



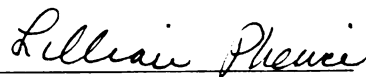


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FACTORS INFLUENCING QUALITY OF PARENTING FOR HEAD  
START SINGLE PARENTS

presented by  
Rebecca Meszaros

has been accepted towards fulfillment  
of the requirements for

M.S. degree in Community Services



Major professor

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**FACTORS INFLUENCING QUALITY OF PARENTING FOR HEAD  
START SINGLE PARENTS**

**By**

**Rebecca Meszaros**

**A THESIS**

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

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**Department of Family and Child Ecology**

**2001**



## **ABSTRACT**

### **FACTORS INFLUENCING QUALITY OF PARENTING FOR HEAD START SINGLE PARENTS**

**By**

**Rebecca Meszaros**

**This study investigates the relationship among community, economic pressure, social support, emotional well-being, and the quality of parenting for single parent families in the greater Lansing area of Michigan. In order to carry out the objectives of this research, a non-experimental, cross-sectional research study was done with Head Start single parents in the greater Lansing area as participants. Descriptive analysis including frequency, mean, median, standard deviation, and mode were used for this study. Bivariate correlations were run to determine if there were any associations between variables. Consistent with prior studies, the results show that emotional well-being is a key variable influencing the quality of parenting for single parents. Community and social support influence the quality of parenting indirectly through their influence on emotional well-being. The findings also show a relationship between emotional well-being and community, and emotional well-being and social support. Although recent research has indicated that economic pressure influences the quality of parenting, this was not the case in this study. The findings indicate that economic pressure does not influence the quality of parenting even though it is a very present reality for the study participants.**



## Dedication

This project is dedicated to my family, especially my son, Rafael. Thank you for all of your support and prayers that have enabled me to bring this project to completion.

I would also like to dedicate this paper to all other single parents. This journey that we have embarked on is both challenging and rewarding. It is your strength and endurance that pushes me forward. Thank you.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the assistance and support of my committee, Dr. Barbara Ames, Dr. Norma Bobbitt, and Dr. Lillian Phenice. I am especially grateful for the guidance and support of Dr. Phenice. Thank you for believing in me and pushing me to do my best. A special thank you to Head Start in the greater Lansing area - to Mary Farrand, Carol Sitowski, the family workers, and especially the single parents who participated in this study. Without you, none of this would have been possible.



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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Parenting is one of the most challenging roles that a person can undertake within his or her lifetime. Single parents have even more challenges, as they have complete responsibility for parenting, employment, finances, and household upkeep. In 1998, twenty six percent of all families with children were headed by single parents (Single Parent Statistics, 2000). This study investigates whether support from family members, friends, and community services are essential in order to ensure a quality of life for these families. Previous findings by Crockenberg (1988) indicate that social support is associated with more sensitive and responsive maternal behavior among single mothers, and that satisfaction with support is associated with more appropriate maternal control, better mother-child communication and greater nurturance. It was also found that potential negative effects can be mediated by social support. Simons, Johnson, Conger, and Lorenz (1997) have found that life stress, like economic pressure, and type of community a person lives in also influence the parenting behaviors of people. As human ecologists Bubolz and Sontag (1993) state, "Environments do not determine human behavior but pose limitations and constraints as well as possibilities and opportunities" (p.426).

This study was designed to investigate the interconnectedness of families and communities. Specifically, it will enable one to look at the various factors influencing parenting and their implications at a community level, such as how support of single



parent families strengthens communities. Understanding the variables that influence parenting can help a community focus on the support that is necessary to ensure that all members have a quality of life that enables them to be healthy and productive members.

The interrelationship of the four variables that have been identified as influencing the quality of parenting for single parents are based on previous research by Ronald Simons (1993). Based on Belsky's work finding that parental behavior is disrupted by work-related stressors, the research of Simons, Lorenz, Wu, and Conger (1993) indicates that economic pressure disrupts competent parenting by increasing psychological distress and undermining access to supportive relationships with others.

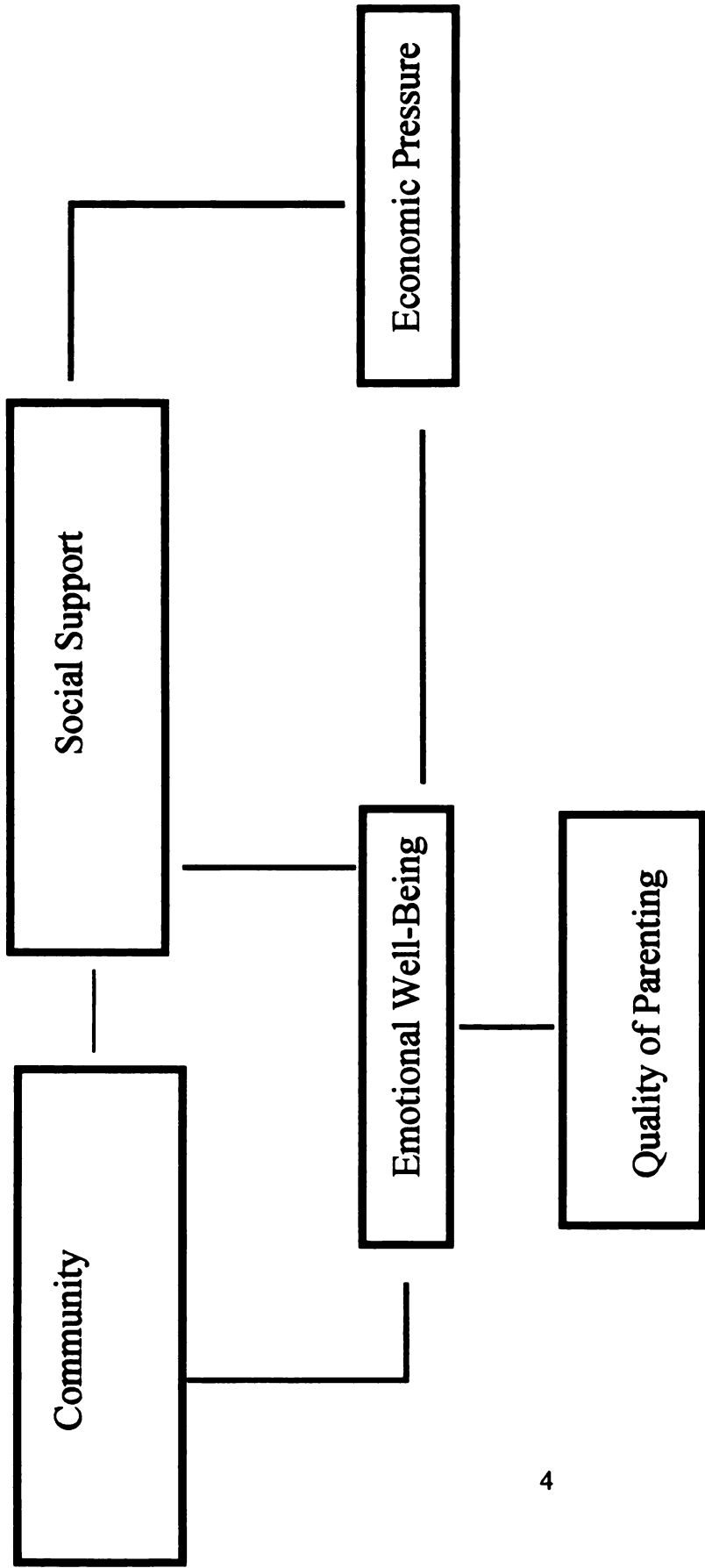
The conceptual model being used for this study postulates that the dependent variables of social support, community, economic pressure, and emotional well-being influence the independent variable, quality of parenting of the single parent (See Figure 1). The key variable in this model is the emotional well-being of the single parent. This is the variable which links the other variables of this study to the quality of parenting. Economic pressure indirectly influences the quality of parenting through its influence on social support and its direct influence on emotional well-being (Simons, et al, 1993). Community has an indirect influence on the quality of parenting through its influence on social support, and social support indirectly influences the quality of parenting through its influence on the emotional well-being of the single parent.

