hated coming home and cooking...But the kids are easier to satisfy. You don't need a big meal like you do for a man. 31-2

Women whose husbands had rigid criteria for household care thought that single parenting brought a welcome relief.

> [Now] if my house is a mess, it doesn't bother the kids and I. I don't like it, but I do not have this person complaining to me or making me feel uncomfortable or making me feel like I have got to get this done and have the place in order before he comes home. Or I can't take that bike ride with the kids or I can't do this or that cause the house isn't clean. And I don't feel that way anymore, at all....I would say it frees me up completely. When I don't have to worry about whether the house is clean, I mean, I have time for the kids. It frees me up. It does. It frees me up. 31-3,12

Betsy enjoyed the freedom single parenting gave her to restyle her

homemaking patterns. Her past daily routines were not of her design.

> I am not a perfect housekeeper. My husband wanted the house neat as a pin and everything cleaned off, the cupboards bare. He wanted things really a tight ship...I couldn't get motivated. Housework is not my thing. But he had higher expectations for housework than I did. It didn't have to be clean, but it had to be neat. If I took the hammer out of the tool box, I had to take it right back to the tool box. I mean there wasn't any delay, no fussing around, no leaving it on the counter for a few hours. I guess I have gone into my mold since the separation. If it takes a while, it takes a while. I'll put it away eventually. Someone comes to the door or says they are coming by, I'll clean up [laughs]. 35-25

Most of these women took their homemaking abilities for granted. Only occasionally did mothers seem to garner esteem from the upkeep of their home. Most of the pride mothers felt about their homemaking stemmed from their mastery of a few new tasks. For example, Betsy felt pleased about doing some new household repair and maintenance tasks:

> I was really kinda proud of the fact that I could do it. To find out how strong I really was and how men kinda make you think you can't do a lot of things and really they aren't that difficult or they couldn't do them [laughs]. There's a few brawn things that just take muscle. For that I really scream and curse and get all upset about cause I can't physically do them and I just get very angry. But most of the things. I put in a doorbell last night. I painted the house and had the kids help me last summer. I take care of the yard and everything out there. Everything out there I planted. There wasn't anything out there before we moved in. Lots of accomplishments I am proud of, that I was able to rise above and follow through on. 35-2

Paula also felt some pride in her work around her home:

> In certain ways it made me feel really good to do things on my own. We were married for fifteen years. I had gotten into that, you handle this and I'll handle that. For example, the house shifts badly. The basement has a large crack that has developed in the last two years. That is where the water main comes in. I thawed

> out the water main and put styrofoam on the walls. Something I would have never done before. 11-5

Overall, it seems that the three groups of mothers, who had different housekeeping standards when they were married, re-evaluated their expectations for housework after they became single parents. Some mothers devoted less time to housework because of a desire to spend more time with their children. Others were compelled to readjust their lives due to the new and competing demands of work and/or school schedules. Mothers also sometimes became more lax with their housework because they felt less social pressure about housework or were free of their husbands' demands.

The Men

In contrast with the women, men's reactions to their changing responsibilities for housework distinctly varied by their marital history types. When men from segregated marriages became single parents, they were faced with a new responsibility for inside household care. They had had minimal dealings with the array of cooking, cleaning, shopping, and planning duties that housework encompassed. Their early months and years of single parenting were filled with lessons and learning about upkeep of a home. Fathers from segregated marriages described the struggles and obstacles they faced while they became familiar with these tasks and cultivated skills. Eric commented on his early frustrations:

> It was tough. A lot tougher than I thought.
>
> Q: How?
>
> Well, I didn't really do the laundry. You know, I didn't do the house [when I was married]...All the other little things, like cleaning the house, doing the dishes

> after you had cooked...making sure that when you went shopping you had exactly what you needed. That was all new. It was, there were times when it was disgusting, my ignorance....It wasn't as natural as a woman, a woman's instincts with the children, with the family, with the house. It's a naturalistic thing for a mother, for a woman, where it wasn't for a man.
>
> Q: What instincts didn't you have that a woman would have?
>
> Washing clothes. If you could have seen some of my whites. After my first couple of loads. When to add bleach...That was the instinct there...I didn't know that. I had to learn that. And I ruined a lot of clothes. 13-5

The large disjuncture between their old cluster of household responsibilities and their never and vastly enlarged duties set fathers from segregated marriages apart from the other two groups of men. In addition, fathers from segregated marriages relied the most on their children (both girls and boys) for help with household care[26]. Eric clearly recognized his special dependence on his daughter's aid:

> My oldest daughter was forced to grow up a little faster. I depended on her. I asked her to do a lot of things and she did them...To this day she feels neglected cause she didn't have the growing up the other children had. And it's hard to sit down and explain to her why you couldn't sit and play with your dolls cause you had to help daddy fold the clothes or put them away. 13-6

Throughout our conversations both fathers from segregated marriages frequently referred to the numerous, daily chores that their children did. For example, Carl admitted:

> Housework, I can't stand it. It's always a mess. I just let it go and I make all the kids do all the work. I just sit back and supervise. I let them see a dirty house and let them get the hint. I make them do the dishes and clean up after themselves. 8-1

Eric described his children's daily after-school activities. His daughters were age seven, eight, and ten when we talked.

> The oldest one will make the beds. Joyce will check the garbage and if there is any, she will take it out. Start the dishwasher. The youngest will pick up the clothes and run them downstairs....Now Joyce [the eight year old], she does the dishes and vacuuming, and when I go to wash clothes, she is learning to wash clothes. She knows how to sort. If I fold, they will put them away. It's working and I believe it's working cause of the cooperation between all of us. 13-10

Another characteristic that made the two fathers from segregated marriages unique was their pride in the upkeep of their homes. This is not to say that these men enjoyed housework; Carl obviously did not. But, these men felt pleased and rather proud of how well they and their children managed their housework. As Eric mentioned above, they spoke of how things were "working out good" or how they were "doin a real good job" with their home or with individual tasks, such as meals (13-5). These commentaries were extremely rare among the other two groups of fathers. Fathers from segregated marriages seemed pleasantly surprised by how well things had turned out for them, perhaps because their families had managed alone, without the aid of a woman, something these men had never expected to do.

The seven fathers from modified-segregated marriages had some experience with household care before they became single parents. Some had helped with cleaning, others had done occasional cooking, a few had shopped frequently or done the laundry. Sometimes the fathers obtained experience with housework during specific periods of their marital histories, as did Sid. He told me that his wife:

> used to work a few years ago and she worked evenings. I took care of the boys when they were small, changing diapers and washing dishes. A lot of the housecleaning. But the last few years when she was home, I

didn't participate as much in all that. 44-5

Other fathers developed their housekeeping expertise during transitional periods of their marriages. Steve explained that he did some housework when he was married. Yet he got exposed to the full array of household tasks only when his marriage was breaking up. He felt that experience helped make the transition to heading a household as a single parent a bit easier.

> There were some things, at the time [before the divorce], as far as washing some of the clothes and stuff, I started to do that. So I guess it wasn't as bad as what it could have been. 45-15

The fathers from modified-segregated marriages had not shared household care; they had been their wives' helpers or sporadic assistants. Thus, men from modified-segregated marriages had to learn a number of new tasks and skills. However, the change from having some involvement in household care to having total responsibility was less substantial than the change experienced by men from segregated marriages. Fathers from modified-segregated marriages commented that being in charge of household care meant that one had to nurture one's elementary skills, rather than master a group of foreign ones. Dave explained:

> I had to diversify my cooking. I always thought of myself as a fairly good cook, but it was fairly one-dimensional. I would make a main course and it would be something like spaghetti or I couldn't do it. So I had to broaden my horizons....I think ironing was something I didn't know how to do. I had to iron a shirt and I had to do that, pants and stuff. But I knew how to run a dishwasher and a dryer. At least I knew how to use one setting. I don't know what all those settings are. 47-18

Even those fathers from modified-segregated marriages who thought of themselves as poor housekeepers did not feel lost in alien territory,

as had fathers from segregated marriages. The basic skills of homemaking were familiar to them. When asked about his early housekeeping experiences, Rod replied:

> I knew how to do it. To the extent that you would recognize what I was doing as housekeeping. It wouldn't win any prizes. I know how to put soap in the dishwasher and use a sponge. I don't bake brownies. I don't do that kind of stuff...It's one thing I haven't done a lot of. Cooking is one thing I'll have to say I am not very good at. We do eat out a lot. I'll cook things that are very simple. 26-27

Most men from modified-segregated marriages had one or two specific tasks they were very unfamiliar with when they became single parents. These chores were the hardest for them to feel comfortable about and incorporate into their daily lives. Nonetheless, these signs of discomfort were isolated responses to individual jobs, rather than a holistic response to housework. For example, Vince's wife had done all the cooking. He admitted:

> The biggest changes in lifestyle and the biggest burden I carry is cooking. I did almost no cooking, literally no cooking until the separation. I could cook hamburgers and sandwiches and I had a couple of things that I could cook, but basically no cooking. [I can bake but] it's only one thing. I don't have to coordinate a whole meal and the mashed potatoes don't have to turn out with the beans and the biscuits all at the same time. And when I got [my child's] custody, I had to be responsible for some meals. That was a real trauma. And I am still not on top of that. 37-9

One new task for some fathers was the organization of a household routine and daily time schedule. Steve felt that scheduling had been a difficult task to master. He mentioned it on numerous occasions during our talk.

> Scheduling. Well, you are gonna have a real goofed up night if you don't pick the kids up till 6:30. By the time you get done eating, it's about 7:30-8:00. It doesn't give

> them much time to do their homework or spend time with them before they go to bed. Whereas if you somewhat keep on a schedule and get those types of things done as far as housekeeping duties early in the morning before they get up, it takes a lot of pressure off the evening. 45-9

Rod's frustration stemmed from the fact that he had:

> a hard time taking care of the house. It's just a small apartment, but my daughter is real messy so there is a lot of picking up to do. She makes a mess with food and doesn't pick it up. I clean up a little bit every day but the way I approach it is to do sort of a moderate clean up on Saturday usually. I am really slow about it, too. I think most people could get done in an hour what I do in four or five. I am not very organized in cleaning, but I maintain a reasonable level of neatness and cleanliness....But it seems like our apartment can really deteriorate in two to three days. If I didn't pick anything up in forty-eight hours it would look like a dump. And I do pick up some things. I do the dishes and that sort of thing. I don't like doing that. It is one of those things that I am not sure if I don't like doing it cause I don't do it well, or I don't do it well cause I don't like doing it. 26-26

When most men from modified-segregated marriages became single parents, they felt somewhat competent and comfortable with the basics of housework. None felt extremely taxed by this responsibility and none displayed the self-congratulatory esteem that men from segregated marriages had. These fathers did not even express a muted self-praise for their families' household work. However, fathers from modified-segregated marriages were unique in that they apparently enjoyed the greater control they had over housekeeping when they became single parents. Men from modified-segregated marriages had been helpers around the house; this was one component of family life their wives seemed to control. In contrast, when they became single parents these men exercised discretion and power in this area also. This control was appreciated most by men who had little input into household care and who did not approve of their

wives' standards. For example, Vince enjoyed being in charge of housekeeping:

> One of the great pleasures of being divorced is that I can live neatly, and my ex-wife was in practice a slob. Rotting food in the refrigerator, papers and clothes lying all over the house. Dirty dishes in the sink. The place was always a mess...Essentially she was responsible for leaving the place a mess and I was not able to affect that in any way... It's wonderful to be single in terms of housekeeping, cause I can keep it neat. I can have a housekeeper come in. I can concentrate more on this or on that. It's great, I love it. 37-8,9

Rod also had been displeased with how his wife did housework:

> [My wife] did housekeeping worse than I do and I am not very good. Much as I hate to do it, when we were together and it would get bad I would try to do it and she would get angry because she would think that this was an affront to her housekeeping skills. So it was a touchy subject to begin with. Not so much because we were accusing each other of not doing enough, but if I would try to do it she would get mad if I tried to do anything. 26-27

Finally, some of these men merely were pleased because their homes now reflected their own efforts and were not just images of their wives' ideals or preferences. Gene explained:

> I think my awareness [grew] that I like the house as clean as my wife did. And it was not just her cleanliness, but I have similar views. That I like to see the house be neat and clean. And it wasn't so much of a duty anymore, but I just like the cleanliness. That's what I want. I want cleanliness. Realizing that it was important to me and not just a duty of the marriage...now it's more or less maintaining my environment the way I want it, not just a chore. 36-24

When they were married, the five fathers from integrated marriages were the most involved with household care of the three groups of men. Most said they had shared or done housework jointly with their spouses. Karl said that he was used to doing:

> Everything. [My wife] tended to cook more. I wasn't

> much of a cook. I guess she did most of the cooking. She liked to cook more. But washing the dishes, scrubbing the floors, things like that, washing clothes, all those things were done. 10-14

Roger claimed that:

> When we were married we shared the housework, you know. The laundry bit and the housecleaning....I wasn't the man, the breadwinner. And like a lot of them [i.e., other men] will, especially older men I know, they take care of the outside yard and the woman takes care of the inside and the kids, whether they have a job or not. Their wives usually didn't work and took care of the inside, cooking, cleaning, and baking, and then the men take care of the garage and auto and other toys they have. I moved the grass and I helped. I had to do the floors and there's a lot of times I got up in the middle of the night and changed diapers...And that's the agreement we had. And she's always worked except for two of the twelve years we were married and we always shared the duties of the household. 41-17

Martin's involvement in housework varied dramatically over the years:

> Early on we didn't [share]. There were things that women did and things that men did. And women made the scrambled eggs and men read the paper. And that's the way it was. Then very early on we decided that wasn't a good idea. So we came to share things fairly equally; she still did more. Then came my graduate work and I did less. But in these past few years I probably did more. 38-11

By the last few years of his marriage, Irv had taken on many housekeeping activities:

> I did most of it. She didn't like to do housework. A lot of people don't. I did most of the cleaning. I don't mind....Meals I don't like. If I can avoid them, I will avoid them like the plague. But she was a damn good cook. A really good cook. 15-19

Fathers from integrated marriages felt quite able to do housework and reported the fewest adjustments in their daily household activities. Each of these fathers became involved with only an additional, isolated household task or two after becoming a single parent. Larry had the most severe changes of fathers from integrated marriages. He

said that as a single parent, he had to take on:

> Cooking indoors. All the laundry. Getting in a routine and balancing everything....The whole household routine, and still have enough for me and work and everything else without being worked to a frazzle. 42-14

For Roger, the new task was:

> Shopping. Shopping is one [new] thing. I have to, I didn't do groceries and making meals wasn't, making meals wasn't too bad but getting the groceries from the grocery store to here was, I guess would be a big step for me. Cause to go out and sit down and make a grocery list out. And what the kids are gonna eat, and what's good for them. And what I can prepare without really screwing it up [laughs] is, involves a lot. 41-8

Often fathers from integrated marriages seemed to consider their new housework tasks as easily mastered:

> When I was home my mother would be cooking and I would look and see. She would just be throwing in things. That's where I went from there. I would watch my wife cook and she would throw things together. Well, I thought, if they can do it, I sure as heck can do it. I found out I could and I did. 42-14

Sometimes their new tasks were even seen as trivial or mildly annoying. For example, Martin explained:

> There were some things I had to learn to do over. Little silly things that women learn to do. Part of the household tasks that I never had before, now I had to do. You don't know the proper tools, equipment or soap. Dumb little things. If you never wash floors, for example. I can make an extraordinarily inefficient job of washing the floor. Or if you don't know this foam cleans chrome. Or what you use to take grease off the walls. 38-12

These fathers had been accustomed to their spouses' help around the house. Perhaps because of this and their tendency not to rely much on their children's help around the house, men from integrated marriages were the only group of fathers to openly admit their dismay and fatigue with housework. For example, Karl spoke of the lack of

breaks or support:

> I guess one of the things that's difficult is that, it's difficult to find any free time for yourself. When you work that many hours and come home and have a house which has not only your mess but somebody else's mess and the cats and all that. It's exhausting sometimes never to have much free time to do what you want...I don't know, it's just that you get tired of coming home every night and the garbage cans are on the floor and the floor is dirty and there's no food and the clothes are all dirty, and the cat's thrown up. You know. You just want it all to go away for a few minutes. 10-5

Martin would have agreed with Karl:

> I mean it's just a hell of a lot of work. I wish I didn't have to do it. I must admit that when a date washes dishes it makes me feel pretty good. And I don't want to overreact and go out, I don't want to have a partner that is subservient. But the relief is nice. To have someone wait on you after you have waited on the children and everything is a very nice break. 38-12

Fathers from integrated marriages did not seem to derive much esteem from doing housework. Martin described housework as "just mundane matters;" he believed his involvement in homemaking minimally enhanced the general feeling of competence he was building as a single parent. Of course, men from integrated marriages had little reason to feel that they had accomplished anything very unusual by keeping up their homes; most had been involved in this for years. In addition, unlike fathers from modified-segregated marriages, fathers from integrated marriages did not seem to feel relieved by or pleased with their increased control over homemaking. However, none of the fathers from integrated marriages complained about their wives' housekeeping standards or activities, unlike some men from modified-segregated marriages. Because of their past involvement in housework, fathers from integrated marriages no doubt had had more

control over housework than had men from modified-segregated marriages, whose wives had dominated this sphere of daily life. After becoming single parents, men from integrated marriages merely expanded their power in this already familiar area.