In order to carry out the objectives of this research, a non-experimental, cross-sectional research study was done. This applied, descriptive study was carried out in a natural setting. Head Start single parents in the greater Lansing area were the unit of



analysis. Primary data were collected and used.





**Figure 1.** Cognitive Map of Research - Model of the influence of Community, Social Support, Economic Pressure, and Emotional Well-Being on the Quality of Parenting for Single Parents.



## Statement of the Problem

This study looks at the environmental factors that influence the quality of parenting for single parent families. This study investigates the relationship among community, life stress, social support, emotional well-being, and the quality of parenting for single parent families in the greater Lansing area of Michigan. Simons, Lorenz, Wu, and Conger developed a model that shows the various influences on parenting. Specifically, this study uses a model based on one developed by Simons et al (1993).



## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature

#### Community and Quality of Parenting

The relationship between community and quality of parenting has not been widely researched (Klebanov, Brooks-Gunn, & Duncan, 1994; Simons et al. 1997; Voyandoff & Donnelly 1998). Wilson has argued that adults living in disadvantaged neighborhoods are more likely to be depressed and will not have appropriate parenting skills (Simons et al., 1997). Wilson's research has shown that when manufacturing and the good-paying jobs and services that accompany it, moves to the suburbs from the city, inner-city neighborhoods become places of low resources for those left behind. These neighborhoods become places of poor schools, inadequate public and social services, economic and business problems, low morale, and lack of involvement by community members. Wilson (1997) adds that residents in such neighborhoods tend to focus on the present, lack long-term goals, and display little planning or organization. These are all characteristics that do not enable effective parenting. Recent research has provided evidence to support Wilson's arguments. Klebanov, Brooks-Gunn and Duncan reported that neighborhood poverty was associated with low maternal warmth and provision of a negative household environment, after controlling for mother's education and family income (1997).

Based on Wilson's (1997) ideas and the research of Klebanov and associates (1994), Simons (1997) and his fellow researchers found an association between



community context and parental behavior across communities of various sizes, including single parents of both toddlers and adolescents. Simons, et al (1997) found that because of the disadvantages of some communities, residents are thus more susceptible to negative life stressors and less social support. They found in their research in rural Iowa communities a direct link between what they called social disorganization, a breakdown in basic institutions and social relationships required for people to satisfy fundamental needs and values, and quality of parenting (p.212). Social disorganization has an indirect effect on quality of parenting through both negative life stress and low social support. It was also found that the effect on a parent's emotional well-being directly influences parenting. They concluded that a community experiencing severe social and economic problems caused parents to behave in ways that led to ineffective parenting.

On the other hand, community resources can positively affect the well-being of parents. Voyandoff and Donnelly (1998) have shown a modest relationship between parental well-being and formal supports, school environments, and neighborhood resources. Though community resources cannot overcome all of the disadvantages parents may face, neighborhood resources and school environments can be important sources of informal support to parents of adolescents. Their findings indicate that a range of community resources is beneficial to parental well-being (1998).

### Economic Pressure and Parenting

Parenting itself brings added economic demands and household expenses increase along with the added expenditure of child care. Often such economic stress can mean lower personal and parental well-being (Heath & Orthner, 1999). A stressful event, like



family economic pressure, disrupts competent parenting by increasing psychological distress and decreasing access to social support. According to Simons, Lorenz, Wu, & Conger(1993), for both mothers and fathers, economic pressure is strongly associated with depression. As depression increases, supportive parenting, or the quality of parenting, decreases. Thus economic pressure effects parenting quality through its effect on the emotional well-being of the parent. Economic pressure also influences spousal support indirectly through depression. A parent's emotional well-being and access to marital support can mediate the effect of economic pressure on parenting

The demands and pressures of parenting are greater for single parents when they are the sole earner and parent in the family. The primary stressor for single parents, especially mothers, is inadequate financial support (Heath and Orthner,1999). Voydanoff and Donnelly (1998) found single parenthood and economic strain to be the primary sources of parental stress, along with extensive work demands and community problems. They found that single parenthood and economic strain had a negative influence on parental well-being.

### Social Support and Parenting

◀ Social support is the emotional, instrumental, and informational help a person receives from others (Crockenberg, 1988). The marital relationship, when present, is the primary support system for parenting, and social network support is considered secondary. Social support influences parenting behaviors indirectly through its effect on parents' emotional well-being (Simons, et al, 1997). For mothers, spousal support appears to have a buffering effect between depression and quality of parenting, and spousal support serves



to decrease the probability that stress would affect the quality of parenting.

◀ Social support is associated with more sensitive and responsive maternal behavior among single mothers and satisfaction with support is associated with more appropriate maternal control, better mother-child communication, and greater nurturance (Crockenberg, 1988). Even for low-risk families, social support is associated with parenting that is more appropriate and beneficial to the child. Social support is beneficial for a child's development because of the one-to-one contact between the child and the person providing the social support, as well as the effect on the mother's behavior (1988).

◀ A single parent's support network offers practical support more frequently and more consistently. This can be child care, transportation, help during a child's illness, house cleaning and so forth (Wijnberg & Weinger, 1998). Though practical support is necessary and enables single parents to meet their work responsibilities, emotional support enables them to cope with the ever present demands and pressures of being a single parent (1998). In a small study of poor single mothers in the Midwest, Wijnberg and Weinger found that mothers in their study wanted most to be connected, cared about, and validated by their social network (1998).

◀ D'Ercole (1988) found that the supportive relationships with friends and co-workers had more influence on the well-being of single mothers than the task-related support of family and neighbors. D'Ercole concludes that with friends, one can socialize, share experiences, and be a part of a network of peers. This type of social support system appears to buffer stress.

◀ In a comprehensive overview of single parent studies and social support, Nestmann



and Niepel (1994) categorized the studies that have been done into two groups - structural (size, composition, and density) and functional (the role of social support). They tentatively concluded that single parent networks are smaller, consist of relatives, are of the same gender, and have fewer but more intensive contacts (Nestmann and Niepel, 1994). As for the functional component of social support, this serves to protect single parents and enhance their well-being. In other words, it serves as a coping mechanism for single parents. Friends and family members are usually the sources of this support (1994). >

### Emotional Well-Being and Parenting

Extensive research has shown a relationship between psychological health and quality of parenting. Adults who are psychologically healthy are more likely to provide the type of care that enables their children to be psychologically healthy (Belsky, 1990). Parents with high measures of ego development and ego strength tend to behave sensitively and responsively toward their infants. They also develop feelings of confidence and control as parents. Research also has shown that parents who feel positively about themselves tend to communicate more effectively with their children.

Social support, depression, and mother's education, are significantly related to ineffective parenting (Simons et al., 1997). Depressed mothers tend to be less affectionate, responsive, and spontaneous with their infants and are more likely to be irritable and punitive with their older children (Belsky, 1990). Social support and negative life events, like economic pressure, affect parenting quality through their effect on emotional well-being. Social support has been shown to be positively associated with mother's emotional well-being and with sensitive and responsive maternal behavior



(Crockenberg, 1988). Crockenberg(1988) sees social support as generally associated with patterns of appropriate parenting and better adjustment to parenting.

Further evidence shows that mothers with family support had significantly higher maternal self-esteem than mothers who did not have family support. Self-esteem is a significant factor in the emotional well-being of a person and an important resource for single mothers (D'Ercole, 1988). Though practical or instrumental support is essential to single mothers, "emotional support is of even greater value" (Wijnberg and Weinger, 1998). Wijnberg and Weinger (1998) studied a group of poor single-mother students, full-time workers, part-time workers, and full-time mothers in western Michigan. All sub-groups except full-time mothers wanted to feel connected, cared about, and validated by their social network.

Webster-Stratton (1997) found that parent training programs reduce isolation, strengthen support networks, lead to better parenting, fewer child behavior problems, and ultimately resulted in greater collaboration between parents and school. Integral to the success of these parent training programs is the emotional well-being of the parents. Webster-Stratton (1997) states that "...when parents value themselves and regularly act upon that self-respect, they are able to be more nurturing with their children and to build relationships with others in the group and their community. Self-care is an important link between parents' work and their ability to become involved in their community" (p. 11).

### Theoretical Perspective

Human ecology theory will be used as a foundation from which to understand the influence of community, social support, economic pressure, and emotional well-being on



parenting for single parents. In human ecology theory a family is not seen as an entity all of its own, but part of and interacting within an environment. Environment is defined as three distinct but interrelated environments. The first is the human-built environment which includes roads, cities and pollution. The second, the social-cultural environment is, for example, neighbors, laws, cultural values, and economic institutions. The third is the natural-physical-biological environment which consists of water, mineral, plants, and animals (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993).

This theory is significant to the study because it provides the basis for seeing the single parent family as it interacts with its environment and how these interactions influence the quality of parenting. Human ecology theory allows one to look at the various components that make up a family's environment, along with what they potentially contribute and receive from their interactions with the environment. In this study human ecology theory is used to show that such specific components of the environment as community, social support, economic pressure, and the mother's emotional well-being do not determine but influence parental behavior.

Bubolz and Sontag (1993) remind us that what a family does has consequences for the environments to which they belong; hence a family's actions affect the environment and others in the environment. Human ecology theory, as used in this study, provides a holistic perspective to understanding parenting. This theory acknowledges the interactions that occur between a family's characteristics, human attributes, and environmental factors. In this study this allows one to understand the single parent family at both the micro or family level and macro or environmental level. It enables a single parent family to be seen



as a unit which is interrelated and interdependent with its environment. The variables that comprise this environment contribute to a single parent's quality of parenting.

## **Conclusion**

Recent research has identified four main variables that influence parenting. One is the community where families live, and another is the life stress experienced by a parent. A third is the social support received or perceived, and fourth is the emotional state of the parent. These variables influence the quality of parenting at different levels and with differing results. The literature shows the interconnectedness of each variable with families and their environment. Each variable influences parenting in association with another variable. Community as a place where parents live influences the quality of parenting through its disadvantages or advantages, such as adequate resources. Of importance in this relationship is that community as a variable influences parenting most often through its effects on a parent's emotional well-being. Economic pressure and social support as variables in this model also influence parenting through their effects on emotional well-being. Research has shown how social disorganization within a community leads to negative life stress and low social support for parents, ultimately influencing the quality of parenting by reducing the emotional well-being of the parent. This study sought to look at the interrelationship of these variables with single parent families, an ever growing family system in the United States.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods**

#### **Research Questions**

The overall objective of this research was to investigate the relationship among social support, community, life stress, and the emotional well-being of parents on the quality of parenting for single parents.

In order to reach this overall objective, two questions were developed to guide the research. The following questions were addressed:

1. What is the relationship of community, social support, and economic pressure to the emotional well-being of single parents?
2. What is the relationship among community, social support, economic pressure, and emotional well-being of single parents to their quality of parenting?

#### **Research Hypotheses**

**HO1** There is no relationship between community and social support for single parents.

**HA1** There is a relationship between community and social support for single parents.

**HO2** There is no relationship between economic pressure and social support for single parents.

**HA2** There is a relationship between economic pressure and social support for single parents.



- HO3** There is no relationship between economic pressure and emotional well-being for single parents.
- HA3** There is a relationship between economic pressure and emotional well-being for single parents.
- HO4** There is no relationship between social support and emotional well-being for single parents.
- HA4** There is a relationship between social support and emotional well-being for single parents.
- HO5** There is no relationship between the emotional well-being and quality of parenting for single parents.
- HA5** There is a relationship between emotional well-being and quality of parenting for single parents.
- HO6** There is no relationship among community, economic pressure, social support, and emotional well-being and the quality of parenting for single parents.
- HA6** There is a relationship among community, economic pressure, social support, and the emotional well-being and the quality of parenting for single parents.



## **Conceptual and Operational Definitions**

### **Independent Variable**

**Quality of Parenting** The independent variable to be measured in this study is the quality of parenting for single parent families. In this study, parenting is the extent to which a parent shows care and concern for a child. Quality of parenting is defined as supportive parenting shown by parents concern about their child's feelings, taking an interest in his or her daily activities, manifesting love and acceptance, encouraging appropriate behavior, helping with problems, and reinforcing accomplishments. Operationally, this will be measured using the ten-item Supportive Parenting scale, a self-report measure adapted from the measure created by Simons et al (1993). This scale has a coefficient alpha of .81 for fathers and .78 for mothers. The response format uses a Likert scale of 1-5 points.

### **Dependent Variables**

The dependent variables that will be measured in this study are community, economic pressure, social support, and the emotional well-being of the parent.

**Community** Community is defined as interlocking networks of relationships between individuals and groups consisting of trust and reciprocity. This will be measured using a 29 item Social Capital Questionnaire, a self report measure, created by Onyx and Bullen (2000). This measure uses a four point Likert scale response format.

**Economic Pressure** Economic pressure is defined as economic stress and material needs of the single parent. This will be measured by specific answers given to survey questions created by Simons et al. (1993), with a Cronbach alpha of .84, regarding household



budgeting and material needs.

**Economic stress:** Two items will assess the degree to which the parents felt they “can’t make ends meet” using a Likert scale of 1-5 points.

**Material needs:** A series of nine items asking if parents had the money needed for basic household and family needs. Items will be summed to form material needs indicator of economic pressure.

**Emotional well-being** This is defined as mother’s self concept and self-esteem or how they feel about their role as a single parent. This will be measured using eleven true or false questions created by the author based on the depression symptomology subscale of the SCL-90-R (Derogatis 1983). All true responses will indicate a high self concept and self-esteem.

✓ **Social Support** Social support is defined as supportive social resources that might facilitate coping with stressful situations. This will be measured using the Tangible, Appraisal, and Belonging subscales of the Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL), a 40 item self-report measure created by Cohen and Hoberman (1983).. The three subscales will be summed to form a single indicator of social support.

### **Other definitions**

**Single parent families** Single parent families are defined as families where the mother is primarily responsible for parenting, employment, finances, and household upkeep. This will be measured by asking participants their marital status on a survey questionnaire. They will be given three choices: single - never married, single - divorced, single - widowed.



## **Sample**

A purposive sample of 27 single parents residing in the greater Lansing area was recruited from the local Head Start programs. After permission to conduct the study was received from the director of the greater Lansing Head Start programs and UCRIHS, the self-report questionnaire was given to the family worker coordinator. The family worker coordinator contacted Head Start family workers at various programs in the greater Lansing area. These family workers identified single parents who participated in their Head Start programs. The family workers gave the self-report questionnaire to these parents, and they were asked to review it. If they were willing to participate in the study, interested parents signed the consent form and filled out the questionnaire. The questionnaire was returned to the family workers when completed. All completed questionnaires were returned to the family worker coordinator.

All participants were single parents, with the sample fairly evenly divided between never married and divorced/separated mothers. Forty eight percent were never married and fifty two percent were divorced/separated. Seventy-four percent of the women were between the ages of 19 and 29. They had a mean of 2.22 children, ninety six percent had 1-4 children and fifty nine percent of these parents had 1-2 children.

Fifty eight percent of the families fell into the \$0-\$15,999 income category. Eighty nine percent had incomes of \$22,500 and less. Economic variance was controlled for given the nature of the sample which was chosen from those qualified for Head Start programs. An overwhelming 93% of the sample were employed, with 79% employed full-time. Fifty-two percent had lived between 1-5 years in the greater Lansing area. Thirty



percent have lived in the greater Lansing area all their lives.

## Instrumentation

Mother self-reports were used to measure community, life stress, social support, emotional well-being, and supportive parenting. All instruments except for the emotional well-being instrument have been used in other research.