Two interesting patterns regarding housework distinguished single fathers from the single mothers. One trend was the degree to which men and women thought of housekeeping as a basic parental obligation. Fathers were much more likely than were mothers to feel that housekeeping was not a parental responsibility. When describing their housekeeping arrangements, fathers often asserted that responsibility for housework should not have to rest on their shoulders (although fathers from integrated marriages were least likely to say this). Not uncommonly, they gained help from their children by insisting that housework was a family chore that everyone must share in. When his daughters were preschoolers, Eric talked with them about housework:

> I guess I came out and said, "Dad doesn't want to do this anymore and you are going to have to start doing this yourself." They decorate and I let them do little things and I leave it. I let them do things cause I am an easy person when it comes to cleaning up this house. I'll do anything to get out of it. That's the way it is. 13-11

Irv also felt that his children should participate around the house. He explained:

> I have been very consistent with them, and it is expectant of them and they know they have to do it. Cause everybody has got to do something. I refuse to go through this place every day after work and clean it. I have done it and can do it. But I don't want to do it and shouldn't have to do it....Beds made in the morning. Put clothes away. You don't even think of all those responsibilities but they make a world of difference. Cause I'll be damned if I am going to go around and put them all away. 15-10

Mothers were much more likely to explain to me (and apparently to their children, too) that they could not (rather than should not have to) do all the housework alone. When they asked their children for help around the house, mothers suggested they needed help because there were limits to what they could do. Fathers said they deserved help because they did not enjoy housework or felt that it was unreasonable for them to do all of it. And while some mothers also admitted that they did not like doing housework, none of them implied that this affected the way they cared for their children. In contrast, fathers were more likely to admit disinterest in housework and to dismiss themselves from these tasks. For example, Vince described his feelings about cooking:

> If I were into that, I could do it. I could cook meals, get a simple cookbook and just do it and stuff. But it just feels like an effort and a burden. And who's gonna care if a kid will eat a meal? I suppose I could make greater effort to find out exactly what he likes and cook it just the way he likes it. But I am not interested in that. I don't want to spend a lot of my time and energy trying to make him happy with food. 37-10

Second, fathers from all three marital history types were much more likely than were mothers to receive unpaid help with housework. Men with mothers close by often received aid, even when they seemed not to want it. For example, Fred told me that his mother lived only a few blocks away from him.

> She wants to come over here and clean the house all the time. She thinks it's dirty and I don't think it's so dirty. She wants to come over right now and wash that window. That's her. I say don't worry about it. The rain will come and wash it off. She wants to come over and dust and vacuum everything. I say you have your own house to do, I can do this....She's got the key. Her own key for the place. And once in a while I come home and I know there's been things jumbled around, and she's been in

here. 39-6

Steve's mother also was nearby. He noted:

> When I get behind over here, she'll come over every so often and [laughs] straighten up the house. Do a big tornado job on it and it's good for a while again [laughs]. 45-1

And Karl received periodic help from both his mother and his mother-in-law.

> Both [my daughter's] grandmothers take pity on us and send us food. My mother makes up some soups and stews and whenever we go there we bring home a cooler. On Sundays, we often go out to the other grandmother and after that we often have leftovers and cakes to bring home....[And] my mother-in-law shows up once or twice a year and cleans it up. 10-5

While none of the mothers were privy to such aid, a number of them frequently visited and shared meals with their parents. This gave these women some relief from sole responsibility for cooking.

Summary

In sum, mothers generally became less involved with housework and thought it became easier to do after they became single parents. Consequently, homemaking became less central to mothers' self-esteem and self-concepts than it previously had been. In contrast, fathers felt more involved in and taxed by housework. Only fathers from segregated marriages seem to have derived esteem from the ways in which they and their children maintained their homes. Additionally, it seems that single fathers and single mothers had different conceptions of the relationship between parenting and housework. Mothers generally felt that responsibility for keeping up their homes rested on their shoulders as single parents. Fathers (especially from segregated and modified-segregated marriages) less often

accepted sole responsibility for the upkeep of their homes; fathers quite often implied that housework was a family responsibility, not a parental one, and obtained frequent help with housework from their children.

CHAPTER VIII

REACTIONS TO PARENTING RESPONSIBILITIES

> I want them to be secure that I am going to be there. That I am not going away. I am going to stay no matter what. Up until the divorce I was secure that there was love in the family unit. I want them to know that love is still secure. It's very shattering to everyone. It came as a surprise to everyone. I know how shattered I was. I know hov insecure I felt. I want them to know they are very much cared about. It's more security for myself, too. [Paula, a single mother of three]

Divorce or the death of a spouse can turn one's world upside down. The grief and sense of loss can be overwhelming and remain vivid for years. In the context of this emotional turmoil, single parents realign one of their most important responsibilities: parenting.

Some of the critical issues that the single mothers in the sample subset dealt with included coming to terms with having independent control over parenting, administering discipline alone, and deciding to ask children for help around the house. Mothers responded to these issues differently, depending on their marital history type. In addition, the women's mothering ideologies influenced their ability to recognize their own needs for personal time and rest from parenting.

The Women

The three groups of mothers differed in their perception of their spouses' parenting involvement. Most women from segregated marriages were full-time homemakers when their children were young. Parenting was their top priority and these women expected to be much more involved with child care than were their husbands. Indeed, according to these mothers' accounts their spouses had been only marginally involved in parenting. Even so, many mothers from segregated marriages were relatively quick to claim that their husbands had been often useful, helpful parenting aides. Even Judy, whose husband was rarely home, observed:

> Richard was around so seldom...He was never there for any crisis, anything that was going on, anything positive even, the kids' programs, he was never there....[Yet] in parenting, when he was around he was good with the kids. He'd give them baths and change diapers. He was good with the kids. So I did feel the full load of parenting squarely on my shoulders [when he left] and that was scarey. 43-6

Maggie, a mother of three who was widowed in her early 20s, had received support from her husband when he came home from work. She felt debilitated when that release was no longer available:

> [When we were married] Joe worked two jobs and I really didn't see him that much. So when he was home I liked to hand over the kids so I could have some peace. [After he died] I can remember many nights, they would go to bed at 7:00 or 7:30 and I would be in bed at 8:00 cause I was so exhausted....Even at three years old they aren't independent. They can't play by themselves in the yard or anything. 23-8

Barb also admitted that her spouse's support was reassuring:

> Just to know that another adult has responsibility. I could say, "Hey, you pick up the kids tonight. I can't." Just to have another adult human being that you

could say, "I can't do this. You have to." 28-2

Women from segregated marriages missed the respite from child care that their spouses had provided. They had come to expect dependable parenting assistance. It was unsettling to lose a valuable helper, especially when children were so young and needed a great deal of attention. Women from modified-segregated marriages and primarily wife-shaped marriages also became single parents when their children were very young. However, mothers from segregated marriages often felt they lacked any "down time" as parents.

According to LaRossa and LaRossa (1981), parents have various stages of attentiveness. They may be "up" and engaged in direct contact and communication with their children. Or parents may care for their children as a secondary activity (in addition to being occupied with another task) as when a parent is fixing a meal while listening for sounds from the nursery. "Down time" occurs when a parent is with his/her children but is not on call or does not need to remain ready to answer children's cries or meet their needs. For example, a parent may be napping or reading a book while her mate watches the children. Mothers from segregated marriages felt most overwhelmed and agitated by the lack of down time. Barb expressed her aggravation with the constant nature of single parenting:

> When you spend four years of continuous parenting, and you are alone, you are just waiting for someone to say, "Mommy, will you flush the toilet for me?" If you haven't had children, you don't know. There is no private place in the house. You are always on call. You are always on call....Ready for this crisis thing. You can never really totally relax when the kids are moving around. When they go out the door [you think], "Where are they? Are they following the rules?"... It takes a lot of energy. 28-14

Judy felt severely restricted as a single parent:

> I really felt tied down and trapped for a long time. I felt real tied down cause there wasn't ever the other parent to lighten the load at home. Not even in any little way. The age of the kids, any time you ever wanted to go anywhere or be by yourself at all you have to find a sitter and pay for a sitter. If you couldn't afford it, that was it. And I had all I could do with taking care of my own kids. I wasn't gonna get into reciprocity baby sitting at all. 43-23

Nancy felt similarly:

> You can't take a bath by yourself or go to the bathroom by yourself. Not that I resent that, it's just that it's all so overwhelming. It's always so constant. You just have to do everything. You don't have a baby sitter and you want to go to lunch with somebody; until the kids are in school, you've got your kids. And we have moved, and who are you gonna leave your kids with that they aren't gonna get sick of that? 6-7

Mothers from segregated marriages felt disturbed particularly by unexpected events, like illnesses. For example, Ann explained:

> Being responsible for her is a lot. That's what drains me, when I think about it, when I am sick, when my energy level is low....There is no back-up when you are down. That is frustrating. 14-2

Jane felt vulnerable when it came to hectic times:

> My mother was married and she was juggling [many] things around cause my father was never home. He worked all the time. So she was kinda like a single parent. She tells me that. But then there is a lot of difference, cause if you got to the point where you got sick of [everything], you could call someone up and say, "Get your butt home. I need you right now." I don't have that. And there is no way out. 24-13

Women from segregated marriages also felt uncomfortable with the solitary nature of single parenting. Decisions and daily rules had to be hammered out without a mate's advice. These mothers had expected to depend on their husbands to help mold and shape the substance of their parenting. Jane lamented her situation as a single parent. She told me:

> One thing is that it is lonely. Cause I don't have anybody to come to about little things...I buy books to help me. It's kinda lonely cause there is nobody. I am not going to call my parents. Little things like do you think spanking is wrong. Last year he wanted to play baseball and it took me three months to decide if I would let him play with a team. I didn't know about that....It would be easier if you could pass the buck, "You tell him." 24-15

The seven mothers from modified-segregated marriages were primarily responsible for parenting while they were married. However, in comparison with women from segregated marriages, these mothers did not feel that their husbands were significant sources of parenting relief. Few claimed that their husbands provided daily or regular help with child care. For example, Pam observed:

> I have always been the one to take care of him and provide for him, that hasn't changed. His father wasn't a good father. He never tucked him in bed. He didn't take any part in the child care. At all...[Even when we did fun things], he wouldn't go with us. He wasn't a very involved father. 18-6

Paula implied she rarely received help from her husband when she explained:

> I was married to a doctor. He worked all the time. [When he left] that wasn't a real adjustment. It took the kids a while to realize, I think, that their dad was really, permanently not here. [Daily] life didn't change that way. 11-3

Margaret's husband often had been on the road:

> I did all the parenting. He was never home. Sammy and I, from the time he was born until Heidi was born, he and I were alone, the whole five years. Tom was never around. 34-3

Perhaps this difference between women from segregated marriages and women from modified-segregated marriages may be traced to their different employment patterns. When they were married, women from

segregated marriages were usually full-time homemakers whose only daily parenting breaks were provided by their husbands. In contrast, most mothers from modified-segregated marriages were either employed part-time or full-time. Thus, their daily parenting load (in terms of hours spent caring for children and down time) was eased by baby sitters and day care. Husbands of women from modified-segregated marriages probably did provide periodic breaks or relief for their wives during stressful times; other researchers have found that husbands of employed women contribute similar amounts of time to child care as do husbands of full-time homemakers (Miller and Garrison, 1982). Nonetheless, either mothers from modified-segregated marriages felt their husbands' help was insignificant or they felt less relief from the fathers' aid than did mothers from segregated marriages.

Women from modified-segregated marriages felt they and their spouses had shared responsibility for their children's well-being. These mothers missed this, if anything. Paula felt that she and her husband had been co-planners of their family's future. She admitted:

> Before when there were two of us I always thought someone would always take care of things. Now I feel a greater responsibility for the kids turning out right. I am responsible. 11-8

Even mothers who did not like their spouses' parenting style felt that single parenting was more burdensome. For example, Betsy's spouse had a very quick temper and had often lashed out at their son. Betsy said that tension at home had declined tremendously since her spouse left. Still, she recognized:

> The problem [with parenting] for me concerns

> responsibility and to know that, whatever happens, it'll all stay right here [with me]. 35-6

She shared few parenting values with her husband, who had created nearly explosive amounts of pressure at home. Nonetheless he had been partly accountable for the well-being of her children, just by remaining her spouse.

The five mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages had husbands whose involvement in parenting varied markedly. Some fathers did minimal amounts of parenting. Susan explained her ex-spouse's attitude about child care by repeating his litany of her responsibilities:

> I went back to work, after the six weeks were up. When it came time to find a baby sitter, that was my problem. Getting up in the middle of the night, that was my problem. If they were sick and taking them to the doctor, that was my problem. 16-13

However, Carol's husband was a supportive helper.

> That was one of the things George and I, we did work well. When he could kinda see when I was pushed to the limit. He would kinda step in and I would do that for him, too. You know, when you could see that you were pushed. When the kids would bother you. This was when the kids were younger and stuff. He did tend to, or could recognize that and steer them away from me. That would help. 31-17

Arlie's husband was also very supportive:

> I was real active in community affairs and did a lot of work for community groups. I did a lot of that work, so that entailed going back and forth and when I did that he was always home. No matter what time late at night I got home, he was always there with the kids. So I didn't have to worry about that. During the day he worked, but after that period of time he would pick them up, make supper, that type of thing. He didn't change diapers or anything like that, but as far as playing with them or doing things or making supper or jumping up from the couch to get them a glass of water, you know, minor little things, he always did stuff like that. 33-1

Grace saw her husband as a parenting partner:

> [My husband was] real active with Danny. Changed his diapers, played with him, fed him...He wasn't the kind of parent who didn't want to be with his child. 9-10

Unlike mothers from segregated marriages, mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages did not feel that single parenting was extremely frustrating. They did not feel that their parenting responsibility grew heavier nor did they seem troubled by the loss of their husbands' daily parenting help. Whether or not their husbands had been active child care givers, women from primarily wife-shaped marriages appeared comfortable with single parenting responsibilities.

Satisfaction with Control

Given their different perceptions of the awesome and frustrating nature of single parenting, it is not surprising that these three groups of mothers also felt differently about having major control over their parenting. Mothers from segregated marriages were least enthusiastic about having independent control over parenting. If they communicated to me any pleasure over parenting control, they later negated these ideas. They felt they could easily relinquish some of their power, given the right circumstances. For example, Maggie, a mother from a segregated marriage, noted that:

> I think that many times single parenting is easier cause I don't have to consult someone and if there are conflicts I will handle them the way I want to and the way I see fit.

Yet, when she married for the second time:

> The kids liked Larry cause he was good to them. And he did take some responsibility from me and I didn't have a

hard time giving some of that up. 23-4

Marilyn enjoyed being in charge of her family. Yet she acknowledged:

> I guess I wouldn't mind giving up some of that control. I don't know, I guess if I were to get married again it would have to be a joint decision. That type of thing. Cause right now I have complete control over what goes on. How I think and how I behave. And I guess I wouldn't mind sharing those decisions, it's just that I don't want somebody to come in and decide everything for me. 32-16

Ann, who was a married parent for only a short amount of time, noted her ambivalence about parenting control:

> The most satisfying thing [about being a single parent] is that you can bring the kids up the way you want or you're not fighting, "She can do this." "No, she can't." I guess not having to deal with how someone else might bring her up. I think it would be easier to have the conflict with an adult than to be totally alone, though. 14-2

Only Barb mentioned the benefits of being in command of child care and family activities without making a later disclaimer. Even so, her comments focused on the logistics of solo parenting rather than on the pleasures of having greater influence over discipline or socialization. She explained:

> Our plans aren't contingent on another person having to agree. The three of us, we get along real well. If the three of us want to go to Hardees for dinner, fine. If we want to run down to my folks for the evening, fine. If we want to stay up all night and then sleep in, fine. Trying to accommodate sometimes for that fourth person, unless that person blends in real well, I think it's difficult. The more organizational problems you have. 28-4

When they were married, women from segregated marriages often had very little control over family decision-making. While having more control is somewhat pleasurable for them, sharing family responsibility with a mate would be their preference.

Mothers from modified-segregated marriages were more emphatic

than mothers from segregated marriages about the value and importance of having control over parenting. Apparently, many women from modified-segregated marriages were uncomfortable with their spouses' parenting style. (Remember, too, that most insisted their spouses played a very small parenting role.) Women from modified-segregated marriages felt their spouses were mainly involved with disciplining and setting rules for their children. Disagreements about discipline were commonplace in modified-segregated marriages. These mothers may have missed sharing responsibility for parenting, but they were often relieved to have the upper hand and were pleased to live without frequent conflicts about discipline. For example, Betsy relished this new control. Her spouse's unpredictable temper often was directed at their son because:

> He didn't have any realism in his parenting. He didn't understand development. And what goes on with kids and how they change their ideals and how they grow. He didn't have a basic understanding of children. It was hard for him and no matter how I tried to explain it, he had some set ideas that were totally unrealistic and those are the ones that he's gonna go by. That's what I mean by we had separate value systems. They were this far apart when it came to parenting. And so parenting was probably our biggest rift. 35-8

Gwen was also happy to live without frequent bickering about parenting:

> The most rewarding thing [about single parenting] is that I don't have to ask anybody if I am doing the right thing. I can bring her up the way I want to. There is no one to tell me, "You are doing this wrong"....We would have disagreements on how to bring her up. Whether to spank her. He would let her color on the walls. He didn't care. But to me that is forbidden. He didn't care and that was one of those things we disagreed about. And that caused a lot of friction. 7-8

Helen's husband had done almost no child care. She said she felt

like a single parent for the two years she was a married parent. Helen enjoyed single parenting because she no longer had to contend with her husband's demands:

> Stevie was sick those years we were married and it was easier for me to deal with [his sickness] alone cause his dad would say, "Can't you keep him quiet? I need to get my sleep." It was like one brat and one sick baby. It was easier alone cause I didn't have to worry about Stevie keeping someone awake. 25-7

Mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages were quite delighted with having greater parenting power. These mothers had a major role in parenting while they were married; yet, single parenting enhanced their opportunity to shape their children's experiences in valued ways. As a result, mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages saw many advantages of single parenting and enjoyed uncomplicated decision-making. Susan implied this as she explained how she currently incorporates her ex-husband into her children's plans:

> If it's a major decision or a change or something I'll make him aware of what's going on, but he doesn't make the decision.
>
> Q: Why?
>
> It's just easier....It's easier. Cause you don't have to take another person's view or needs or wants or ideas. That's what easier. You don't have to incorporate. It makes sense. 16-15,22

For Carol, single parenting meant less conflict over family activities. She had felt swamped by rifts with her husband:

> It bothered him to have the kids in the car, cause then they fight. So we ended up staying home. And that was so frustrating. And that happened so much of the time, we ended up not doing things cause if we did and took the kids along, and they would fight, it would make him nervous. It would make me nervous cause then I would

> think, I have to keep these kids quiet so their dad wouldn't get upset. And now, if we want to go, we just go. We don't have to worry whether this person is going to come with us and get upset or going to be home all alone and put me on a guilt trip cause he's been left home alone. 31-12

Grace enjoyed having greater freedom of expression. She felt all spheres of her life, including parenting, were scrutinized unfavorably while she was married:

> In the relationship I felt that I put restraints on myself cause I got a lot of negative feedback, especially if I was expressing myself. I feel like I can do more of that [now] without feeling like I had to watch over my shoulder or wait for a critical response....I like pick Danny up and yell and polka and laugh and pretend and climb on furniture and John would get uncomfortable with that. I like to play fantasy with Danny. I will get right in the spaceship. I think I am loud. I like to be loud and make noises and I feel like I am free to do that, and Danny likes it. 9-6

In short, mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages were the most comfortable and pleased with the parenting control they gained as single parents.

Discipline

These three groups of women had distinctly different feelings about discipline. Mothers from segregated marriages were the most frustrated by disciplinary issues and most likely felt that their ex-spouses had been more effective at obtaining their children's compliance[27].

While mothers from segregated marriages did not dwell on their disciplinary concerns, they mentioned these matters much more than did other mothers. For example, when asked what was most frustrating about single parenting, Judy, a mother from a segregated marriage who had been a single parent for six years, responded:

> I guess it would be disciplining alone. That is very frustrating. To not have anybody on my side. To help reinforce whatever disciplinary measures I set up. That if I am getting weak to give in, that can help take over and help maintain the consistency that should be there. Cause I am not strong enough to be constantly, constantly there. That's frustrating for me, refereeing the kids fights and being involved. 43-25

Marilyn was also distressed over discipline. She had difficulty with her hyperactive son, who had been a source of enormous tension.

> When he was little he was so hard to handle that I thought a couple of times that I might have to give him up. That he was gonna drive me nuts. And nobody could handle him. My parents have raised five kids and they couldn't handle him. They couldn't handle him at day care, at school. We got notices from our building manager that we might get kicked out. It was bad. 32-10

Marge's husband had been very strict, and she felt the children had listened to him well. When we spoke, Marge said she felt dashed. While she tried to be a more rigid disciplinarian as a single parent, she believed her children were not very responsive:

> Every chance they get, they try to bend the rules and a lot of times they win.
>
> Q: Were you the authority before?
>
> Pretty much. But they seemed to listen to him better....I don't know. He was always stronger, tougher, and mom was an old softy. When he said something, they had better....
>
> Q: So now you aren't a softy?
>
> Right, because I have had to be tough, too. I hate it. I think they push and push till they know they can't push anymore and I have a really hard time with discipline. 29-13

Mothers from segregated marriages seemed to have thought of their spouses as a backup system for discipline that could step in

when mothers were weary and maintain order and stability. These husbands had helped by shoring up any weaknesses or slippages in their wives' implementation of the rules.

The seven mothers from modified-segregated marriages had concerns about discipline, but few were as strong as those of mothers from segregated marriages. Only a few common worries surfaced among these mothers. Most felt their discipline practices altered minimally since they became single parents. They were accustomed to monitoring their children and dishing out punishment. They felt they had been more involved than their spouses in providing and enforcing guidelines for their children. A number of these husbands had been inactive or irregular disciplinarians because of their alcoholism or their excessive work loads. Jo's husband was not involved with their children. He drank heavily and was basically a nonparticipant in the family for years before Jo became a single parent. When I asked if her husband ever disciplined their children, she replied:

> Not very often. No, I was always the only one who did most of it. 30-8

Betsy's husband worked long hours. She was comfortable with disciplining, even though her husband had not approved of her style:

> Gary was never here. You can't save discipline up till daddy gets home. When he was here he was in charge ....He didn't think that my discipline was good enough. I didn't push hard enough, he said. 35-18

If women from modified-segregated marriages missed their husbands' input, it was usually because these women had looked to their spouses for support as a parent. Even though many women felt this help had not been provided frequently, they searched for it

throughout their marriages. Margaret was one such mother:

> I asked him about discipline. What he thought would help. I got the same answers I [always] got. "I don't know." I was still trying to get him to be a parent. I was still trying to get him to back me up. 34-13

Betsy also missed the feedback and support a spouse could provide. She did not yearn for someone to step in and take over in times of crisis or fatigue, as did mothers from segregated marriages. Instead, she missed interacting and discussing parenting issues. To her, single parenting was frustrating because there was:

> No feedback. No positives. They do something and you say something and you never know if you did the right thing. You never get any positive feedback. You never have somebody say, "Yeah, you did ok. That was the right thing"....You don't have the other person to say, "That's great," or "I think you should do this." I have a little advantage in the fact that I have had a lot more resources available to me through the years. Being able to go to workshops on parenting. And we took parenting classes, too. But trying to put them into action is the tough part. Then you are alone and you don't have anybody to help you. And it's so easy to slip into the old mold. Scream and holler and find out that won't work either. So it would be nice to have someone to help with that. 35-17

Mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages were the most independent of the mothers when they were married. In comparison with the other single mothers, they had little anxiety about discipline. They usually set guidelines for their children while they were married, as Grace explained:

> Usually I made most of the major decisions about discipline and rules and regulations and then I would tell him what they were and then Peter would kinda try to follow them....He was real active, but I kinda had ultimate responsibility for all the decisions and the direction of guidance. And I took that on. 9-10

Mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages often had a very firm

and strict sense of what they felt was permissible. For example, Linda said:

> I used to be hard on [my son], too. Strict. But I am a believer that if you don't have your child under control by the time he is 5, you have lost him. If they are controlling you at the age of 6 then it's over. You'll never control him.....There are some set rules and he goes by the rules or else there's repercussions. 4-14

Unlike the other two groups of women, mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages did not lament the loss of a disciplinary backup system; nor did they seem to need a discipline support system. If anything, mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages felt relieved about not compromising with the wishes or demands of another adult. This was precisely Carol's reaction to disciplining as a single parent.

> I am a tougher disciplinarian. And I don't have to deal with this person or convince this person that I feel this is right or wrong. What I say goes. And it is just much easier that way. It is easier to convince a child and say, "Until you are a certain age, you can't do this," than it is to convince another adult. I no longer have to compromise with George's leniency about things that I feel strongly about. I just say, "This is it." And there is no arguing about it. No compromising. This is it. 31-2,17

In sum, these three groups of mothers had dissimilar feelings about being single-parent disciplinarians. While mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages enjoyed exercising control over this area of family life, mothers from segregated marriages felt distressed by the task and would have welcomed assistance. Mothers from modified-segregated marriages would have enjoyed having feedback and parenting support, even though they felt this area of their lives had changed little since they became single parents.

Finally, three experiences with discipline distinguished the mothers from the fathers I interviewed, regardless of their marital history type. The first pattern was a concern and uncertainty among mothers about the future difficulties of raising teenagers. Marilyn voiced doubts similar to other mothers who speculated about this upcoming ordeal:

> I think about them becoming teenagers and being single is kinda scary. I guess I feel like I am setting the foundation. I guess that is always in the back on my mind: what am I gonna do?....I don't know as far as teenagers. I think of all the emotions. I was real hard to get along with as a teenager. And I know how I used to think and if they do that to me, it will be tough. 32-20

Another theme common among many mothers but not among fathers was the leniency they showed in the early years of single parenting. For example, Paula admitted that a discipline problem began early on when she would:

> Say no and then yes. I give in to their whims at the store. I buy things I never would have before. They are realizing that a temper tantrum will get them things they would have never gotten before. The first couple of months you wouldn't believe the toys that crossed this door. 11-12

Gwen also dealt with this issue:

> I figured it out once. I bought her something every time we went to the store for two or three years. I can't resist. I am an old softy. If I say no, the tears come. 7-4

The third and final difference between mothers and fathers related to the important part children's age played in parents' feelings about discipline. As other studies have indicated, divorce is perhaps roughest on older children and is particularly difficult for teenage boys separated from their fathers (Wallerstein and Kelly,

1980). The two mothers in the sample subset who had teenage sons when they divorced experienced enormous difficulties with these boys. Both sons eventually moved into their fathers' homes. None of the fathers with teenagers had similar experiences.

Children's Help

When they were married, these groups of women had different sets of expectations for their household duties. Some wanted to be full-time homemakers while others thought that upkeep of a home would be only one of their primary tasks. They also had divergent notions about what their children's roles should be at home. Whether or not these different expectations were a result of single parenting or were exacerbated by single parenting was not possible for me to determine. Nonetheless, the differences were pronounced and varied by the mothers' marital history type.

Relatively speaking, mothers from segregated marriages expected the least amount of help around the house from their children. After they became single parents, they generally felt there was little change in the amount of aid they asked of their sons and daughters. They did not feel more lax or demanding as single parents. Yet, their children's involvement in housework contrasted sharply with other single mothers' children.

I asked all parents about their children's responsibilities at home. Mothers from segregated marriages consistently explained why their answers were so brief. For example, Nancy, who lived with her eight year old and her ten year old, explained that she valued other

things more than she valued help around the house:

> I don't make my kids do a lot of things. They do homework, read. I make them do little things, behavior things. Like give to others. That's a personal code. That's more important than cleaning their rooms. 6-10

Maggie lived with two teenagers. She insisted that it was often easier to do things alone than with the help of her children:

> The kids really don't have chores. I don't expect an awful lot of them. I expect them to keep up their rooms...Take care of their clothes pretty much. Little things like putting the dishes in the dishwasher. But usually I want it done now, and they aren't available. So I do it myself. 23-6

Marilyn, whose two sons were aged nine and ten, believed that there was not much need of help:

> There isn't much for them to do here....I get after them to pick up their room. Sometimes they'll help fold clothes, things like that. I don't know. Right now when I get home from work I am in a hurry to make supper and it takes longer if they [help] and makes a bigger mess, so I'd just rather do it myself....I don't know. I guess it's not that much. If they clean their own room and pick up stuff when I ask them to that's enough. 32-18

Until two years ago, Marge had been a full-time homemaker and had never expected her three children to help around the house. After she began working full-time, she felt that some help would be nice. However, Marge did not institute a set of routine chores for her children; she seemed to rely on their rare and reluctant volunteer support.

> They never really had anything to do before. I was always here. I always washed their clothes, made their beds, did the breakfast and dinner dishes, picked up after them....But once I got a job, I am not here everyday to make beds or whatever. And you go stand for eight to ten hours. You sure as heck don't feel like coming home and making supper and standing for another two hours washing dishes. So one time Joey helps, and then you hear, "Mom,

> why do we always have to do the dishes?" As if they are really getting punished bad. 29-13

Mothers from modified-segregated marriages demanded more help around the house from their children than did mothers from segregated marriages. Some of these mothers believed they asked for more help at home after they became single parents. For example, Paula's job took her away from home a number of weekday evenings. On these nights, she left her teenage daughter in charge of the house and two younger siblings.

> They eat dinner after I leave. I will have dinner ready for them or in the oven for them by the time I leave to go back to work. My daughter will cook it. Makes sure food is on the table. I will usually have the table set. Fifteen is a rough age and she has had a lot to go through in the past year. I try to keep my demands on her at a low enough level. She has taken on a lot of responsibility.... She has been doing more than I would like. But out of necessity. 11-5

Jo felt taxed by her full-time college course load. For her, the hardest part of the day was coming home. She said she felt pulled in sixteen different directions by all her responsibilities. Her saving grace was the help of her daughters.