Economic Pressure The measure of economic pressure is the mean response to three indicators of economic pressure. The first two items assess the degree to which parents feel they “can’t make ends meet”. Each single parent indicated to what degree they had difficulty paying bills each month (1 = *no difficulty at all*, to 5 = *a great deal of difficulty*) and whether they had money left over at the end of the month (1 = *more than enough money left over*, to 4 = *not enough to make ends meet*). Each parent also responded to nine items asking if they had the money needed for home (rent or mortgage), clothing, household items, transportation, food, medical care, recreational activities, children’s supplies, and utilities (1 = *more than enough*, to 4 = *not enough*). The items were summed to form a material needs indicator of economic pressure. In previous research, the material needs indicator had a coefficient alpha of .89 for mothers and .89 for fathers. (Simons, et al, 1993). Material needs scoring key: 0-9 (more than enough), 10-18 (just enough), 19-27 (barely enough), and 28-36 (not enough).

Quality of parenting The measure of the quality of parenting, using the Supportive Parenting scale, is the mean response to ten-items focusing on the various components of supportive parenting such as concern for child’s feelings, interest in daily activities, and help with problems (1 = *never* to 5 = *always*). In previous research, the nine-item



Supportive Parenting scale had a coefficient alpha of .81 for fathers and .78 for mothers (Simons, et al., 1993). Quality of parenting scoring key: 0-10 (never supportive), 11-20 (somewhat supportive), 21-30 (supportive), 31-40 (mostly supportive) and 41-50 (very supportive).

**Emotional Well-Being** The measure of the emotional well-being of the parent is the mean response to eleven true or false items revealing the mother's self concept and self-esteem in relation to parenting as a single parent. It was pilot tested by a small group of single parents. This measure was created by the researcher based on thirteen items of the depression symptomology subscale of the SCL-90-R (Derogatis 1983). This depression subscale has demonstrated reliability and validity. In previous research, this subscale had a coefficient alpha of .86 (Simons, et al, 1997). All true responses will indicate a high self concept and self-esteem (true = 1, false = 0). Emotional well-being scoring key: 8-10 (good emotional state), 5-7 (satisfactory emotional state), 2-4 (low emotional state), 0-1 (very low emotional state).

**Community** The measure of the strength of community networks, using The Social Capital Questionnaire (Onyx & Bullen, 2000), is the mean response to 26 items consisting of five subscales (Responses range from 1 = *no, not at all* to 4 = *yes, definitely*). The Social Capital Questionnaire, used in previous research, has a Cronbach's alpha of .84. The five subscales measure participation in local community (e.g. Do you help out a local group as a volunteer?), proactivity in social context of capacity of the individual to plan and initiate action in a social context (e.g. Have you ever picked up other people's trash in a public place?), feelings of trust and safety (e.g. Do you feel safe walking down your street after



dark?), neighborhood connections (e.g. Have you visited a neighbor in the past week?), and family and friends (e.g. How many phone conversations have you had with friends in the past week?). The mean response to each subscale is the measure of the strength of that subscale. (This is based on 36 items). Community scoring key: 0-24 (no strength), 25-48 (low), 49-72 (medium), and 73-96 (high).

**Social Support** The Tangible, Appraisal, and Belonging subscales of the Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL) (Cohen & Hoberman, 1983) were summed to form an indicator of social support. The Appraisal subscale measures perceived ability of someone to talk with about one's problems (e.g. When I need suggestions for how to deal with a personal problem I know there is someone I can turn to). The Belonging subscale measures perceived availability of people with whom to do things (e.g. If I decide on a Friday afternoon that I would like to go to a movie that evening, I could find someone to go with me.). The Tangible subscale measures perceived availability of instrumental assistance (e.g. If I were sick and needed someone to drive me to the doctor, I would have trouble finding someone.) Internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) for the ISEL is .77 and .77 for appraisal, .75 for belonging, and .71 for tangible for each subscale. Social support scoring key: 24-30 (high perceived support), 17-23 (normal perceived support), 10-16 (low perceived support) and 0-9 (no support).



## Chapter 4

### Results

The questionnaires were analyzed by the author using SPSS 10. For each variable, descriptive analysis including frequency, mean, median, standard deviation, and mode was done. Bivariate correlations (pearson's correlation) were run between all variables, including each of the eleven questions of the emotional well-being scale. All significant correlations were positive. Missing data, typically less than 3.7%, were excluded from analysis.

#### Descriptive Analysis Results

##### Economic Pressure

Frequency analysis indicates that 51.8% of all participants have "some difficulty" to "difficulty" paying their monthly bills. The mean, median, and mode results were all "some difficulty". Thirty seven percent have "just enough with no money left over" at the end of a month. For the third section of the questionnaire relating to economic pressure, 44.4% of respondents indicated they have "barely enough" money to meet family needs. The mean was 22.37, median was 23.00 and the mode was 23, all answers indicated "barely enough". Approximately 26% of respondents did not have enough money to meet family needs.

##### Supportive Parenting Scale - Quality of Parenting

Frequency analysis indicates that the mean score for the supportive parenting scale



(see page )was 42.48. The median and mode scores were 43 and 44 respectively. With a score of 50 equal to “very supportive” and the highest score possible, the mean, median and mode scores fell into the “very supportive” category. Approximately 67% of respondents (66.7%) were “very supportive” with an overwhelming 100% either “supportive” or “very supportive”.

### Emotional Well-Being

All true answers to the eleven questions comprising the emotional well-being questionnaire indicated a very good emotional state. Thus the highest possible score was 11. The mean score for the study participants was 7.4, indicating a satisfactory emotional state. The median and mode scores were slightly higher, both 8, and were scored as having a good emotional state. Frequency analysis showed that 61.5% of respondents had a good emotional state, and 23% had a satisfactory emotional state. The responses to two specific questions from the emotional well-being questionnaire were analyzed to determine the percentage of respondents who were happy and satisfied with their life (“I am happy.” and “I am satisfied with my life”). Seventy six percent said that they were happy while satisfaction with their lives was evenly divided between “yes” and “no”. Fifty percent said they were satisfied with their life and fifty percent said they were not satisfied.

### Community

The range of scores indicating community connections for participants was from 31-77. The scores were divided into four categories: no support, low support, medium support, and high support. The mean score was 62.7 which falls into the medium support category. Almost 93% (92.6) of respondents were in this category of medium support,







indicating a normal level of community interactions. The median and mode scores also fell into the medium support category, 64 and 66 respectively.

Breaking down the community scores further showed where participants experienced most of their community interactions. Questions relating to participation in the local community had a mean of 11.89. This score revealed that 77.8% of participants had low participation in their local community. For proactivity in a social context or the capacity of an individual to plan and initiate action within a social context, the mean score was 22.89, significantly higher than local community participation, revealing that 55.6% of participants had a high proactivity in a social context. The subscale for feelings of trust and safety showed that 81.5% of respondents with normal to high feelings of trust and safety in regard to their communities. This subscale had a mean score of 13.52. Those respondents with good to high neighborhood connections, the next subscale, comprised 92.5% with a mean score of 14.48. The subscale for family and friends was made up of two questions. The first one asked how many phone conversations a person had during the week with family and friends. The second question asked the number of people the respondent talked to the previous day. Respondents had on average 4-7 phone conversations in the past week; 51.9% of respondents had 0-7 phone conversations in the past week and 63% had 0-10. Fifty six percent of respondents indicated that they talked to between 1-7 people the previous day.

### Social Support

The range of scores for the ISEL included a sum of the three subscales comprising the test. This range was 8-30. The mean score was 24.35, median score was 26, and the



mode was 30. The perception of social support was high, with 64.3% experiencing high social support. The highest amount possible, a score of 30, was earned by 9.3% of respondents.

## **Bivariate Correlations Results**

Table 1

**Mean and Standard Deviation Results for Dependent and Independent Variables.**

	Mean	Maximum	Std. Deviation	N
Emotional Well-Being	7.38	10	2.04	26
Quality of Parenting	42.48	49	3.58	27
Economic Pressure	22.37	33	6.49	27
Community	62.70	77	8.50	27
Social Support	24.35	30	6.10	26

### **Hypothesis 1**

There is no association between community and social support ( $r = .326$ ).