> The only thing really that was good for me is that my girls are good about starting meals and washing clothes and cleaning house. So they took a lot of that pressure off me. 30-5

After they became single parents, mothers from modified-segregated marriages reported feeling comfortable asking for a bit more help from their children, but not for an amount that differed greatly from the children's previous work loads. These mothers were sensitive to how their children's lives had changed and did not consider this issue lightly. For example, after she became a

single parent, Paula struggled with her feelings about her children's additional responsibilities. She was pragmatic and yet hesitant about their present arrangements:

> I am making them grow up a little faster than they would have otherwise. For example, my daughter is baby sitting and I am expecting the boys to get their own breakfasts. Before I would have been there and gotten their breakfasts for them. Which isn't all bad....I see the kids are doing things and surviving. I have accepted it and gone along with it. Before it wasn't necessary. I would like them to be children as long as they can be children. And it's hard today. I am making them grow up a little faster. 11-7,8

Mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages demanded just a bit more household help from their children than did mothers from modified-segregated marriages. However, the tenor of these mothers' expectations was rather distinctive. They seemed more comfortable with the demands they placed on their children and expected greater responsibility from their sons and daughters[28]. For example, Carol described her son's (age twelve) and daughter's (age eight) regular chores:

> Last winter he would do the dishes, and he got really sick of doing the dishes. Not including the lawn, I would have him vacuum and dust and clean his bedroom and she would fold clothes and clean her bedroom. And then I usually would put something big in there like clean the bathroom, or clean the car. Something like that. 31-30

These mothers seemed somewhat less tolerant of uncooperative or irresponsible behavior by their children. Grace's son was almost five when we spoke. While I would not suggest that her expectations of her son were too high, she communicated her rules to me in the more definitive, unconditional style that mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages often used when discussing this topic:

> I expect more of him. And I don't think that's particularly negative. I expect him to clean his room and I expect him to brush his teeth by himself and put his pajamas on himself. I am more assertive about making him finish the task by himself or do it. Cause I just can't do it all. Before there was some help so I could be a little more lax in that, in helping him. So, I think I am putting more responsibility on him to behave and get things done. 9-20

Finding a Balance

Single mothers grappled with trying to achieve what they referred to as a "balance" in their lives. Particularly in the initial years of single parenting, they felt uncertain about how much time and energy they should devote to their selves, their work, and, most importantly, their children. This issue was complicated by the fact that these mothers often judged themselves against some very high mothering standards. This parenting paradigm, which I call "selfless mothering," provided the context in which many single mothers juggled their responsibilities. Their standards are "selfless" because dedication, self-sacrifice, and self-denial seemed to be the major ingredients of this parenting style. Nancy, one of the single mothers able to work at home while her children were young, was quite selfless. She insisted that putting her children's needs first would ultimately lead to her own happiness:

> My kids are the most important thing in my life. The most important thing....If you put yourself aside, eventually you will be able to fulfill yourself. Do the things you thought you were letting pass by....Do the things that have to be done first. It's not like your kids are going to trap you. They do for twenty years but then you still have another lifetime ahead of you to do everything you thought you wanted to do. Anyway, my kids are the most important thing to me.....I think if you don't do everything for your kids, that it comes back to haunt

> you. It hurts you, too, if your kids are unhappy. I couldn't just walk off and not feel badly. So, I just handle things as they come and then when I'm free, I'll just walk off. Then I don't have to feel guilty about anything. 6-5,11

While mothers from segregated marriages were most likely of the three groups of women to subscribe to extreme forms of selfless mothering (perhaps because their marital experiences had been so traditional), all mothers exhibited some characteristics of selflessness and struggled with balancing time for themselves and for their children. The most selfless of mothers could be distinguished from other mothers by the way their brows knit when they spoke about needing to find equilibrium in their lives. And they frequently referred to feeling guilty about their "balancing" decisions. For example, Paula was quite torn between what she thought were her children's needs and her own needs for relaxation and social outlets. She had been a single parent for a little over a year when we spoke. During this time she started a job that took her away from home sometimes eighty-five hours a week. Her current schedule amounted to a fifty hour work week. This left little time for other areas of her life. She explained:

> I spend as much time as I can with my children. At the same time I feel cheated about time for myself. I don't get to spend time for myself. Now, if I spend time for myself I feel guilty. My mind is still the old, well, I am not a women's liber. I can't get rid of it: the wife is supposed to stay home. I would like to work only twenty hours a week. It's hard for me to say, "I want to read for an hour." I feel guilty even if I tell myself over and over again. The things you grow up with are hard to get rid of. I like to take long baths. I feel really guilty....Or out to a movie, I felt really guilty taking that time, yet I knew I needed it and thoroughly enjoyed it. 11-7

Margaret also held up selfless mothering as her parenting standard for many years. Her mother had been her role model.

> I struggled a lot with trying to be a responsible adult and parent, but where do my needs come in?....It's like, ok, you need time away as an adult to just clear your mind and have a good time. But how does that fit with your work schedule and the amount of time your children get?...And trying to work through all that to where you feel comfortable with it. That takes time. It's difficult. And I really struggled with the parenting in that respect....I was supposed to be here all the time. So when I leave, I feel guilty. 34-5

The obligation that seemed to tug at Paula's and Marilyn's hearts was the feeling that they owed their children their "free time" (i.e., when not at work or busy at home). Many mothers felt similarly. Concern over their children's well-being and recognition of their own desires fed these single mothers' unsettled, unbalanced feeling. This conflict was most acute in the first year or two of single parenting. During these years, many mothers attempted to meet their multiple work and parenting demands alone, and only slowly came to realize that their own needs were being given scant attention. Margaret described her early, futile attempts to remain available to her children while also working overtime at her job:

> I survived with very little sleep for a long time....It was almost like for a while I was afraid I would miss something if I was asleep. I had to be awake. So I survived on four to five hours of sleep. It was like I was supposed to be here for them. When I was here, I was awake. But the quality of being here wasn't real great. 34-5

A big source of stress came from trying to feel comfortable with taking time out for dating and socializing. It was hard enough to carve out free time for themselves while they remained at home,

but dating and socializing with other adults necessarily made mothers inaccessible to their children. Marge had been a full-time homemaker before she became a single parent two years earlier. She explained that it was difficult for her to take time to date:

> ...probably because I worked and I wasn't here when they did come home from school. I just felt that any time that I did have away from work, I owed to the kids or I felt that I should be here. I felt that I should spend my time with them instead. 29-12

Arlie recognized this, too.

> I think my biggest problem I think after we got divorced was getting back into the social end of being a single parent....Wanting to go out socially with girl friends or that sort of thing and then not really wanting to cause then I would be guilty about leaving the kids alone. That was one of my biggest problems. 33-3

Mothers felt this predicament was most taxing and worrisome in the early stages of a new relationship. For example, Grace explained:

> I have a new conflict now. And that conflict is the conflict of being a mother and taking care of myself as an adult human being. And I am struggling about how I share my time with Danny and time for myself. Cause if I want to have a relationship with a man, it takes time to devote to that....But now, it's like I almost have two separate lives. It's sort of me, adult woman, doing those things and then me, a sort of a family base with a child. And sometimes they overlap. Before [when I was married], they all overlapped. And if I go too far with being the parent, then I start getting irritable and unhappy. My needs aren't being met. And if I spend too much time focusing on myself, then I notice that my son gets clingy and starts acting out a little bit and doesn't appear to be as happy as I would like him to be....I tend to be swinging a lot. All me. All Danny. I need a balance there a little better, but that will come. I think I am doing the best I can with it. 9-12,15

In these early years, a number of mothers reached or approached what they referred to as "burnout" because while they worked hard at meeting their responsibilities, they failed to care for their own

personal needs. When she reached this critical stage, Marilyn was a full-time college student raising two sons. She devoted a large slot of her week to a community organization:

> Used to be that I wanted to get straight A's in school and I wanted to have the cleanest house, and have good kids and be a good mother and.... You know, you can't be good at everything and then do volunteer work at night, too. Pretty soon you start spreading yourself too thin and you can't fit things into your schedule and you realize that you don't have time for yourself. You start feeling like you are giving too much and start feeling drained, kinda burnt out. 32-15

Ann spent the first two years of single parenting without asking anyone for help or favors. Then she became ill.

> I was going to burn out....I had time to evaluate my lifestyle and how much I had taken on. So afterwards I was able to ask my parents for time, if they would watch Robin so that I could do absolutely nothing. And I never took naps before. But now I do for maybe about an hour. I'll tell her I am going to lay down. To answer the phone and come in if there is an emergency. Taking time out for me was something that I didn't do before. I am still learning. Cause I feel guilty. 14-5

As Ann's words suggest, many mothers slowly became more comfortable with meeting their own needs and blocking out some weekly time they could call their own only after overextending themselves. Linda once reached a point where she said:

> Something has to go. I can't do it all. I think if single parents would realize that. That you can't be mom and you can't be dad and you can't hold down a job and you can't have a social life and a perfect house. I was exhausted when I was trying to do that. 4-3

Other mothers came to an internal agreement about the balance of their lives a bit more gradually. Susan had such a metamorphosis. When she separated from her husband she had a very low sense of self-esteem. Her two infants and her job consumed quite

a bit of her time. It was clear that, little by little, she acknowledged the importance of her own needs. She explained:

> You can only give and give and give so much to your kids. Then when you become financially able to do something for yourself besides taking care of your kids, I often tell my kids that, it's mom's night out. I need to get away from you kids. I need to get away from work. I just need to go out and do things with the girls. And you do. You do some things like that. You don't do them as often as someone without responsibility, but you do fit in what you need to do for your own self. Make sure you have enough family time. Make sure you have enough time for yourself, time for your work, time for your house. 16-19

Barb also exemplified this trend:

> One priority that has become real apparent in the last few years is that if I don't take care of me, I can't take care of my kids. There are some definite activities that I have to do in order to maintain some sanity. I know that I need to get out a couple of nights a week. I know that there are just times when I have to take the boys to a baby sitter and spend a little time here alone. I have become real sensitive to what I need. I just keep giving and giving all the time, which I think I got into early in my marriage and continued on until the divorce. But I just realized that if the pail is empty I just can't give anything out of it. I just have to keep on sticking things back into it for me. 28-13

Summary

Of the women, mothers from segregated marriages were most overwhelmed and agitated by the constant nature of single parenting and were least enthusiastic about having independent parental authority. They often said they would relinquish some parental power, given the right circumstances. Mothers from modified-segregated marriages were more certain about the value and importance of their autonomy as parents. Those from primarily wife-shaped marriages were pleased with their new found control and

enjoyed parental decision-making uncomplicated by another adult.

The mothers I interviewed also differed in their feelings about discipline and help around the house. Mothers from segregated marriages were most frustrated by discipline and often felt that their spouses had been better at obtaining their children's compliance. Mothers from modified-segregated marriages did have some concerns about discipline, but not as strong as those of mothers from segregated marriages. The most independent of mothers were from primarily wife-shaped marriages; they seemed to have little anxiety about discipline. If anything, these mothers enjoyed not compromising with their spouses' wishes or demands about discipline. With regard to their children's roles at home, mothers from segregated marriages expected the least amount of help. Mothers from modified-segregated marriages asked for more help from their children, while women from primarily wife-shaped marriages demanded the most aid.

All single mothers struggled with the need to balance time for themselves and time for their children, especially during the first year or two of single parenting. Many mothers only slowly realized that they gave their own needs scant attention. In these early years, a number of women reached or approached the point of "burnout" because they had failed to take care of themselves.

The Men

While they were married, fathers of the three marital history types were involved with parenting to different degrees. The two men

from segregated marriages were often quite uninvolved in the daily lives of their children; in fact, their descriptions gave me the impression that these men were almost marginal household members. For example, Carl said he was never around when he was a married parent; he worked eighteen hours a day. He described the change in his life:

> When I was married, I wasn't involved with them. My mind was always on money. Now I am involved with everything: money, food. I know what kinds of grades they are getting. I know what they are doing in school. When I was married I avoided everything, if I could. I wouldn't even talk to them. 8-7

In contrast, fathers from modified-segregated marriages were more involved with their children, particularly when they became school-age or older. These men thought of their wives as the primary care givers for their children. Nonetheless, they felt emotionally connected with and close to their daughters and sons. Vince described his parenting experience this way:

> I think the kids' mother and I functioned fairly well as parents. We communicated frequently and openly and well about what was happening with them. We disciplined in concert....But she was much more the parent. I mean at least eighty percent to ninety percent the parent of the kids, in terms of my contribution....I think that I did not avail myself of many opportunities to do things with them. And my ex-wife was totally kid-oriented ...Pretty much organizing the kids' lives was in her hands. 37-4

Dave got more involved with his children as they matured. By the time they were in junior high school, he explained:

> The things I used to do are physical things. Like take them to games. And, like I was coaching for a while and I would coach one of their teams. And see that they got up in the morning, and they got off to school and fixing breakfast and trying to involve myself in their

> lives that way. At home there was a lot of turmoil in the evening or tension in the evening and there wasn't an environment where there was a lot of sitting around and conversing. Everyone tended to isolate themselves, I think. So I don't think there was a lot of that. 47-2

Rod's wife was an alcoholic. As their marriage progressed, he became more and more responsible for his daughter's care, in part because of his wife's illness. He described the transition:

> I think there was, month by month, a general progression of how much time I was spending with her and how much responsibility I was taking. So before it was eighty/twenty, but by 1982 when her mother became ill, it was probably more like seventy/thirty and maybe even sixty/forty. When her mother became ill, I had her alone with me for eight weeks when her mother was in the hospital, and that was one hundred percent. Then her mother came home and it was probably fifty/fifty, and in some dimensions it was seventy/thirty; certainly in providing some structure in her life. That was almost all my responsibility. 26-8

Fathers from integrated marriages were the most involved of male parents when they were married. These men either thought of themselves as parenting partners or considered themselves to be more attuned to the needs of their children than their wives had been. In the last few years of his marriage, Irv felt that he carried more of the parenting load:

> I took care of them before, too. When we were married. I did all the laundry, which I still do and don't mind. I was home at night to put the kids to bed. I saw they had meals. She didn't care. She was gone all the time. I went to the school meetings. If they got hurt, I left work. It was just natural....That was quite a bit of the reason that I got them. She just got too busy. 15-4

Karl also thought that he was closer to his child than his wife had been. As far as taking care of his daughter, he said:

> I probably did more. [I would] sit and play blocks with her. We would read lots and lots of stories. [My ex]

> would do some of that, an acceptable amount, but never to the extent that I did. 10-14

Martin saw himself as the primary parent in the last few years of his marriage. He said he had become:

> The nurturing parent, absolutely....I don't want to gainsay her parenting. For the first ten years of our marriage she was a marvelous parent. But then she became all wrapped up in herself. 38-2

Change in Responsibility

Depending on their marital history type, these three groups of fathers felt differently about their responsibility for their children. Men from segregated marriages felt the most dramatic changes in their parenting responsibilities and related tasks. They had never been involved in the day-to-day care of their children until they became single parents. After they became single parents, they grew more sensitive to their children's physical needs. For example, when discussing changes in parenting that occurred after the breakup of his marriage, Eric focused on the physical dimension of care:

> Getting up in the middle of the night if the baby woke up, diapers, that was all new....Washing the children up. The extra powder, the baby oil. When to use baby oil and when not. That I didn't know. Cleaning the ears. Little things. That was an experience. 13-6

Fathers from modified-segregated marriages also felt increased responsibility for their children after they became single parents. Their changes, however, were somewhat less severe than those of fathers from segregated marriages. When discussing their new parental responsibilities, men from modified-segregated marriages

focused on the particular aspects of parenting that were new. For example, Gene and Fred mentioned that shopping and selection of children's clothes were new to them. When asked what parenting activities they had to incorporate into their daily lives, they made similar comments:

> One of the things was being more in tune to what my kids need as far as school clothes. Things like that, that I had to check out what they needed, books or anything. So it's being more aware of what their needs are, clothing and things. 36-26

> How to shop. Well, you want to go to the grocery store with them. They want to get a toy. Well you just don't buy a toy every time you go to the grocery store, when you do go to a store. Like Tom wants a pair of high tops. You go to Sears and they cost forty-two dollars. Well, in eight months they will be worn out anyway and you can't spend forty-two dollars on something you will wear for a year. So you go to Kinny's; they are twenty-four dollars. You don't have to buy them. Just try them on. So it's shopping. Trying to teach them how to shop. 39-16

Building a daily time schedule and routine for oneself and one's children was also a new task for some fathers. Others, like Rod, were concerned mostly with matters of grooming.

> I had a lot to learn then about taking care of a little kid. How to dress them. I still have trouble with her hair....couple of times I put on clothes that didn't fit. I was not real sure about how things went together. I never paid attention to children's clothes, especially women's clothes. I didn't know what went with what. And color coordination I am not very good at. So at first I think maybe she was dressed a little inappropriately. But I learned that. 26-10

Vince felt more involved in his son's development and behavior than he was as a married parent. Interestingly, he contrasted his feelings about his son's development with that of his daughter (who lived with his ex-wife).