Bivariate correlations also do not show an association between community and quality of parenting. There is no significant correlation between these two variables ( $r = .134$ ).

There is no support for hypothesis 1. However, a modest positive association between community and emotional well-being ( $r = .35$ ) is shown using nonparametric correlations.

### **Hypothesis 2**

Bivariate correlations show no association between economic pressure and quality



of parenting (  $r = -.114$ ). There is no association between economic pressure and social support either (  $r = -.026$ ). There is no support for hypothesis 2.

### Hypothesis 3

Bivariate correlations do not show an association between economic pressure and emotional well-being (  $r = -.126$ ). There is no support for hypothesis 3.

### Hypothesis 4

When social support is correlated with emotional well-being, bivariate correlations show a positive association (  $r = .69$ ), significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Bivariate correlations also were run between social support and the specific questions of the emotional well-being scale. These correlations show a modest positive association between social support and six items that comprise the emotional well-being scale. (See table 2).

Table 2

Correlations between Social Support and Six Items from Emotional Well-Being questionnaire.

	Happy	Compare	Do not blame	Seek support	Feel included	Do not feel alone
Social Support	$r = .56$ $N=24$	$r = .44$ $N=25$	$r = .73$ $N=25$	$r = .65$ $N=24$	$r = .53$ $N=25$	$r = .50$ $N=25$

Correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Bivariate correlations do not show an association between social support and quality of parenting. There is no significant association between social support and parenting (  $r =$



.29). There is support for hypothesis 4.

### Hypothesis 5

Bivariate correlations show an association between the emotional well-being of a single parent and the quality of parenting. There is a positive significant correlation between emotional well-being and parenting ( $r = .62$ ), significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

When specific questions from the emotional well-being questionnaire are correlated with parenting, some significant correlations become evident (see table 3). Bivariate correlations also show an association between happiness (“I am happy”, item number 2) and quality of parenting. There is a modest positive correlation between happiness and parenting ( $r = .50$ ), significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Bivariate correlations show an association between satisfaction with life (“I am satisfied with my life”, item number 3) and quality of parenting. There is a significant positive correlation between satisfaction and parenting ( $r = .68$ ), significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). There is also a significant positive correlation between satisfaction and emotional well-being ( $r = .58$ ), significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). There is a modest positive correlation between feeling included (“I always feel like I am included when I am with two-parent families”, item number 10) and parenting ( $r = .53$ ), significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Not feeling alone is modestly correlated with parenting ( $r = .50$ ), significant at the 0.01 level. There is support for hypothesis 5.



Table 3

Correlations between Supportive Parenting and Five Items from Emotional Well-Being questionnaire.

	Happy	Satisfied	Best Parent	Feel included	Do not feel alone
Quality of Parenting	$r = .50^*$ $N=25$	$r = .68^{**}$ $N=26$	$r = .39^*$ $N=26$	$r = .53^{**}$ $N=26$	$r = .50^*$ $N=26$

**\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level(2-tailed)**

**\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

Hypothesis 6

Bivariate correlations show an association between community, social support, and emotional well-being. Bivariate correlations also show an association between emotional well-being and quality of parenting. Thus there is partial support for hypothesis 6. Figure 2 shows a revised model of the relationships between community, social support, emotional well-being, and quality of parenting for single parents. According to the results, economic pressure does not appear to be significant in this model of the influences on the quality of parenting for single parents. Thus economic pressure as a variable has been removed.

Table 4

Summary of Research hypotheses and results.

	HA 1	HA 2	HA 3	HA 4	HA 5	HA 6
<b>Support</b>	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Partial support



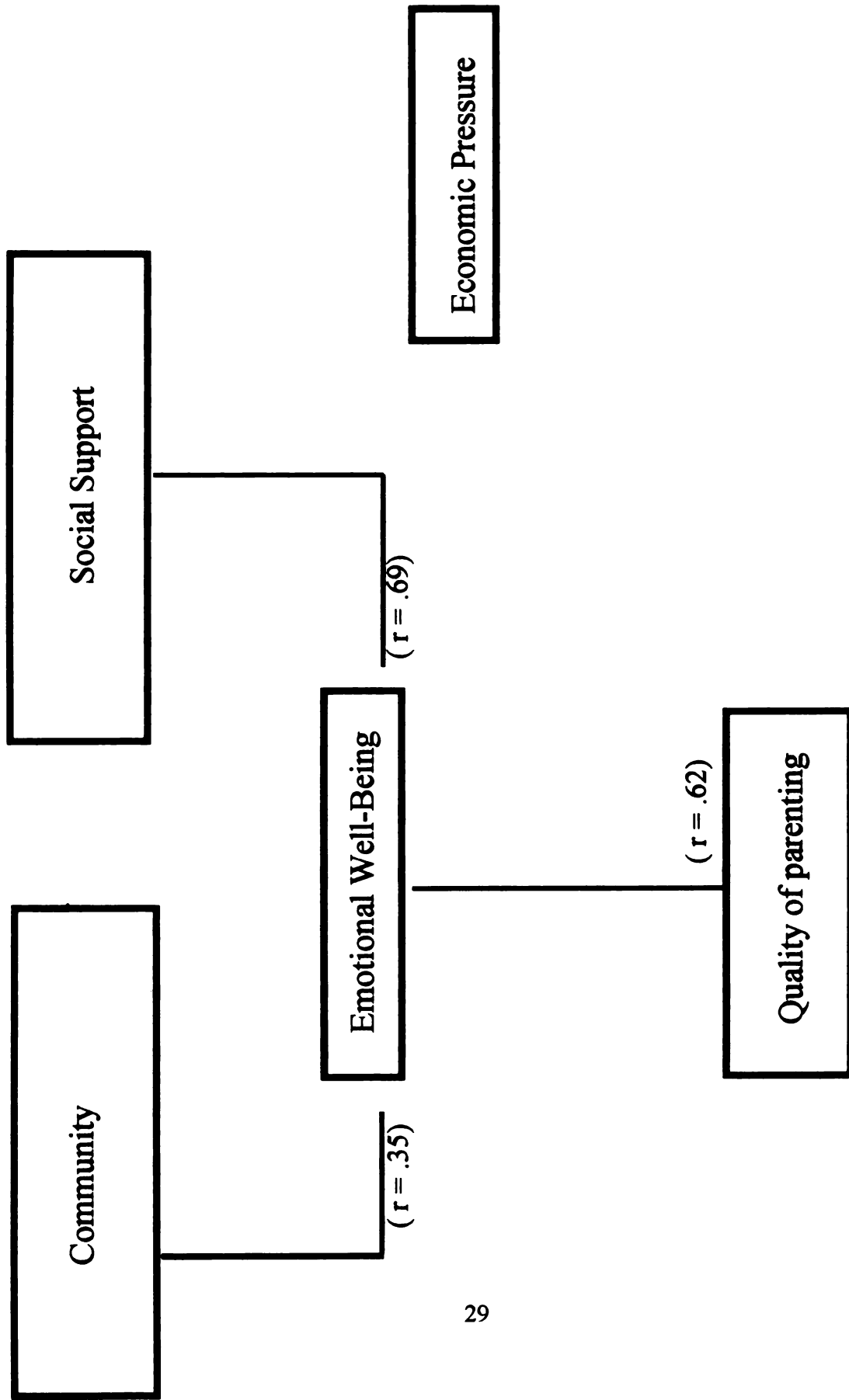


Figure 1. Model of influence of community, social support, emotional well-being, and economic pressure on quality of parenting for single parents.



## Chapter 5

### Discussion

#### Findings

Based on a similar model regarding the manner in which social support influences the effect of economic pressure on parenting (Simons, et al, 1993), this study sought to investigate the relationship among community, economic pressure, social support, emotional well-being, and the quality of parenting for single parent families. The model being used for this study assumes that economic pressure, or economic stress experienced by Head Start single parents, indirectly influences the quality of parenting through its influence on social support, or supportive social resources, and its direct influence on emotional well-being. Community, consisting of the interlocking networks of relationships between individuals and groups, has an indirect influence on the quality of parenting through its influence on social support and social support indirectly influences the quality of parenting through its influence on the emotional well-being of the single parent.