> I think I am more of a guider of his development than I was before. Or a facilitator of his development, socially, academically and athletically, than I was before....I just want my son to grow up and be a mature adult. To be happy and not abuse drugs or alcohol or people. That's all I want. And I want the same for my daughter, it's just that I don't feel as responsible for that...I am lucky cause he is smart, he gets good grades. He'll go to a reasonable college without sweat. He seems rigidly opposed to drugs and alcohol right now. I am a little worried cause he has a tendency to get hyped up and impulsive. But I don't feel any more responsibility for that as a single parent than I did as a co-parent. I say that, but maybe I do feel a little more responsible. But it doesn't torture me. 37-21

Fathers from modified-segregated marriages also thought they became more sensitive to their children's emotional and relational needs. Steve explained:

> I think I am probably more aware of my responsibility now as a parent than I was before. Not that the responsibility has changed, just that I am more aware of it now.
>
> Q: What are you more aware of?
>
> Oh, that the kids need time. You have to spend time with them. And do things with them, not just be around them....And at times it isn't easy to do. 45-10

Dave felt that being a single parent caused him to be more responsive to the emotional needs of his sons:

> The one area I think there's been the biggest change for me is to become more nurturing and to assume more of that role. You know, when you are living by yourself, you have no one else to pick up the slack. So if I come down too hard on the kids for something, then there's no one there to put their arms around them and, you know, console them or whatever it might be or to soften the blow. So I think as a single parent, that's probably been the hardest thing for me to, or the biggest adjustment. I shouldn't say the hardest thing, cause it wasn't. You know, once I recognized what I needed to do, then I started working at it....I think I ended up looking a lot harder at how I relate to my boys. I don't think that I had been as

> physically affectionate as I try to be now. I wasn't brought up that way....And so I have tried to overcome those kinds of things and be more physically affectionate and put my arms around them. I have tried to tell em I love em everyday. Just to do those kinds of things. I think those things are really important. 47-4

Fathers from integrated marriages felt their responsibilities for their children changed minimally when they became single parents. At the most, fathers like Karl admitted they felt only "a little" more accountable for their children's well-being (10-19). Otherwise, men from integrated marriages rarely noted that they felt more responsible for their children. One element of parenting that seemed new and stressful for fathers from integrated marriages was the loss of a dependable child-care aide. Parenting without a spouse made transportation and coordination of work and schooling often fairly difficult or complicated for most mothers and fathers. This new parenting task caused fathers from integrated marriages the most concern. Irv explained:

> I have a hard time getting organized sometimes cause there is no second person there to pick up the slack. Like when I drive truck in the fall, if I can't get a sitter, I have to pick up my littlest one so he wouldn't be alone. One other thing is a snow storm. All of the sudden, school is called off. No one is home and who can get there in a storm? Then I have to call the school, call a sitter....It's very hectic, hard on you, if you want to keep up with it. There are a lot of things I could say, the hell with. 15-15

Karl also seemed fairly frustrated from having no second parent available, especially when he traveled. What was most stressful for him was:

> The juggling. I have freedom [at work], but this job puts constraints on you that many jobs don't. Many jobs are eight to five. Generally I have been able to juggle

> it. I have been worried about it on a few occasions, about how I was going to handle things. And it can get into some pretty tricky logistics. Like getting someone to pick her up after school and take her to the airport and put her on a plane. Who's gonna do that when I'm out of town? 10-7

Children's Help

These three groups of fathers also differed in the amount of help around the house they requested and received from their children. Fathers from segregated marriages received the most aid from their offspring. As noted earlier, these fathers expected their children to do numerous daily chores (see Chapter VII). Additionally, their older children were parenting supports: they baby sat and assisted with the care of their younger siblings. Carl not only had his sons do all the housework, he had his older son teach his younger son how to do all the necessary chores.

Fathers from modified-segregated marriages expected a fair amount of help around the house from their children, but not as much as fathers from segregated marriages. These fathers often agreed that after their marriages ended, their children's household chores increased a bit. For example, Gene said that his two children:

> have probably absorbed a little more, but they were always a part of the weekend chores and doing things anyway. They probably do a little more of the general housekeeping like vacuuming and things for the general population and not just their own rooms. I also see that as appropriate to do those things. 36-24

Fred's children were preschoolers. Still, he expected a bit more help from them after he became a single parent:

> I have always told them, any little help. You guys do a little bit, clean up your room or whatever. Go down in the basement and clean up the mess you made there. They

> have to keep their room cleaner than they used to. Like picking up their clothes; they used to leave them laying, throwing gloves. 39-7

Dave's household routine called for his sons' daily cooperation and involvement. He said their responsibilities were:

> More structured. The things that affect all of us, we do as a team. Like the dishes or the meals, fixing and setting the table. Todd cooks, Joel is not ready or comfortable with that. Todd may fix it and I may help him and Joel may set the table. Then we will all, someone may clear, wash, wipe. Basically we are all involved in both aspects of it so that in terms of doing the wash, I do those things generally but sometimes they do that. Keeping their rooms clean, they have to periodically do that. I am not a real stickler about that. 47-18

Vince also demanded more responsibility from his son for the upkeep of their home. Previously, his teenager had done little around the house.

> One of my goals as a parent is to get my son to appreciate that it is helpful to have some order in his life. Some order in his room and life in general. And that's been a slow process. Yet I can't live like he lives. It's been a steady process to get him to be neat, to pick up and wash dishes and to be a contributing companion here rather than just somebody I have to take care of, because I'll be goddamned if I am going to take care of a fourteen year old. He can just start taking care of himself. And yet he had never been used to doing anything like that. 37-8

Interestingly, fathers from integrated marriages expected the least amount of children's help around their homes, in comparison with the other men. Their children's chores were fewer in comparison with the other two groups. These fathers suggested that the children's duties changed minimally when their home became a single-parent household. Roger described his son's chores as being:

> Pretty much [the same]. He does the vacuuming and the dusting and I do the rest: scrubbing the floors and the

> bathroom, the good stuff. And he's been doing that for a long time. 41-18

Larry said that when his marriage ended, his sons:

> ...just pitched in a little bit. Not dishes but they would vacuum and do their room and take care of the cat and mow the lawn. I would take care of the other stuff. 42-1

Of course, housekeeping patterns are not static. Apparently some single fathers had fairly unstructured households in the first year of single parenting, like many single mothers (Hetherington et al., 1976). During his first year of single parenting Martin did not ask his children to do any household chores. Martin said of his children's duties:

> If it changed at all it became less. They are gonna have jobs now. I mean they have told me they want them. Life was so hysterical that we had trouble scheduling things. I did a lot of it cause I wanted them to know that I was taking care of them and that things were gonna be ok....As someone pointed out, they need some jobs so that they can feel part of the family and contribute to it. And I feel that's true. 38-12

Rather than depending heavily on their children, fathers from integrated marriages tended to be more self-reliant about housework. Perhaps these men expected less help from their children because they had done housework as married parents and were accustomed to it. This pattern of children's help is actually a reversal of the trend found among the mothers. As mentioned earlier, mothers from segregated marriages were the least likely of mothers to expect help around the house from their children; fathers from segregated marriages were the most likely of fathers to get aid. It seems that parents who were most involved with housework while married subsequently expected the least amount of housework help from their

children; parents whose spouses were highly involved with housework expected the most aid.

Balancing Needs

Single mothers frequently spoke of struggling to find and maintain a balance in their lives. They searched for comfortable arrangements to afford them enough time and energy to devote to their children, household responsibilities, work, and personal lives. Interestingly, fathers were either unconcerned or much much less troubled about this issue, regardless of their marital history type. Most fathers spoke rather comfortably and casually of making free time for themselves. They frequently felt satisfied with what they devoted to their work, home, and children. Vince exemplified this easy-going manner. When asked if it was difficult to find time for himself, he quickly replied:

> I don't have that problem. I think that's more, I would guess that's more of an issue for female single parents. Being a parent is just a small part of my life. 37-3

Others, like Roger, felt able to do things when opportunities arose. When we spoke about finding free time, he said:

> I don't have to worry about that. Like now, I could be out having supper now cause the kids are occupied.....What I am saying is that if I want to have some free time, I can. I can because I have a baby sitter and all that. But what am I gonna do while I have free time? I don't date and once in a while the guys will have a beer after work. I can stop....If some lady called me up and said, "I want to go to dinner tomorrow," fine [laughs]. 41-20

Many fathers believed that single parenting gave them more

flexibility and additional free time. Vince told me:

> I have more control over how I schedule my life. If I want to play ball some night, I just suddenly schedule it. I don't have to have a big song and dance about whether I have the freedom to do this and that....[Before] most of the time I was home, and I felt I had to be here. 37-1

The few fathers who felt some tension about balancing their needs were most stressed in the early period of single parenting, as were the mothers. Larry explained:

> At first the kids came first. When I had to be totally responsible for them I made sure that I did. That was a top priority besides getting myself back in order. Then came having some fun when things mellowed out a bit. Then for a while there, I was too much with the kids. It wasn't good for me and it wasn't good for the kids. Then I would be going to meetings and for coffee, and I was going in the other extreme. I was away too much. I would be bouncing until I could get a better balance for myself, the kids...Everything was bouncing back and forth for a while until things balanced out. 42-12

Men felt uncomfortable about free time for different reasons than did single mothers. For example, mothers felt they had little personal free time. In contrast, fathers' pressures and strains usually resulted from their high involvement in personal activities and dating. For example, Martin dated frequently. I asked him how he found so much free time. His answer intimated the kind of tension that few women felt. He said:

> See the bags under my eyes? It's a bitch, that's what it is. You are just tired. That's all there is to it. My kids are of the age now where I can leave them alone early in the evening. I don't leave them alone late at night or go away on the weekends, anything like that. But it's draining. 38-8

Fathers' feelings about dating and socializing time were not filled with guilt or discomfort, in contrast with the mothers. None

of the fathers were so overwhelmed as to feel the "burnout" that many mothers described. This is understandable; mothers were tired because they tried to meet the needs of work, home, and children without taking much time out for themselves. In addition, there were a few other catalysts for some fathers' discomfort. For example, a few men were undergoing custody battles; they usually believed they had to watch their behavior, particularly before their cases were settled. As a result, they tried to stay close home and their children. One of these men, Rod, explained that the court proceedings were almost always foremost in his mind. He thought his future held more promise of free time:

> I have mixed feelings about leaving her. I think that maybe when this legal thing is finished and it's a little easier for me to deal with that, if I can find some kind of activity that I wanted to get involved in on a regular basis I would just set up some sort of standing thing with the baby sitter where I would go to that. 26-21

Karl was stressed by his new, more demanding job responsibilities. His hectic schedule was perhaps the most difficult aspect of his life because there was:

> ...not enough time to spend with Lilly as I would like to spend. By the time you do your job, and you come home and the house needs attention and dinner must be made, there isn't enough time to spend with her and not enough time to do what I want to do. 10-24

And finally, Gene felt a bit strained because he had enjoyed having every other weekend free until his ex-wife moved out of town. He went from sharing parenting responsibilities to shouldering child care alone. This change felt very restrictive to him:

> When my wife moved out of town I went from having every other weekend off and I could devote that solely to my own private needs, my socialization with my support

> system. And when she left I had the kids seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. Without any breaks. And that's been the biggest change in my life. Trying to keep my own, maintain my own health and still feel I am providing the support and the interaction for my kids. 36-1

Women's feelings about balance in their lives were influenced by their ideology of mothering. Many single mothers described a rather altruistic mothering model. However, the fathers showed little evidence of having any clear parenting ideology. In fact, fathers were almost predictably vague when describing parenting ideals. For example, when I asked about the kind of father he had wanted to be when he was married, Larry looked puzzled. He said:

> I don't know how to answer that one. I wanted to be successful, be able to go with the kids whenever. Hope to be right or give them good standards. Like that. 42-12

Karl also admitted that his fathering ideals were rather unformulated:

> I didn't, I have never really thought about that. It's kinda vague, you know. Once in a while you see a father playing with the kids, or biking with the kids. 10-19

Steve expressed a similar thought:

> I guess the only thing that I remember even thinking about was that I wanted my kids to be closer to my age than my dad. Cause he was over forty years older than me. There was such a difference in age that we didn't do things together. 45-19

Some fathers' thoughts on parenting had focused on financial responsibilities. Dave reflected:

> I don't think I thought a lot about it very much a long time ago. I don't think I thought about it very much until these last few years. And then I thought about it a lot since then. So I couldn't tell you what my image was then. I think I had a certain sense of things that I felt I should do as a father cause of the way my father was, I guess. The good things that we did I liked to do and the

> things I didn't I would like to change.....I think that when I was married I think I thought that women bring up the children and dads go to work. You know, you are the breadwinner and you don't have to worry about the kids. They, someone takes cares of them. You come home and bounce them on your knee a couple of times and take them to ball games. And that's about it. But day-to-day care is not, you aren't really involved with that. Just like the day-to-day care of the house, you don't fix meals or do floors or do any of that crap. Well, my concepts of that have changed a lot. I don't think any of that's true.

Even though Dave went through a metamorphosis in the past few years, his parenting paradigm remained rather amorphous:

> I think I realized that it was really important for me to try to provide them with something that I think I didn't have, and wanted. But I really didn't know exactly how to do it. And I am still not entirely sure that I do. But I think that was kinda where I was at. 47-21

Rod was a rare father who referred to mothers for his images of parenting. Even so, he distanced himself from the ideals that women might uphold.

> When you look for standards of what a parent is to be, the storybook standards are full-time parents. And there are only so many hours in the day and you can't be a full-time employee and a full-time parent. You just can't do that. That's the kind of thinking that gets people into trouble.....I have so many hours that I am a parent. And I do that four hours after school, weekends. And I am doing the best job that I can do. It's sort of pointless to go back and compare myself to my mother who didn't work, stayed home and always saw to it that I had the best craft projects in school. I am not standing there when she comes home, but I don't know that that is necessary. I don't feel obligated to do that....I am not going to stay up until 2:00 a.m. scrubbing the bathroom. My mother did that. She was a wreck. Cause she was always trying to maintain some abstract standard. 26-30

Like Rod, many fathers' pragmatic feelings about parenting contained no guilt or assumptions that children deserved all of one's free time, in contrast with many mothers' feelings (particularly in their early period of single parenting).

Discipline

Unlike the mothers, who varied across marital history types in their feelings about discipline, fathers' reactions to discipline were not affected by their marital history types. Marital history type was not a source of diversity among fathers with regard to discipline; most fathers felt they had been disciplinarians and rule-setters while they were married. For example, Rod said that when he was married he:

> ...provided some structure in Sue's life. That was almost all my responsibility. Her mother didn't have much structure. My daughter and her mother were buddies. They played together and had a good time together, but there was no authority. At the age of three or four, my daughter needed to learn certain rules, and there were no rules with her mother. I had that responsibility. 26-8

In comparison with some of the mothers, fathers seemed comfortable with disciplining[29] and felt they had a clear sense of expectations and demands. Eric, a father from a segregated marriage, told me:

> We have our problems here at home and I discipline them out the way I think I should discipline them....This is the way it is, it is my rule, and they know it. Believe me it works good. They say, "You were right and I was wrong. I'll never do that again." My strength is that what I say goes. 13-11

After explaining how strict he was at home, Irv, a father from an integrated marriage, said:

> I figure I am a good parent, consistent, care about what goes on, am as fair as I can be. It may sound like I run a Gestapo place, but I don't. Things just have to get done....When I say something's got to get done, it better get done. I don't have the time or the patience to sit and argue with you four or five times. 15-21

Like mothers, fathers who disagreed with their spouses' discipline style were the most pleased with having sole authority

over this dimension of parenting. Dave was happy because he felt his children benefited from his more stable set of rules:

> I think when you are dealing with kids by yourself, it's a lot easier then when you are dealing with them and someone else, in a sense. The problem we had before was we had two sets of rules and there was no consistency. We'd make a rule and say, if you do this, this would happen. Only it was my feeling at least that my wife wouldn't come through with the consequence. And as a result of that, the kids never really knew what the rules were.....My wife would say if you do that, you are grounded for a month. Some unrealistic consequence that she could never carry out. And that give the kids a message....When they are over here, they know what the rules are. That's been, that kind of consistency has been real good for them. 47-6

Fred also was satisfied with the authority he gained. He felt his spouse had undermined his relationship with his sons:

> I never had control when she was around cause she always told them to do the opposite of what I told them to do. Now, it's where, we ask to do things, we don't just tell that we are gonna go over to the store or swimming or that. If it takes a half hour before we can go, then you just have to wait the half hour. 39-11

Summary

In sum, men from segregated marriages felt the greatest increase in parenting responsibilities and related tasks. While they had not been involved previously with their sons' and daughters' daily care, as single parents these fathers grew more sensitive to their children's physical needs. Men from modified-segregated marriages experienced changes in responsibilities that were less severe. When describing their new parenting tasks, these men often focused on aspects of parenting such as shopping with children. They also seemed to have grown more sensitive to their children's emotional and relational needs. In contrast, fathers from integrated

marriages felt that their responsibilities for their children changed minimally when they became single parents.

These fathers also differed in the amount of help around the house they requested and received. Fathers from segregated marriages received the most aid; they expected their sons and daughters to do numerous daily chores. Fathers from modified-segregated marriages also wanted a fair amount of help from their children, but not as much as did fathers from segregated marriages. Children of fathers from integrated marriages had the fewest demands placed on them.

When it came to finding a balance among the demands of work, self, and family, fathers were either unconcerned or much less troubled by this issue than were single mothers. The few fathers who did feel some tension about free time were very involved in socializing or dating, were undergoing custody battles, or had heavy work loads. In contrast with single mothers, fathers' worries about balancing time demands were not intensified by their reactions to a parenting ideology or model. Finally, fathers seemed to feel very comfortable with the task of disciplining. While they were married, most had set and enforced rules for their children. Only men who had disagreed with their spouses' disciplining style felt any significant changes in this area of their lives.

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the following pages I pause from presenting new information about this group of single parents in order to refresh the reader's memory about this study's origins, its connections with previous research on single parents, and to examine this project's unique strengths and weaknesses. Then, I provide a brief summary of my findings, which may be thought of as avenues for further investigations especially into gender and family life. I conclude this final chapter with a commentary on the use and applicability of the typology of marital history types.

Origins of the Study

In revieving the literature, I found much micro-level research on single parents had numerous methodological and conceptual problems. The research most closely related to the topic of this grounded theory investigation dealt with single parents' roles. I lacked confidence in the usefulness of the articles and books on single parents' roles because they frequently portrayed single parents as a rather homogeneous group. These data analyses often vere no more than simple reports of frequency distributions of answers to select questions; no holistic sense of relationships among single parents' feelings or behaviors in their specific roles seemed

available. In addition, researchers usually neglected to ask about the rationales or motivations for single parents' actions, nor did they inquire about single parents' feelings about their daily lives. These omissions seemed critical to me. I wanted to understand why single parents organized their lives in the patterns they did and why they felt the way they did about their work, household, and family activities. I felt an alternative approach to this topic was needed. Thus, I designed this grounded theory investigation.

Strengths and Limitations of this Project

This study has numerous assets. To begin with, it allowed me to contrast single mothers' and single fathers' perceptions of their daily lives. I inquired into the similarities and differences between the ways single mothers and single fathers reacted to their responsibilities. This was valuable because to date, few studies have explicitly compared single mothers and single fathers, nor have researchers pursued the complexities of gender in relationship to the organization of and experiences in single parent households.

Second, this project gave me the chance to investigate single parents' feelings about both paid work and family life. During my data analysis, I examined patterns in single mothers' and single fathers' feelings about responsibilities for their households, finances, work, and children; this helped me uncover the relevance of marital history types.

Third, this flexible grounded theory investigation allowed me to examine the potential effect of numerous social factors on single parents' perceptions. I obtained this flexibility by incorporating a

variety of parents within my sample. I spoke with mothers and fathers who had been parenting alone for very short and fairly long periods of time. Some had one child; one parent even had six children. There were parents who wanted to end their marriages, some whose spouses left them, and widows. A few had infants at home when they first became single parents, others had children much older. The parents I interviewed ranged from high school graduates to Ph.D.s and included professionals and laborers, the wealthy and the impoverished. By comparing single parents' responses, I discerned the relevance of these factors for mothers' and fathers' reactions to and experiences of single parenting. Factors I did not discuss in Chapters IV through Chapter VIII (such as number of children) were not related to systematic differences among all single mothers or all single fathers.

Fourth, a grounded theory analysis and semi-structured interviews enabled me to shift directions somewhat in the course of my study and focus on issues of interest to the single mothers and single fathers with whom I spoke. As a result, my project became an investigation into single parents' <u>feelings</u> about their responsibilities instead of a mapping of their daily activity patterns.

Finally, this study was valuable because it permitted me to develop a typology of single parents' marital history types. This typology helped explain how single mothers and single fathers vary in their reactions to their daily lives. With the aid of this typology, the broad range of single parents' responses to their new

responsibilities, from extreme pride and pleasure to disdain and remorse, became more understandable.

However, this research also has some important limitations. To begin with, I may have implied that "marital history types" fully describe individual marriages. These marital history types should be thought of as ideal or abstracted types. This typology's usefulness lies in its ability to help us compare and contrast single parents' reactions to their daily lives. It should not be thought of as a complete description of all single parents' histories. As a typology, it necessarily highlights some characteristics of single parents' pasts and glosses over others. Other factors which highly colored some single parents' histories (e.g., abuse and alcoholism) were forced into the periphery of this report because I relied on marital history types for sources of contrast and comparison.

Marriages, like other social phenomena, are malleable and undergo change over time. These marital history types do not incorporate appreciation for the complicated ways in which relationships and agreements between husbands and wives were in flux and continually renegotiated. In other words, this typology, like most, captured a rather static slice of marital experiences, whereas marriages are dynamic. When applying these marital history types to the lives of the men and women in my sample, I categorized their marriages according to the parents' most recent or most remembered experiences. In order to present a more sophisticated portrait of single parents' lives, a typology that captures and incorporates fluctuations would be helpful.

Second, data presented here are not based on observations of single parents. Instead, I relied on parents' reconstructed depictions of current and past experiences and feelings. Some readers might object because I did not verify the accuracy of these memories or impressions. However, I would argue that ideas and remembrances -- even if somewhat reconstructed -- are still useful data. While we all from time to time discuss the past and present with others and reformulate our view of the world based on the memories and experiences of those around us, individuals use their current impressions and perceptions as reference points when they evaluate their feelings about their daily lives and responsibilities. If I had verified with the ex-spouses that indeed, the couples in question did share housework or decision-making, I would have gained insight into the parents' reconstruction processes. Yet, the single parents' own thoughts about their situations (rather than those of their ex-spouse) will guide their reactions, and their reactions to single parenting were my main concern.

The possibility remains that single parents might have redefined their pasts to make them more consistent with their current desires or more compatible with what they thought I wanted to hear. If that occurred with the single parents in my sample, then I did not discover the impact of previous family structure on single parenting. Instead, I uncovered a psychological framework of single parents. In other words, some may argue that my interviews were filled with merely wishful creations of single parents, used to help

them justify their current feelings. However, this interpretation seems dubious for it fails to explain why all single parents did not redefine their pasts to make their current situations more enjoyable. If motivated by anger, single parents could have reconstructed their pasts in ways that emphasized their victimization. Yet, few parents described such obviously one-sided pasts.

Third, the data analysis might have been strengthened if I had initially provided a comparison of parents' across their individual task histories. For example, I might have compared all parents who felt they had been primary decision-makers with those who did not. Instead, I utilized the parents' marital history type as a basis for comparison. Yet, marital history type is an ideal type which glosses over some real distinctions among the parents in each of these four types. If I had provided an initial analysis of parents' involvement in past tasks with their current reactions to these tasks, the reader could have had greater latitude in evaluating the accuracy and usefulness of the marital history typology.

In spite of these limitations, I believe that marital history types provide a context in which numerous differences among single mothers and single fathers can be discovered. Let me review them briefly.

Summary

Heading a Household

In heading a household and making decisions for a family, upon divorce mothers from segregated marriages experience the most dramatic changes. They never desire to be solely responsible for their families, express doubts about whether they can manage the responsibility, and often feel overwhelmed by all their duties. Mothers from modified-segregated marriages are less pressured and frustrated by these responsibilities. Their main source of stress comes from their longing for a decision-making partner. Mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages had been integrally involved in decisions and had felt very responsible for their families while married. They do not feel taxed by having to head a single parent household, nor do they seem to yearn for decision-making aid.

Men from segregated marriages believe they were the leaders of their families when they were married; thus, they feel no additional overall responsibility for a household. Men from modified-segregated marriages think they were heads of their families when they were married, but they do not believe they had been sole decision-makers. Even so, these fathers miss their wives' participation in decision-making only slightly. Fathers from integrated marriages are most likely to express a bit of uncertainty about their abilities to head a household alone in the beginning of their single parenting. They keenly feel the loss of a decision-making partner and miss being able to discuss and thrash out ideas with a spouse. As a result,

these fathers sometimes feel taxed, frustrated, or overburdened by all their decisions.

Financial Management

Many mothers from segregated marriages had had virtually no input into their families' finances while they were married. Wives from segregated marriages differ in their reactions to financial management depending on whether or not they had wanted to end their marriages. Mothers who made the decision to leave their husbands gain a dimension of valued control over their lives and feel much more positive about this new task. Women whose spouses left them gain little pleasure or enhanced self-esteem from their new financial responsibilities.

Women from modified-segregated marriages express pride in their financial management abilities less often and in a fainter tone than do many women from segregated marriages. Women from primarily wife-shaped marriages often had been their families' bill payers and money handlers. Only those who had disagreed with their spouses about financial affairs have more than superficial comments to make about this task; they embrace the added control they hold over finances. However, none of the mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages feel their financial management activities have an impact on their self-esteem.

Men's feelings about financial management do not vary significantly by their marital history types. Men who think they have gained control over finances are more low-keyed about this change than are women in comparable situations. Men whose family

incomes drop abruptly are the most distressed about financial management.

Work and Financial Support

Being from either segregated, modified-segregated, or primarily wife-shaped marriages correlates with distinct kinds of work experiences for women. Women from segregated marriages expect at most to be supplemental contributors to their families' incomes. They want to remain at home, especially while their children are young. When they become their families' primary financial support, they reflect a great deal about their mothering standards. Mothers from segregated marriages who continue to uphold the ideal of full-time mothering are most ambivalent about developing a career or an occupational commitment. Still, women from segregated marriages very often comment spontaneously on the pride they gain by financially supporting their families.

Mothers from modified-segregated marriages are either employed when their marriages end or are in school preparing for near-future employment. While these women quickly increase their involvement in paid labor or schooling after they become single parents, none react as strongly or as negatively to this change as do women from segregated marriages. Nor does this increased work load precipitate an extensive re-evaluation of mothering. These mothers rarely express feelings of accomplishment or esteem they might have gained from becoming the main financial support of their households.

Mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages are the most involved in the labor force both before and after their marriages

end. Like other mothers, these women increase their paid-work hours after they become single parents. However, they do not show remorse about how their work schedules detract from time with their children.

Of course, the important exceptions to the above trend are poor women. These mothers are most likely to be and remain frustrated by finances. Those who receive government aid for low-income persons feel debilitated by their lowered self-esteem, high levels of stress due to meager resources, and restricted feelings of control over their lives.

Whether from segregated, modified-segregated, or integrated marriages, men expect to be and see themselves as main financial supporters of their families. An important difference among men corresponds with the division of fathers into workers who have autonomy and are highly invested in their jobs (i.e., professionals and the self-employed) and those who lack autonomy and interest in their work (i.e., laborers and service workers). After becoming single parents, professional and self-employed fathers slightly reprioritize their work's importance; they feel a dampened enthusiasm for their jobs or a shift in the significance of work. The professional and self-employed men decrease their regular work schedules. Even though they spend less time working, professional and self-employed fathers believe they acquire new, more efficient working habits which compensate for their shorter work days.

Keeping Up a Home

Being responsible for the upkeep of a home elicits very little stress among these single mothers. In fact, many women feel single parenting makes their housework duties easier to manage because they no longer feel upset and distracted by their spouses' lack of participation. Also, mothers commonly lower their housework standards following the end of their marriages. Some mothers do so because they want to spend more time with their children. Others readjust their lives due to the new and competing demands of work and/or school or because they feel less social pressure about housekeeping.

In contrast with women, men's reactions to housework varies clearly by their marital history types. Men from segregated marriages spend their early months and years of single parenting trying to familiarize themselves with these tasks and cultivating new skills. In addition, fathers from segregated marriages rely extensively on their children for help with household care. Fathers from modified-segregated marriages have some experience with household care before they become single parents. Usually these men feel that they have to nurture some of the rudimentary housework skills they already possess. None of these fathers feel extremely taxed by housekeeping and none display the self-congratulatory esteem that men from segregated marriages do.

Men from integrated marriages become involved with only an additional isolated household task or two after becoming single parents, and this added responsibility is only rarely seen as

burdensome or difficult. Yet, these men are accustomed to the aid of their spouses around the house. It seems that because of this and their tendency not to rely much on their children's help around the house, men from integrated marriages are the only group of fathers to openly admit their dismay and fatigue with their household care responsibilities.

Parenting

Of the women, mothers from segregated marriages are most likely to be overwhelmed and agitated by the constant nature of single parenting. They miss their spouses' assistance. Women from modified-segregated marriages like being able to share responsibility for the well-being and future of their children. Unlike mothers from segregated marriages, mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages do not feel frustrated by single parenting nor do they feel that their parenting responsibility feels heavier than it did when they were married.

These three groups of mothers also vary in the importance they place on control over parenting. Mothers from segregated marriages are least enthusiastic about having independent control over parenting. Mothers from modified-segregated marriages are more emphatic about the value and importance of having parental autonomy. Apparently, many of these women had been uncomfortable with their spouses' parenting styles. Mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages are rather uniformly delighted by the greater amount of power they have over parenting and enjoy shaping their children's experiences.

These women also vary distinctly in their feelings about discipline. Mothers from segregated marriages are most frustrated by disciplinary issues. They had thought of their spouses as a backup system for their discipline. Mothers from modified-segregated marriages have some concerns about discipline but most feel that their discipline practices altered minimally since they became single parents. Mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages seem to have little anxiety about discipline; they are used to enforcing rules. If anything, mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages enjoy not compromising with the wishes or demands of another adult.

These women have different expectations for their children's roles at home. Relatively speaking, mothers from segregated marriages expect the least amount of help around the house. Mothers from modified-segregated marriages ask for a bit more help around the house from their children. Mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages demand even more household help from their children than do mothers from modified-segregated marriages. And these mothers seem less tolerant of uncooperative or irresponsible behavior by their children.

Single mothers grapple with trying to achieve a balance in their lives. Particularly in the first few years of single parenting, they are uncertain about how much time and energy they should devote to their selves, their work, and, most importantly, their children. This issue is complicated by these mothers' often very high standards of mothering, including "selfless mothering." Mothers from segregated marriages are most likely of the women to

completely subscribe to selfless mothering. Yet, all mothers struggle with the need to balance time for themselves and time for their children. Especially during the first year or two of single parenting, many mothers only slowly realize that their own needs are being given scant attention.

Men from segregated marriages feel the most dramatic growth in their parenting responsibilities and related tasks. While they had not been involved previously in the daily care of their sons and daughters, after they become single parents, these fathers grow more sensitive to their children's physical needs. Men from modified-segregated marriages experience changes less severe than those of fathers from segregated marriages. These men grow more sensitive to their children's emotional and relational needs after becoming single parents. In contrast, fathers from integrated marriages feel that their responsibilities for their children change minimally when they become single parents.

Fathers also differ in the amount of help they ask for around the house. Fathers from segregated marriages receive the most amount of aid. Fathers from modified-segregated marriages expect a fair amount of help from their children, but not as much as do fathers from segregated marriages. Children of fathers from integrated marriages have the fevest demands placed on them.

When it comes to finding a balance in their lives among the demands of work, self, and family, fathers are either unconcerned or much much less troubled by this issue than are single mothers. Fathers who feel some tension in this area are very involved in

socializing or dating, are undergoing custody battles, or have heavy work loads. Finally, fathers seem quite comfortable with disciplining; most were rule setters and rule enforcers for their families when they were married. Only fathers who had disagreed with their spouses' disciplining style feel any significant changes in this area of their lives.