The strength of the findings of this study lies in the way in which all the variables work together to show the various influences on the quality of parenting for single parents. Consistent with prior studies, the results show that emotional well-being is indeed a key variable influencing the quality of parenting for single parents. There is a direct, positive, relationship between emotional well-being and the quality of parenting. In this study the emotional well-being of the single parent appears to be a link between community and social support and the quality of parenting. As the conceptual model



proposes, community and social support influence the quality of parenting indirectly through their influence on emotional well-being. The findings also show a relationship between emotional well-being and community, and emotional well-being and social support. It is economic pressure that is not consistent with the conceptual model. The findings indicate that economic pressure does not influence the quality of parenting even though it is a very present reality for the study participants. (See Figure 2 for revised model).

Although recent research has indicated that economic pressure influences the quality of parenting, this was not the case in this study. Contrary to what was hypothesized, there is no relationship between economic pressure and quality of parenting. The results show that economic pressure is indeed evident for this sample of single parents. Over half the sample had “difficulty” paying bills and 44.4% had “barely enough money” to meet family needs. Previous research indicates that economic pressure would negatively affect the quality of parenting. One possibility is that the other variables in this model are significant enough to override the economic pressure felt by these single parents. The relationship between community, social support and emotional well-being perhaps holds the key to these results.

The findings indicate that 92.6% of the single parents have normal participation within their community and that 87.2% have normal to high perceived social support. Given these findings, perhaps participation in community and social support work to offset the economic pressure felt by these single parents. If a single parent feels safe, has neighborhood connections in her community, and perceives friends and family to be



supportive of her and her family, then this can influence her emotional well-being and consequently her quality of parenting.

Another possibility is, given that 93% of the parents in this study work and 79% work full-time, it could be that because these parents are working, that factor by itself makes them feel like better parents even though they may still be experiencing economic pressure. They may feel like better parents because they are able to support their families. The work environment also could be a source of social support. Friends and co-workers are an important source of emotional support (D'Ercole, 1988). Even though economic pressure is a distinct reality for this group of single parents, the support that they receive from friends and co-workers enables them to cope with the demands and pressures of being a single parent.

Though modest, there is a positive relationship between community and emotional well-being in this study that supports previous studies. Voydanoff and Donnelly (1998) also found a modest relationship between community and parental well-being, concluding that informal supports can benefit parental well-being even if they cannot overcome all of the disadvantages parents may be facing. The research here shows that neighborhood connections and feelings of trust and safety are two areas that account for the largest part of the community score. Thus, it is neighborhood connections and feelings of trust and safety that influence the emotional well-being of the single parents in this study and ultimately their quality of parenting. The relationship between community and emotional well-being suggests that when the emotional well-being of the single parent is high, then this enables the mother to build relationships with others, to establish networks or



relationships with individuals and groups. In return, because of these relationships, the emotional well-being of the parent is increased (Webster-Stratton, 1997).

Social support is an important resource to parents and results from this study confirm this. The relationship between social support and emotional well-being in this study is consistent with Crockenberg's (1988) findings that social support is associated with quality of parenting. Social support in this study is an ability to not only recognize the emotional, instrumental and informal assistance that are available, but also, an ability to accept this assistance. Being able to seek support and accept it and having that support in place, leads to better emotional well-being and thus a higher quality of parenting. The single parents in this study are participants in a Head Start program, are working and have relationships with family and friends. It appears that these are potential sources of support. Research shows that the work environment and Head Start programs can be sources of social support. Head Start is a federally funded, comprehensive child development program that mobilizes community resources to benefit low-income preschool children (Michigan Head Start Association, 2000). Increasing the competence of children and families to cope effectively with their environment is accomplished by providing a broad range of services to the family, such as medical, dental, mental health services, nutrition, and parent involvement (Head Start, 2000). Concretely this means that Head Start could account for a significant part of the community and social support influences on the quality of parenting for single parents because of the very nature of support offered by its programs. These findings suggest that Head Start and work make up a significant portion of the social support system for single parents in this study and are



thus important to their emotional well-being.

The interesting statistical interactions between social support and specific questions of the emotional well-being scale suggest the reciprocal relationship of these two variables. The following six questions of the emotional well-being scale had the most significant associations with social support: accepting responsibility for having to raise their children as a single parent, seeking support when needed, happiness, avoiding comparisons, feeling included when with two parent families, and not feeling alone. These six aspects suggest emotional support or connections, caring, and validation by the social network of the single parents in this sample. It is this type of emotional support that enables single parents to cope with their situation as well as provide a quality environment beneficial to their children.

Though this study measured both community and social support, it is often difficult to separate these two variables. The same institutions that comprise community participation, often are the same as the social support system. There is frequently an overlap between community and social support. Head Start, work, family, friends, other organizations, neighborhoods, are all part of the community, but can also be a social support network a parent develops at the same time. Given this overlap, it is surprising that there is no association between community and social support in this study.

It is of interest to look further at the relationships between the quality of parenting and specific aspects of emotional well-being. Satisfaction and feeling included around two parent families was positively associated with the quality of parenting. The data do not reveal if those who were satisfied with their lives or who feel included around two parent



families have a higher quality of parenting, only that satisfaction and feeling included is important to the quality of parenting. It must be noted though that the sample of single parents was evenly divided as to whether or not they were satisfied with their lives. Such findings do engender the question of whether or not satisfaction and feeling included are important variables of emotional well-being to consider in relation to parenting for single parents.



## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

Overall, this study helped to illustrate the interactions that take place between Head Start single parent families and their environment. These findings are consistent with the human ecological perspective that families are not entities in and of themselves, but are part of and interact with an environment. The influence of environmental contexts is most evident in this study considering that economic pressure had no influence on quality of parenting even though it is a very present reality for most of the single parent families. It is not only the dyadic relationship between child and parent that influences parenting and quality of life, but also the family's interactions with the other environments with which they associate that can influence parenting and ultimately quality of life.

The experiences of being Head Start single parents presents a unique outcome different from previous studies of single parents. The positive influence of community and social support on the emotional well-being of the single parent families in this study is due in large part to their participation in Head Start programs. The broad range of services offered by Head Start, as well as their emphasis on parental involvement, are forms of support that other single parent families may not have. The single parent families that participated in this study are receiving support that enables them to cope with the economic pressures of poverty and the demands of being single parents.

The quality of parenting of the Head Start single parents in this study suggests that their relationships with school, work, friends, family, and neighbors are important



components of their environment. These relationships whether in the neighborhood or at work or with family and friends can be important sources of emotional support which is instrumental in helping cope with the demands and pressures single parent families often face. As sources of emotional support, community and social support are integral to the emotional well-being of the single parents in this study, for it is through emotional well-being that these variables have their influence on the quality of parenting.

From a human ecological perspective, a supportive environment and the emotional health of a single parent family in this study were significant factors associated with quality of parenting, and therefore quality of life as well. Human ecologists, Bubolz and Sontag stated that environments have limitations, but possibilities and opportunities too (1993). This study of Head Start single parents demonstrated the interconnectedness of families and communities with limitations such as economic pressure, but also opportunities like work, family, neighbors and friends.

## **Implications**

This study has implications on a number of different levels: family, community, and governmental. Understanding the influences of community, social support, and emotional well-being on parenting for single parents helps to focus on what is necessary to ensure a quality of life for all. A multi-disciplinary approach based on the human ecological perspective of the importance of the relationships between families and their environments is what is needed to support single parent families. At the local level in communities and neighborhoods, the creation and continued support of neighborhood groups and associations enables residents to come together for various activities.



Community gardens are an example of a way community members and neighbors can build relationships with each other, especially those living in apartment buildings.

Most importantly, this study has major implications for Head Start. As a source of social support for single parents in poverty, it becomes imperative that those who are eligible for this program are first of all aware of it and secondly enrolled in it. A program such as Head Start provides needed services to low-income parents in addition to links to other community resources and parenting education. The continued support of Head Start programs is necessary both to ensuring a quality of life for the parents who participate in such a program as well as for the community at large.

Head Start and other pre-school programs, in addition to play groups bring parents together around their children and provide opportunities for single parents to meet and share experiences with other parents. Such opportunities can aid parents in building the relationships that will influence their quality of parenting. Communities and educators need to work together to increase public awareness of the many benefits of programs targeting pre-K children, especially for single parent families.

Establishing local support groups for single parents is needed. Support groups would enable single parents to create the peer networks that can be instrumental in providing the social support they require. Single parent support groups could also be links to other community resources as well as the community in general through the activities sponsored by the group, such as bake sales, talent shows, park clean-ups, and so on. These support groups would enable single parents to cope with the demands and pressures of being a single parent as well as provide the emotional support that aids in building



relationships with others and the community.

Finally, at a governmental level, this study has implications for increasing access to affordable quality child care and increasing the minimum wage. For a large percentage of study participants, economic pressure was a reality even though an overwhelming percentage were employed. Ensuring affordable quality child care, which can comprise large portions of a household budget, is one way to reduce this pressure. Though this study did not ask job type and wage, most low-income women can often be found in minimum wage service jobs. If this is the case, the minimum wage should be increased to a livable wage or at least to a wage that would allow low-income families to provide for their families without economic pressure.

The implications discussed here are just some of the ways in which communities and families, especially single parent families, can create as well as strengthen the already existing relationships which can ensure strong families and strong communities or, in other words, a quality of life for all.

## **Limitations**

The sample population that was used for this study was a very specific group of single parents. All single parents who consented to participate in this study were participants in a Head Start program in the greater Lansing area, a preschool program specifically targeted towards low-income families. Thus the results of this study are limited to low income Head Start single parent populations in urban settings.

The sample size was below 30 respondents. Using the model in this study with a much larger sample population could serve to strengthen the associations between the



contextual variables and their quality of parenting. Though participants were from the same geographic area, they were not from the same city or town. The single parents in this study lived in places that ranged from small villages to cities. Therefore, the results cannot be linked to a specific community context.

The current study did not account for race or level of education. These demographic characteristics were not included because one of the variables the study was investigating was economic pressure for single parents in general. Therefore, income was included. Race and level of education were not being investigated in relation to quality of parenting for single parents. Obtaining race and education level information would introduce other variables that would help to fine tune the understanding of the environmental influences on parenting for single parents in future research.

In this study, one measurement tool was used for emotional well-being and one for quality of parenting. Similar studies have used several measurement tools for each of these variables, such as the depressed subscale from the SCL-90-R for emotional well-being or the harsh discipline scale for quality of parenting. Using more than one measure would provide the researcher a more complete view of the variable in question. Though other aspects of emotional well-being and quality of parenting are left unmeasured, given the size of the sample population and the scope of this study, only one measure was used and questions were extrapolated from another measure for the emotional well-being scale.

### **Directions for future research**

This study was intended to research single parent families regardless of their income level. In the current study income was controlled because all participants were



Head Start parents and thus met income level guidelines. It would be of interest to repeat this study with single parent families of various income levels.

There is a strong indication that participating Head Start single parent families may experience their economic circumstances differently than other single parent families with similar economic circumstances. A comparative study of Head Start single parent families and non-Head Start families would determine whether or not the resources and support received from Head Start are instrumental in offsetting economic pressure and its influences on quality of parenting. If it is found that Head Start parents are better able to cope with economic pressure in comparison with non-Head Start parents, this study should then address the question of how Head Start enables its participants to cope with economic pressure.

Communities and parents will benefit from future research that examines more closely the different levels of community interaction and how this influences one's quality of parenting, especially for single parents. A study that looks at the community ties a parent has and how much they are involved in their community and what effects this has on children would enable communities and its members to see what type of relationships are necessary to ensure supportive parenting and a quality of life for all.



# **APPENDICES**



# **Appendix A**

## **Questionnaire**



## **Consent Form**

**You are being invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Rebecca Meszaros, a graduate student in the Department of Family and Child Ecology at Michigan State University. This study will be looking at the influences of social support, community, life stress, and you emotional health as single parents in rearing your child. This is based on previous research by Ronald Simons, a sociologist at Iowa State University. It is hoped that this study will help the community to understand what support single parents need to be successful as parents.**

**In order to gather the data necessary to conduct this study, a questionnaire has been compiled. All data collected will be kept strictly confidential and no names will be associated with the information. Your participation is voluntary, you may refuse to answer an questions, and you can withdraw your participation at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. The questionnaire will take about an half hour to complete.**

**Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about this research project, Rebecca Meszaros, 517-627-6308. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant, feel free to contact David Wright, Ph.D Chair, University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, phone (517)355-2180.**

**Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to participate.**

---

**Signature**

---

**Date**



### **Directions for completing questionnaire**

Please answer all questions to the best of your ability. The answers are either true/false or multiple choice. You can circle the correct response. Your participation is voluntary, you may refuse to answer any questions, and you can withdraw your participation at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits. The whole survey should take no longer than an half hour.

The first section asks some basic questions you and your family.

The next five sections is a questionnaire that will be used to measure the influences of your connections to the community, social support level, emotional well-being, and economic pressure as a single parent in raising your child(ren).

Thank you for your cooperation.



## Information Section

**Age**    ☐ 19 - 29                      ☐ 30 - 39                      ☐ 40 - 49                      ☐ 50 - 59                      ☐ 60 and above

**Marital Status**

☐ single, never married

☐ single, divorced/separated

☐ single, widowed

How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

**What are the ages of your children?**

**What is your yearly income?**  
☐\$0 - \$15,999 ☐\$16,000 - \$22,500 ☐\$22,501 - \$28,000 ☐\$28,001 - \$32,000  
☐more than \$32,000

**What city do you live in?** \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you lived there?    ☐ Less than a year    ☐ 1 - 5 years    ☐ 6-10 years  
    ☐ 11-15 years    ☐ All my life

**Do you work outside of the home?**    ☐Yes   ☐No

If yes, do you work full or part time? ☐ full-time ☐ part-time



**Please circle the appropriate response.**

**1 No, not at all**  
**2 No, not much**  
**3 Yes, frequently**  
**4 Yes, definitely**

- 47



12. If you have a dispute with your neighbors (e.g. over fences or dogs) are you willing to find someone to help you work out the problem? 1 2 3 4

13. At work, do you take the initiative to do what needs to be done even if no one asks you to?  
1 2 3 4

14. In the past week at work, have you helped a coworker even though it was not in your job description? 1 2 3 4

15. Do you feel safe walking down your street after dark? 1 2 3 4

16. Do you agree that most people can be trusted? 1 2 3 4

17. If someone's car breaks down outside your house, do you invite them into your home to use the phone? 1 2 3 4

18. Does your area have a reputation for being a safe place? 1 2 3 4

19. Does your local community feel like home? 1 2 3 4

20. Can you get help from friends when you need it? 1 2 3 4

21. If you were caring for a child and needed to go out for a while, would you ask a neighbor for help? 1 2 3 4

22. Have you visited a neighbor in the past week? 1 2 3 4

23. When you go shopping in you local area are you likely to run into friends and acquaintances?  
1 2 3 4

24. In the past 6 months, have you done a favor for a sick neighbor?  
1 2 3 4

25. In the past week, how many phone conversations have you had with friends?  
☐ 0-3 ☐ 4-7 ☐ 7-10 ☐ more than 10

26. How many people did you talk to yesterday?(please write the number down on the line provided)\_\_\_\_\_



### **Life Stress - Economic Pressure**

Please circle the appropriate response.