Insights into Gender and Family Life

I developed a number of insights about gender and family life from this study[30]. These lessons include ideas about useful ways to conceptualize gender, the value of studying the intersection of gender and family structure, and the need to appreciate the multifaceted nature of family structure. The following pages describe these lessons.

Conceptualizing Gender

In Chapter II, I argued that gender is best conceptualized not as a trait or a role, but as a part of self shaped during interaction and as a category used to place persons in the social structure. In light of my findings from this study of single parents, I am further convinced that it is not useful to speak of "gender roles." Role theorists believe that gender is a status with a corresponding set of expectations for appropriate behavior. Thus, they see gender as one role among many that human beings play. For example, women's gender role is sometimes described as encompassing behavior such as nurturance, emotionality, and sensitivity. Role theory has been criticized for its failure to adequately conceptualize the effects of

gender on daily behavior (see Lopata and Thorne, 1978; Thorne, 1978) and to illuminate how and why power and inequality are gendered phenomena (Connell, 1983; 1985). Role theory also does not appreciate how gender molds asymmetrical expectations and evaluations of the performance of all roles of men and women, such as parent or sole provider (Thorne, 1978). The role theory approach is prominent in studies of single parenting; most portray single mothers and single fathers as two separate but homogeneous groups playing different roles.

If I had thought of gender as a role, I would have expected single mothers and single fathers to react differently to changes in their lives. However, I would not have anticipated the numerous variations I discovered among single mothers and among single fathers. Role theory blinds us to these important differences. Of course, role theorists could assert that I am unduly rigid in my use of role theory. Turner (1978), for example, acknowledges that roles are enacted and shaped differentially by individuals. If one accepts Turner's version of role theory, variations in behavior among women and among men become much less surprising. However, in my study gender was not an indicator of consistent and predictable differences in the responses of men and women to single parenting. For example, I discovered instances of men having more in common experientially with women than with other men (e.g., men from integrated marriages were similar to women from modified-segregated marriages but were quite different from men from segregated marriages in their reactions to decision-making). Even if we accepted the more fluid

interactionist role theory of Turner, it would be difficult to uncover the "gender role" of the men and women I interviewed. That is, there seems to be no shared set of common assumptions these fathers or mothers used to shape their family behaviors.

In light of my findings I feel it is useful to continue to conceptualize gender as a social category used to place persons in the social structure. That is, gender helps shape the social organization of families. For example, gender is used in families as a basis for allocating responsibilities. If gender was a role, we would expect men's and women's household duties to be consistently different. Yet, family responsibilities are rarely identical for most women or most men. In other words, there are gendered divisions of labor in families rather than a sexual division of labor. Divisions of labor are evident in the marital history types I discovered. Thus, gender is being used in numerous ways to organize family life, and we should expect to see groups of men and women with overlapping family experiences. Rather than anticipating a dichotomous "his" and "her" marriage (Bernard, 1972), we should look for a range of experiences among women and among men. Conceptualizing gender as a mechanism used to place persons in the social structure is valuable also because it acknowledges one of the sources of men's and women's positions in familial divisions of labor and the labor force, and reminds us that the larger social structure is based on differential allocation of positions and resources to men and women.

Kanter (1977) also recognized that gender is frequently used to

place persons in a social structure. I believe there is an interesting parallel between my study and Kanter's findings about the intersection of gender and the structure of a corporation. Kanter argued that many of the behaviors associated with women workers (e.g., timidity, self-effacement, parochialism, praise addiction) actually arose from women's positions of low power and low opportunity in organizations. In other words, Kanter argued that gender did not cause women to behave timidly as workers. Rather, women often behaved timidly because of the nature of the jobs in which they worked. Similarly, one might argue that gender was used by adults in the families I studied to allocate to women and men various responsibilities, yet the nature of their positions (e.g., sole decision-maker, decision-making partner), rather than their gender might best explain both men's and women's reactions to changes in their lives since becoming single parents.

Another way we might understand gender is to rely on Berk's (1985) interpretation of gender as an accomplishment played out in social contexts. Berk argues that gender is not a trait, but is rather an identity we invoke in interaction and one which reflexively shapes and is shaped by our social roles. This picture of gender is quite dynamic. It allows us to argue that the nature of one's responsibilities as a single parent (e.g., sole decision-maker) and one's gender interactively influence a father's or mother's perception of single parenting. This conceptualization of gender seems most accurate with respect to my findings. In my study the parents' gender influenced the likelihood that a mother or father had

been responsible for particular tasks while they were married (e.g., most women felt responsible for housework). Yet, gender also had an impact on the way in which mothers and fathers carried out similar duties. For example, while both mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages and father from segregated marriages considered themselves the dominant or main decision-maker for their families while they were married, only the mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages suggested that their decisions were often monitored or criticized by their spouses. The job of main decision-maker was shaped by spouses' reactions. As Berk (1985) argues, gender can "make" a job by creating definitions and expectations for the way activities will be handled. Thus, gender helped make the duty of family decision-maker feel different to these fathers from segregated marriages and these mothers from primarily wife-shaped marriages.

In the course of this study, I have come to see that one may approach the study of gender from numerous levels of analysis: identity, interactions, macro social structures. Yet, gender also is a source of symbolism and ideology (see Scott, 1986). For example, I discovered an ideology of "selfless motherhood" held by a number of the single mothers in my sample. This ideology included the belief that mothers should always be at home, available for their children. Acceptance of "selfless motherhood" made the transition from full-time homemaker to paid worker very difficult for some mothers. Single parenting provided a catalyst for a number of women to revise their mothering ideologies. If gender is a source of symbolism, we need to explore how family experiences shape gendered ideologies and

how gendered ideologies may influence families' daily lives. For example, we might wonder which ideologies are more difficult for parents to maintain after divorce or the death of a spouse.

The Intersection of Family Structure and Gender

This research also highlights the importance of past family structure in shaping adults' perceptions of single parenting. Family structure is a concept that incorporates family composition (i.e., number of adults in the household), decision-making patterns, and the division of labor. Future research should continue to explore this source of variation among single parents. Studies that fail to examine the parents' perceptions of their past marriages implicitly assume that marriages are rather homogeneous; of course, they are not. We know through the aid of such researchers as Scanzoni (1982) and Blood and Wolfe (1960) that patterns of power and decision-making in married couples range on a continuum from male-dominated to egalitarian. Studies of familial division of labor also clearly show that while some couples share housework, in many families mothers do most of the work done at home. It would be valuable to further explore single parents' satisfaction with their past family structures. There might be interesting differences between women and men whose marital history type complemented their preferences and those who felt unhappy with their past situations. Just how much effect these differences might have on fathers' and mothers' reactions to single parenting remains to be seen.

Another important lesson I learned from this study is the value of exploring the <u>varieties</u> of ways in which gender and family

structure intersect. In the past, it was common to posit that nuclear families were experienced in rather dichotomous ways (e.g., "his" and "her" marriages, see Bernard, 1972). However, my formulation of four distinct marital history types suggests that families have numerous structures (i.e., ways of organizing the division of labor and decision-making) and that women as well as men might have an assortment of past experiences as wives and as husbands. One's gender is not a clear key to one's experiences; marital history type provides the structure in which gender is enacted in families.

The concept of marital history type illustrates that conjugal power arrangements (as indicated by decision-making patterns) and familial division of labor are interrelated. This typology enables us to probe the relationship between gender and power/labor arrangements in families. Given that gender is a source of ideology (as I argued above), when one explores the intersection of gender and family structure, interesting questions may arise. For example, what <u>meanings</u> do parents give to their various responsibilities in these different families? The meaning of various tasks may differ, based on one's family structure experiences and one's gender ideology. For example, Hood (1982) found that on the surface many two-job families may appear similar, yet couples' feelings about the significance of the wife's employment can differ dramatically. Similarly, wives were often employed in integrated and primarily wife-shaped marriages, yet we might wonder about the meaning of this work to the men and women who lived in these families.

This examination of gender and family structure raises numerous questions for future study, such as how marital history types are formed and how they may change over time; how and why marital history types may be related to ideologies about motherhood and breadwinning; what kinds of asymmetry exist in women's and men's reactions to single parenting based on their marital history types. These and related questions await further inquiry.

Conclusion

This grounded theory analysis was designed to illuminate the diversity of experiences among single parents. It was not based on a representative sample of single parents; thus, the breadth or applicability of this typology of marital history types can be investigated further with larger, more representative groups of fathers and mothers. I would recommend that researchers interested in single parenting give serious consideration to the impact of marital history types on fathers' and mothers' reactions to their responsibilities. Some clear and important patterns are indicated by this project.

Earlier in this report, I mentioned my numerous concerns with the current literature on single parents. I urge the reader now to reflect back on the entire body of this research and consider my recommendations for more fruitful approaches to the study of single parents. My assessment and review of the literature illuminated five specific prescriptions for future research which can help offset the methodological and conceptual weaknesses in the literature. To begin with, more analyses need to incorporate multidimensional comparisons

of single parents along such lines as gender, social class, marital status, and tenure at single parenting. We also need more comparisons of single parents with married parents. Second, we should focus more attention on how single parents currently organize and feel about their lives. Longitudinal studies would help us better comprehend single parents' reactions to and feelings about their changing experiences. Third, future research should help uncover linkages among single parents' various responsibilities; for example, housework, child care, and financial management should be regarded as potentially interdependent activities. Fourth, future research should be sensitive to the range of possible relationships that single parents have with their former spouses. A continuum of involvement should be anticipated, and the ex-spouse's participation in family activities needs to be clarified. Fifth, we need to better understand single parents' interpersonal and institutional social support systems. More inquiries should address how and why these systems are arranged, if and how they change, how they are used, and their costs and benefits.

I would like to close with a note on the importance of sharing and distributing information on single parents with the public. On numerous occasions, the fathers and mothers I met told me of their concern about the quality of current information on single parenting. They were saddened at how difficult it often was for others to understand single parents and for single parents to gain information about one another. Frequently, the mothers said they volunteered for this study because they wanted to contribute to other

people's knowledge of their family form. "If I can help someone else to understand themselves a bit better, I'll feel good," was one parent's motivation. It is my hope that this and further investigations into marital history types may do just that. People working with single parents or creating programs for these fathers and mothers need to better understand which factors are related to the patterns of diversity among single parents and variation in mothers' and fathers' responses to their situations. Studies like this one may be of help particularly for single parents who wonder if their fears of or pleasures with single parenting are unusual. Of course they are not alone, and this study provides one clue as to why so many others may feel as they do.

ENDNOTES

ENDNOTES

1. A family "with own children" is one containing a parent and his/her offspring and/or adopted child. Census definitions distinguish between "own children" and "related children." Own children are offspring or adopted children, whereas related children may be grandchildren, cousins, etc. This particular calculation includes parent-child subfamilies (see endnote 3) as separate family units.

2. According to the U.S. Bureau of Census, a householder is the person or one of the persons in whose name a home is owned or rented. Householder first came into use in the 1980 census. Prior to that time, such persons (always the husband in married-couple homes) were called heads of households.

3. A subfamily is a married couple with or without own children or one parent with one or more own children who live in a housing unit headed by another relative. For example, a single mother and child are a subfamily if they live with the mother's aunt.

4. By definition, in a "family household" the householder lives with one or more persons related to him or her by birth, marriage, or adoption. A "household" contains an adult householder who lives alone or lives with persons not related to him or her.

5. Thus, single parents are those householders with extensive residential ties with their children. Single parents in subfamilies are not included in most of the statistics which follow because the U.S. Bureau of the Census generally does not report combined information on single parents who are heads of households with single parents who live in subfamilies.

6. This figure includes all adult women, including those in subfamilies.

7. Research reviewed in this section generally excludes single parents who have never been married. I focus on ever-married single parents because I believe that single parenting entails an entirely different set of circumstances for persons who begin single parenting by adding a family member to their household in contrast with those who begin single parenting due to the loss of a family member (see Rosenstein and Rosenfeld, 1973). Never

married parents were not excluded from the macro-level discussion because census data presentation frequently makes it difficult to distinguish family household heads by marital status.

8. In comparison with their predivorce experiences, most of the fathers and mothers in Luepnitz's (1982) study saw their family more frequently after they became single parents. However, Luepnitz used a convenience sample while Anspach (1974) attempted to gain a more representative sample by utilizing one year's court records of divorce.

9. Mendes' (1976b) sample was racially mixed (forty-seven percent Black and forty-four percent white) and while only ten percent had below poverty-level incomes, the rest of the fathers were mostly low or middle income. However, Mendes does not report how social class may have affected her sample's behavior.

10. While Luepnitz (1982) collected data on her sample's income and education, she did not refer to this when discussing the support groups of single fathers and mothers. Gasser and Taylor (1976) did not disclose the social class, race, or ethnicity of their sample of forty single fathers.

11. Although Ambert (1982) attempted to institute some controls on income in her study, the incomes of her male and female single parents were markedly different. Her low income mothers had less than a $12,000 a year income. Her high income mothers averaged $33,000 yearly income. Yet, her fathers (who were not separated into low and high income groups) averaged a yearly income of $50,000 (excluding the one male millionaire!).

12. Although income has often been found to be a very important factor in parents' child care decisions, none of these authors provided breakdowns of single parents' choices by income or social class.

13. Income, education, and occupation are the most common indicators of social class utilized in the literature on single parents. Obviously, the majority of these authors conceive of social class in Weberian terms, as a lifestyle. Critical or Marxist critiques of this approach are absent in this literature.

14. Interestingly, authors have not seemed to notice the parallels between this type of family arrangement and the lives of many women married to professional men or men who often are absent from home (e.g., see Fowlkes, 1980).

15. In conventional terms, a "status."

16. These statistics should be interpreted as rough approximations of the actual yearly incomes of these single parents. I did not gather this information rigorously. In fact,

in the early interviews (mostly with women) I spoke with parents whose income levels I could easily estimate given their job titles and places of employment. (I do not include these estimates here, though.) Because the situations of these single parents differed little, I felt it unnecessary to probe into this aspect of their lives. Therefore, these income figures are incomplete; they encompass responses of all fathers in the sample subset but only fifty-five percent of the mothers in the subset.

Later in my interviews I ran across fathers and mothers whose economic situations seemed to vary more. I then began to collect more specific information on income. Still, I did not ask for income breakdowns by salary, child support, alimony, and other possible sources of income. I mainly asked for salary figures and whether or not child support was received regularly. Many of the women in the subset received child support regularly and a few received alimony payments. (Both North Dakota and Minnesota have comparatively high rates of compliance for child support; monthly payments are made through the court system.) Their monthly payments ranged from $175.00 to $800.00, which would add anywhere from $2,100 to $9,600 to their yearly incomes. Only one of these single fathers received monthly child support, whereas five (thirty-three percent) of the men were paying alimony or child support to their ex-wives (e.g., one father had custody of only one of his children; he paid support to his wife for the care of the other children). I do not incorporate these child support/alimony figures into the men's or women's income statistics. I did not ask the fathers about the amount of money that they paid to their ex-wives and I felt it would have been inconsistent to add these payments into the women's incomes when I was unable to subtract the payments from the fathers' incomes. I collected income data on the subset sample members only.

17. One might assume, accordingly, that reactions of men and women from integrated marriages would be less divergent than those of women and men from segregated marriages. However, I can not verify this because I did not speak with any women from integrated marriages.

18. Names and occupations used to describe these single parents are fictitious. In developing substitute occupations, I did not change the general nature of the parents' occupations (e.g., professional occupations were replaced with other professional occupations). The numbers at the ends of the quotations indicate the parent's identification number, followed by page numbers from their transcripts.

19. One woman, whose husband was not a very decisive person, does not fit these characteristics as well. She seemed much less troubled by changes in her decision-making responsibility. But that is understandable since she did not see her spouse as a decision-making partner. (In this sense, her family resembled

primarily wife-shaped households.) This woman felt her husband had forced her to be more active in family decision-making than she had cared to be. However, even in this case, the woman used her spouse as a guide for her own decision-making while she was married. She was similar to mothers from modified-segregated marriages in that she slowly developed an independence and ease with her decision-making.

20. Perhaps fathers from modified-segregated marriages missed the decision-making aid of their spouses more than they admitted. They might have been reluctant to express these feelings for fear of seeming too dependent. While fathers from modified-segregated marriages may have been motivated by such impression management, fathers from integrated marriages were not; they easily expressed their sorrow over lost decision-making help.