1. Do you have difficulty paying bills each month?

**1 = no difficulty at all**

**2 = a little difficulty**

**3 = some difficulty**

**4 = difficulty**

**5 = a great deal of difficulty**

2. Do you have money left over at the end of the month?

**1 = more than enough money left over**

**2 = a little money left over**

**3 = just enough with no money left over**

**4 = not enough to make ends meet**

3. Do you have the money you need to meet your family's basic needs:

**Response Format:**

**1 = More than enough**

**2 = Just enough**

**3 = Barely enough  
enough**

**4 = Not**

Home (rent or mortgage)	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Clothing	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Household Items	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Transportation (car, bus)	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Food	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Medical Care	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Recreational Activities	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Children's Supplies	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Utilities	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>



## **Supportive Parenting Scale**

### **Response Format:**

**1 = never**

**2 = almost never**

**3 = about half of the time**

**4 = almost always**

**5 = always**

**Please circle the appropriate response.**

1. How often do you talk with your child about what is going on in his/her life?

**1      2      3      4      5**

2. How often does your child talk to you about things that bother him/her?

**1      2      3      4      5**

3. How often do you ask your child what he/she thinks before making decisions that affect him/her?

**1      2      3      4      5**

4. When your child does something you like or approve of, how often do you let him/her know you are pleased about it?

**1      2      3      4      5**

5. When you and your child have a problem, how often can the two of you figure out how to deal with it?

**1      2      3      4      5**

6. I really trust my child.

**1      2      3      4      5**

7. How often do you ask your child what he/she thinks before deciding on family matters that involve him/her?

**1      2      3      4      5**

8. How often do you give reasons to your child for your decisions?

**1      2      3      4      5**

9. I experience strong feelings of love for him/her.

**1      2      3      4      5**

10. I want to spend time with my child(ren).    **1      2      3      4      5**



**The General Population Form of the ISEL (Interpersonal Support Evaluation List)**  
Instructions:

This scale is made up of a list of statements each of which may or may not be true about you. For each statement we would like you to circle probably TRUE (T) if the statement is true about you or probably FALSE (F) if the statement is not true about you.

You may find that many of the statements are neither clearly true nor clearly false. In these cases, try to decide quickly whether probably TRUE (T) or probably FALSE (F) is most descriptive of you. Although some questions will be difficult to answer, it is important that you pick one alternative or the other. Remember to circle only one of the alternatives for each statement.

Please read each item quickly but carefully before responding. Remember that this is not a test and there are not right or wrong answers.

**Appraisal**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| T | F | 1. There is at least one person I know whose advice I really trust.                                       |
| T | F | 2. There is really no one I can trust to give me good financial advice.                                   |
| T | F | 3. There is really no one who can give me objective feedback about how I'm handling my problems.          |
| T | F | 4. When I need suggestions for how to deal with a personal problem I know there is someone I can turn to. |
| T | F | 5. There is someone who I feel comfortable going to for advice about sexual problems.                     |
| T | F | 6. There is someone I can turn to for advice about handling hassles over household responsibilities.      |
| T | F | 7. I feel that there is no one with whom I can share my most private worries and fears.                   |
| T | F | 8. If a family crisis arose few of my friends would be able to give me good advice about handling it.     |
| T | F | 9. There are very few people I trust to help solve my problems.   |
| T | F | 10. There is someone I could turn to for advice about changing my job or finding a new one.               |

**Belonging**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| T | F | 1. If I decide on a Friday afternoon that I would like to go to a movie that evening, I could find someone to go with me. |
| T | F | 2. No one I know would throw a birthday party for me.   |
| T | F | 3. There are several different people with whom I enjoy spending time.  |
| T | F | 4. I don't often get invited to do things with others.  |
| T | F | 5. If I wanted to have lunch with someone, I could easily find someone to join me.  |
| T | F | 6. Most people I know don't enjoy the same things that I do.  |
| T | F | 7. When I feel lonely, there are several people I could call and talk to.   |
| T | F | 8. I regularly meet or talk with members of my family or friends.   |



- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| T | F | 9. I feel that I'm on the fringe in my circle of friends.   |
| T | F | 10. If I wanted to go out of town for the day I would have a hard time finding someone to go with me. |

**Tangible**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| T | F | 1. If for some reason I were put in jail, there is someone I could call who would bail me out.                                    |
| T | F | 2. If I had to go out of town for a few weeks, someone I know would look after my home (the plants, pets, yard, etc.)             |
| T | F | 3. If I were sick and needed someone to drive me to the doctor, I would have trouble finding someone.                             |
| T | F | 4. There is no one I could call on if I needed to borrow a car for a few hours.   |
| T | F | 5. If I needed a quick emergency loan of \$100, there is someone I could get it from  |
| T | F | 6. If I needed some help in moving to a new home, I would have a hard time finding someone to help me.                            |
| T | F | 7. If I were sick, there would be almost no one I could find to help me with my daily chores.                                     |
| T | F | 8. If I got stranded 10 miles out of town, there is someone I could call to come get me.  |
| T | F | 9. If I had to mail an important letter at the post office by 5:00 and couldn't make it, there is someone who could do it for me. |
| T | F | 10. If I needed a ride to the airport very early in the morning, I would have a hard time finding anyone to take me.              |



### **Emotional Well-Being**

Please circle the appropriate response. T = True, F = False

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| T | F | 1. I wish other people understood my situation.                           |
| T | F | 2. I am happy.  |
| T | F | 3. I am satisfied with my life.   |
| T | F | 4. I am the best parent I can be.   |
| T | F | 5. I do not compare myself to other parents.                              |
| T | F | 6. I do not blame myself for having to raise my children alone.           |
| T | F | 7. I seek support when I need it.   |
| T | F | 8. I wish I had more time to spend with my children.                      |
| T | F | 9. I wish I had more time for myself.                                     |
| T | F | 10. I always feel like I am included when I am with two-parent families.. |
| T | F | 11. I do not often feel alone.  |



# **Appendix B**

## **UCRHS Letter**



**MICHIGAN STATE**  
**UNIVERSITY**

November 28, 2000

TO: Lillian PHENICE  
Dept. of Family & Child Ecology  
3E Human Ecology Bldg

RE: **IRB# 00-720 CATEGORY:1-C**

**APPROVAL DATE: November 28, 2000**

**TITLE: STRONG FAMILIES AND STRONG COMMUNITIES: THE RELATIONSHIP  
AMONG COMMUNITY, SOCIAL SUPPORT, SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES  
AND THEIR QUALITY OF PARENTING**

The University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects' (UCRIHS) review of this project is complete and I am pleased to advise that the rights and welfare of the human subjects appear to be adequately protected and methods to obtain informed consent are appropriate. Therefore, the **UCRIHS approved this project.**

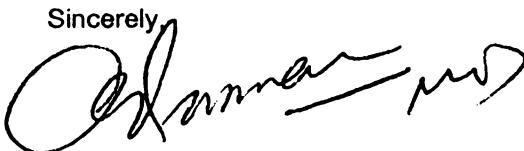
**RENEWALS:** UCRIHS approval is valid for one calendar year, beginning with the approval date shown above. Projects continuing beyond one year must be renewed with the green renewal form. A maximum of four such expedited renewals possible. Investigators wishing to continue a project beyond that time need to submit it again for a complete review.

**REVISIONS:** UCRIHS must review any changes in procedures involving human subjects, prior to initiation of the change. If this is done at the time of renewal, please use the green renewal form. To revise an approved protocol at any other time during the year, send your written request to the UCRIHS Chair, requesting revised approval and referencing the project's IRB# and title. Include in your request a description of the change and any revised instruments, consent forms or advertisements that are applicable.

**PROBLEMS/CHANGES:** Should either of the following arise during the course of the work, notify UCRIHS promptly: 1) problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc.) involving human subjects or 2) changes in the research environment or new information indicating greater risk to the human subjects than existed when the protocol was previously reviewed and approved.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 517 355-2180 or via email: [UCRIHS@msu.edu](mailto:UCRIHS@msu.edu). Please note that all UCRIHS forms are located on the web: <http://www.msu.edu/user/ucrihs>

Sincerely,



Ashir Kumar, MD  
Interim Chair, UCRIHS



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55

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