21. The financial pressures on most single fathers is, of course, substantially different from the pressures on most single mothers. As noted in Chapter II, single mothers in the United States had a median income of $9,153 in 1983 while single fathers had a median income of $19,950.

A characteristic which set single fathers apart from single mothers in this sample was the large legal costs they accumulated from their divorce. The vast majority of these single fathers started out their first years of single parenting with many, many hundreds and sometimes thousands of dollars in legal fees as a result of custody disputes. In addition, the fathers were more likely to "keep" the houses if the couple owned one at the time of the divorce.

22. Unlike mothers from segregated marriages, mothers from modified-segregated marriages did not differ in their reactions to work according to whether or not they had made the decision to divorce. This difference may exist because these two groups of mothers had different work experiences and mothering preferences (i.e., mothers from segregated marriages wanted to be full-time homemakers).

23. I make the distinction here between women who received government aid of an enduring nature (e.g., Aid to Families with Dependent Children and low-income housing) and poor women who did not. In my sample, some women had incomes below the poverty line and did not seek such aid. These women did not have the same feelings about their financial responsibilities as did women on government aid for low-income persons. It is also important to distinguish between women who get government aid of an enduring nature for low-income persons and those who receive only emergency aid or specially ear-marked funds (e.g., assistance in a medical emergency). Women who received only emergency or special temporary aid are included in these figures; yet, their reactions to this aid were minimal. Also, both the widows in my

sample who received Social Security felt reassured by this income source and welcomed it without hesitation. Their experiences were not comparable with the mothers on low-income aid.

24. The only exception to this pattern was a single father who changed jobs after becoming a single parent (a change unrelated to his divorce). His new job was substantially different from his earlier one; this made his work experiences before and after becoming a single parent difficult to compare.

25. Fathers also used the extra time they no longer devoted to work to spend on themselves and their personal enjoyment. In this sense, a number of fathers mentioned the pleasure they derived from the greater freedom of single parenting, even though parenting responsibilities tended to increase. For example, one father explained,

> I guess I never really had anything before that I could do, that I could call my hobby. Now I golf...Where before I would try to do different things but it was so frustrating cause I didn't have the time to do them.
>
> Q: What was taking up your time then?
>
> Mostly work. And it was like, because of the amount of time I spent at work, if I was gonna do anything else it was gonna take away from time I would spend with the family. And that really didn't go over big with the wife 45-12

26. Fathers' use of their children's help around the house is described in Chapter VIII.

27. The exceptions to this pattern were the two mothers who were physically abused by their husbands. The one mother left her husband while her child was still an infant. The other woman's husband was rarely home and no matter how well his children might have complied with his wishes, I am sure she would object to my use of the word "effective" to describe his disciplining.

28. I am unable to determine the relative degree to which parents' expectations for sons and daughters may have differed. This sample subset's size and characteristics do not enable me to do systematic comparisons with regard to both gender and age of the children.

29. One father experienced some difficulty with this element of parenting. However, his case was unusual; his children became increasingly violent and hard to control after the end of his marriage. His wife physically abused their children when they stayed with her. Previously, the father had been the target of

her attacks.

30. In my struggle to understand the nature of gender, I have been aided greatly by Barrie Thorne. Although her written works are cited here, I have also benefited from the numerous suggestions and comments she has shared with me.

APPENDIX

Form approved by the Michigan State University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, which was given to and signed by each single parent prior to his/her interview:

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

1. I freely consent to take part in a research project being conducted by Polly Fassinger, a sociology graduate student, under the supervision of her faculty advisor, Dr. Barrie Thorne.

I understand that: a) this research is designed to study how single parents organize their everyday work and family activities and involves interviews with male and female single parents who live with their children,

b) the interview will take 1-2 hours, depending on my preferences, and will focus on such activities as housekeeping, household financial management, child rearing, and paid work,

c) I am not required to answer any questions and I am free to discontinue the interview at any time,

d) the interview will be recorded on tape but the tapes will be heard only by the interviewer and her advisor,

e) portions of the interview may be included in the written results of the research project, but my name will be kept in confidence and I will remain anonymous,

f) further explanation of the research and/or the final results of the study will be made available to me at my request.

I have read and understand this form:

Signature _____

Date _____

TABLE 13

SOURCES OF CONTACTS FOR INTERVIEWS

	Gender of Single Parent	
	Female (N=32)	Male (N=15)
Newsletters		
elementary schools	72%	27%
Big brother/sister program	6%	7%
vocational school	6%	0%
Parents without Partners	0%	0%
Letters/verbal notices		
family counseling center	3%	0%
day care centers	6%	0%
Head Start	3%	0%
support group for divorced/ widowed	3%	0%
Personal visits/contacts		
support group for divorced/ widowed	0%	7%
Snowball/Referrals from about sources*	0%	60%
	99%**	101%**

*In all other cases the parents contacted me personally and volunteered to be interviewed.

**Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding errors.

Letter distributed at day care center and at social service agency:

February 20, 1985

Dear Single Parent,

I am seeking volunteers to be interviewed for a study of how Fargo-Moorhead single parents manage their home and work activities. Having been raised in a single parent household myself, and having read a number of books and articles on single mothers and fathers, I realize that we need much more information on how single parents manage and cope with their responsibilities. I am hoping you will help.

This study is for my Ph.D. dissertation, through the Sociology Department at Michigan State University. The results will be utilized to help persons who study the family, persons who help families, and other single parents understand what makes daily life more or less difficult for single mothers and fathers. The interview will focus what you feel is important about your daily life and activities. All information we ever talk about will be strictly confidential; your name will never be used in any discussion of the project.

If you are willing to talk with me about your life as a single parent, or if you simply want more information about the project, please give me a call or drop a note in the mail. My phone number and address are listed below.

Thanks for your time and help.

Sincerely,

Polly A. Fassinger
1329 4th Street N.
Fargo
(phone: 232-6099)

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS/PROBES

The goal of this study is to gain more knowledge about the everyday lives of single parents. I would like to know about how single parents manage their daily homemaking, their work responsibilities and their parenting activities. I also want to understand who, if anyone, single parents rely on for daily support or help.

I have a number of questions that I would like to ask you. However, I want you to feel free to discuss a question at length if you believe it relates to an important dimension of your life. My questions are about your perceptions of your life, so of course there are no right or wrong answers.

(Questions with a * are central concerns. Others are probes or are to be used if parent provides little information about the central questions.)

HISTORY

*Would you please tell me about how you became a single parent.
For example, how long were you married?
Why and how did your marriage end?

-make sure information is also included:
When did marriage end?
Have you been a single parent ever since?
Was there ever any doubt in your mind that you wanted to become a single parent?
Names, ages of children now living at home.
Own age now.

*What kind of relationship do you now have with your former spouse?
(how often seen, regularity of contacts, activities done, etc.)

*What kind of relationship do your children have with their father/mother?

DOMESTIC

Now I would like some idea of how you manage daily tasks and household chores. In order to get a feel for your daily life patterns, I'd like you to tell me what your

average work day is like. If yesterday was a typical day, start with what time you got up, and explain what the day was like for you.
*In other words, what did you do all day?

*What is a typical nonwork day (weekend day?) like?

-Also inquire about:
Do your children have particular chores that they are responsible for doing?
Was this your decision?
How does it work? Are they cooperative?
Do you get help with housework from anyone besides your children? What kind? How often?
How reliable is this help? Costs? Are you satisfied with these arrangements?

How difficult is it for you to manage the family's finances/ budget? Do you ever get help? From whom? How often?

*How satisfied are you with the way you manage your homemaking activities? Why?
What do you like most, and dislike most, about homemaking?
*If you could change anything about homemaking, what would you change and how would you go about it?

PARENTING

Now I'd like to shift the focus of our conversation in order to deal more specifically with how you manage parenting activities.

*What are your children's daily schedules like on a workday?
Any regular child care?
--how long has this been arranged?
--how satisfied are you with these arrangements?
re: reliability, costs, convenience
What are the children's days like on school holidays?
Summertime? Weekend/nonwork days?

What arrangements do you usually make when s/he is ill and must stay home? When you want to go out at night?

*How do you feel about raising children by yourself?
-What do you like least about it? Most?
Have you recently faced any crises as a parent? Could you explain what happened and what you did?
*How satisfied are you with your parenting abilities?
*What changes in your life would make parenting easier for you? More satisfying?

WORK

Now I would like to talk with you about your occupation and the work you do outside your home.

*Tell me a bit about your present job. For example, how long have you had it? What is it?
--hours worked per week

*In what ways does your job make child care easier?
possible probes: work schedules, flexibility of schedule, time off for emergencies, benefits, able to contact kids

*In what ways does your job make parenting more difficult?
possible probes: overtime, fatigue,

*In what ways does parenting make your job more difficult? Easier?

*How satisfied are you with how well you manage to combine working and parenting? Why?

What are your biggest problems in combining working and parenting? How do you deal with them?
*What changes in work or in parenting would make your life easier? More satisfying?

SUPPORT

Now I'd like to know a bit about other people who are important to your daily life.

*Of your everyday contacts (by phone, in person, by mail), who is most important to you? Why?
--weekly contacts
--any other persons that are important? Why?

If you could make changes in the community that would benefit you as a single parent, how would you change the 1) schools, 2) health care facilities, 3) churches, 4) businesses. What is the most needed of these changes?

Do you feel that being a single parent changes people's opinion of you? How? How do you feel about that?

INCOME

*One of the factors which may shape how single parents manage their daily lives is the amount of income that they have. Would you mind indicating which letter represents your income bracket (from all sources) for 1983?

Show card: (card will contain incomes above poverty in $2,000 increments up to $30,000).

CLOSING

That is the end of the questions I have for you. Are there any issues that you must deal with on a daily basis that we haven't touched upon and you feel are important?

Would you like to discuss them?

Do you have any questions for me?

Would you mind giving me the names of single parents you know through work, school, church, etc? Would you mind if I contact them for an interview and mention that I got their name from you?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. How long have you been a single parent?

2. How many children do you have?
   a) names/ ages
   b) do they all live with you?

3. What is your occupation?
   a) how many hours a week do you work?

4. How old are you?

5. How many years were you married?

6. How many years of schooling have you completed?

GENERAL

1. What have been your biggest sources of stress as a single parent?
   a) Why?
   b) How have you dealt with them?

2. What is the most satisfying or enjoyable thing about being a sp?

3. What is the most frustrating thing about being a sp?

4. What was the biggest change in your life when you became a sp?

5. Do you feel like you have more free time now than when you were married?

WORKING

1. Were you working before you were separated/widowed/divorced?
   a) What type of job?
   b) hours per week

2. Was your job important to you personally? How? (In what sense?)

3. How much did your family depend on the income?

5. Do you feel differently about work now that you are a single parent?
   a) Its importance?
   b) Do you feel differently about job advancement? Explain.
   c) The hours you work?
   d) About job success?
   e) anything else?

6. Did you make new plans for supporting your family before you were separated/widowed?
   a) Were they easy to develop?

7. If you weren't a single parent today, would you look for a different job?
   a) Why?

8. Who provided most of the financial support/income for your family when you were married?
   a) Did you think of yourself as a (the) main financial provider of your family at that time?
   b) Did you ever expect to be the only financial provider for your family?
   d) How do you feel about it?

9. Did your wife always/ever work?

HOUSEWORK/DECISION-MAKING

1. Who did most of the housekeeping for your family when you were married?
   a) NOT SELF: did you become the primary housekeeper for your family as a single parent?
   b) how did you feel about it at first?
   c) how do you feel about it now?
   d) IF SELF: do you feel differently about housekeeping now? --have your standards changed?

2. Who made most of the decisions for your family when you were married?
   a) NOT SELF: how did you feel at first about becoming the primary decision-maker ?
   b) how do you feel about it now?
   c) IF SELF: how do you feel about being the decision-maker?

3. When you got married and during your marriage, did you think of yourself as the head of your family? Explain.

SELF

1. Do you think of yourself differently now than you did when you were married? That is,
   a) has your self-concept changed? Why?
   b) self esteem changed?
   c) temperament? (patience)
   d) Has this influenced your parenting?

2. What new things (if any) did you need to learn in order to run your home alone?
   a) How did you feel about that?

3. Do you feel like you are more in control of your life at the present?
   a) Explain.

3) What were the greatest sources of self-esteem in your life when you were married?
   a) What are they now? Explain.

4) Do you feel any pressure to remarry?
   a) From whom?
   b) Why?
   c) How do you feel about that?

5) Did you have a mental image of the type of father/mother and husband/wife you wanted to be while you were married?
   a) How has that image of fathering/mothering changed?

6) What has it been like to think of yourself as a single person?

GOALS - VALUES

1. Did your plans for the future (and goals) change after becoming a single parent?
   a) Why?
   b) How?

2. What was it like to develop new goals?
   a) was it difficult/easy?
   b) Why?

3. Have your priorities changed since becoming a

single parent? (vs. when married)

c) Family (parents, siblings)
d) Friends
e) Self
g) Housework
h) Children
i) work-job
j) money
k) Child care
l) home/house
n) anything else that is more important to you now that wasn't before?
o) anything important then that isn't now?

CHILDREN

1. Do you think you gave your children more responsibility when you became a single parent?
   a) or because you are a single parent?

2. Do you feel your children need a male/female role model in their lives?
   a) Why?
   b) Do you feel they need more adult outlets in their life?
   c) Why?

3. Have you been concerned with your children's need for security (feeling secure)?
   a) Why?
   b) How have you dealt with that?

4. How often do they see their father/mother?
   a) what kind of a relationship do they have with him/her?

5. What kind of a relationship do you have with your ex-spouse?
   a) Do you make decisions together?

6. Do you feel as responsible for your children when they are with their dad/mom?
   a) How about when they are with other family members?
   b) Why?

7. Have you been concerned about the effect of the divorce/death of your spouse on your children?
   a) Explain

PARENTING

1. Who was primarily responsible for raising your children and for child care when you were married?
   a) MEN: What were you involved with?

2. When you and your children first lived alone, how did you feel about being the primary child rearer (parent)?
   a) How do you feel about it now?
   b) What do you like least about it?
   c) What do you like most about it?

3. Did (or do) you ever feel like you have to be a mom and dad or a superparent to your children?
   a) When?
   b) Do you feel special pressure on you cause you are a sp?

4. Are there ways you have changed since the divorce that have made you a different parent?
   a) How?

5. Has your relationship with your children changed since you became a single parent?
   a) How?

SUPPORT

1. How often do you see your parents?
   a) How supportive have they been? How do you feel about that?
   b) other family members?

3. Have there been any changes in your old friendships?
   a) Quality
   b) Amount of contact?
   c) Content of talks
   d) Why?

4. Did you purposely seek out new friends/sources of support (material or emotional) after the divorce/death?

5. How are your new friendships different from the old ones?
   a) Quality
   b) amount of contact
   c) content of talks

d) why?

6. If you have few friends, why?

7. Do you think of your children as a source of support for you?
   a) How?

8. Do you hear much praise for what you have accomplished as a single parent?

9. Do you ever feel criticized or judged harshly by others because you are a single parent?
   a) Do you feel single parents are stigmatized at all by others?
   b) Does that bother you?

RELATIONS WITH OTHERS

1. Have you dated much? (if not) Why?

2. Have you felt comfortable with the amount of time you have to date or socialize?
   a) Why?
   b) if no, What prevents you from doing more?
   c) if yes, Was there a time when you weren't as happy?
      What was that like?

3. Have your children's reactions to or relationships with your dates been a concern to you?
   a) Why?

MARRIAGE - CUSTODY

1. Could you tell me why you were happy or unhappy with your marriage?
   a) was there a lot of tension at home before the separation?

2. Whose decision was it to end the marriage?
   a) How did you feel about the marriage ending?

3. How was custody chosen?
   a) Why?
   b) Was custody ever contested?

4. Would you have considered shared custody?
   a) Giving them up? (Not having custody?)
   b) Why?

5. Are you ever fearful of a custody fight now?

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

1. Do you get child support?
   a) Regularly?

2. What is your usual monthly income?
   a) What part is child support?

3. Did you ever get financial support from...
   a) parents?
   b) government?
   c) What kind?
   d) other aid?

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