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SINGLE MOTHERS:
A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

By

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ABSTRACT

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Deborah I. Bybee

The single-mother family is an increasingly common living unit for both adults and children in our society. Although many writers have speculated about the experiences, needs and problems of these families, very little research information about them is available. In this study, a heterogeneous group of 86 single mothers were interviewed to assess their (1) needs and problems, (2) social support mechanisms, (3) goals for the future, (4) service utilization patterns, and (5) reactions to proposed programs. Tabulations of their responses in these areas are presented and discussed. Additionally, several situational and social support variables thought to mediate the amount of stress involved in single motherhood were used to predict two indices of successful functioning: depression and optimism. Results of these multiple regression analyses are presented. Finally, social policy and programming implications of the findings are discussed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In American society, the normal, accepted mechanism for rearing and socializing children has long been the nuclear, two-parent family. Fathers have been expected to support the family by working and to represent the family in dealings with the outside world. Mothers have been in charge of child care and housekeeping and have been expected to assume these functions full-time, at least until their children have reached school age. The family unit has been expected to be largely self-sufficient in meeting the basic material and emotional needs of its members.

As Keniston and the Carnegie Council on Children (1977) have noted, however, this view of the family has changed dramatically in recent years. Changes in economic conditions, demographic patterns, and societal values and expectations have altered the structure of the family to such an extent that fewer than 30% of American families with children fit the described ideal (Keniston, 1977).

Clearly, the two-parent home with an employed father and a stay-at-home mother is no longer the typical American family. Yet family theory and research have continued to focus on this idealized structure, referring to it as "modal" despite the statistics. Society at large has also continued to ignore these changes in family life: the social institutions providing employment, education, child care, financial assistance, and other family services have continued to

operate as though all families matched the ideal. Families with different structures have been seen as inferior deviants who impose inconvenient demands. Yet, as Keniston has observed, societal changes have made all families more reliant upon outside institutions for fulfilling the basic needs of family members.

The family headed by only one parent has become the most frequently occurring alternative to the two-parent ideal. Almost 20% of American families with children were of this form in 1979 (U.S. Bureau of the Census). It has generally been assumed that single-parent families, especially those headed by women, are inadequate for meeting the needs of both children and adults. Yet remarkably little is known about these families. Most research has focused on the presumably negative effects of father-absence on children (Herzog and Sudia, 1971) or on the psychological traits of young unwed mothers (Curtis, 1974; Pierce, 1970; Signell, 1969). Some of the literature on post-divorce adjustment (Bohannon, 1970; Goode, 1956) has offered some insight into the problems and difficulties faced by divorced women, but very little of such research has dealt directly with single motherhood. Nearly all of the literature on single-mother families has been theoretical or speculative and has had little grounding in data. As Burgess (1970) has observed, the dearth of research information about these families has allowed assumptions about their inadequacies to grow, untested:

Because of the vicious practice of making over-generalizations,... the single parent family has been categorized and labeled as "disorganized," "unstable," "undesirable," or "broken," regardless of the condition of its existence. (p. 140)

With only one adult to provide material and emotional support, the single-parent family has been assumed to need more outside support than the traditional two-parent family. Practical services for these

families, however, have been largely limited to minimal financial assistance from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) or Social Security and limited types of social opportunities from organizations like Parents Without Partners. Other social work or counseling services have been offered in some communities, but they have often been based on untested assumptions about the inadequacies of the single-parent family and have reflected society's negative attitudes toward deviant family structures, as the following writers have observed:

We have permitted the social provisions for unmarried parents to carry out society's wish to punish....We consider our programs to be practical services...however, they are organized, located, and operated in a way that reinforces the notion that their task is twofold. One is to help; the other to maintain and at times increase feelings of guilt. (Lewis, 1968, p. 588)

If there is any underlying rationale for the way systems of such services [for the single-parent family] are organized--which is debatable--it is that these services are predicated not upon situational needs of clienteles, but rather upon assumptions of their underlying pathology. (Billingsley and Giovannoni, 1971, p. 366)

The limitations of the services which society has offered to single-parent families have been partly a function of the lack of information about this type of family. Assumptions about pathology and inferiority have allowed services to remain fragmented, value-laden, and inadequate. Research into the real perceptions, experiences, and needs of single-parent families themselves is needed if present services are to become more relevant to the problems of these families and if new programs are to address their real concerns.

Speculation and Research about Single-Mother Families

Incidence of Single-Mother Families

One of the most fundamental changes in the picture of American family life in this century has been the dramatic increase in the number of single-parent families. In the period from 1940 to 1975, the number of single-parent families doubled from 3.5 to 7.2 million (McEaddy, 1976). In 1979, the U.S. Bureau of the Census reported that 19% of all families with children--one in five--were headed by a single parent. Despite a recent steady increase in the number of fathers assuming custody of their children after divorce or separation, over 90% of these families were female-headed.

The majority of single-parent families have resulted from the divorce or separation of the parents. In 1974, 47% of all single mothers were divorced or separated, while 37% were widowed and 13% had never married (Ross and Sawhill, 1975).

The number of children involved in single-mother families has also increased. Between 1960 and 1970, the number of children living with one parent increased 12 times as fast as the number of children in two-parent families (Ross and Sawhill, 1975). In 1970, one child in ten lived in a female-headed home. By 1975, one in seven children, a total of nine million, were in single-mother families. One fourth of these children were under the age of six (McEaddy, 1976).

Of course, single-parent families are not permanent units for many of the people involved. Glick and Norton (1973) have estimated that one third of all divorced people remarry within two years of the final decree, and Kessler (1975) has estimated that an additional third remarry within five years. Unmarried and widowed parents also marry, although at slower rates (Carter and Glick, 1976).

As Ross and Sawhill (1975) have noted, cross-sectional census reports are inadequate in assessing the total number of families which have experienced female-headship. They have estimated that the flow into single mother status is actually four to five times greater than the net increases for any given year. Viewed in dynamic rather than static terms, the number of people who have been involved in single-parent families is much larger. Using the dynamic perspective, Bane (1976) has predicted that 40% of all children born in the seventies will spend part of their lives in one-parent families, most often with their mothers.

Although the majority of single mothers are white, a higher percentage of black families are female-headed. In 1979, 45% of all black families with children were female-headed, up from 21% in 1960. In comparison, 13% of all white families were female-headed in 1979, up from 6% in 1960 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1979). In 1974, 38% of all black children lived in single-mother families, while only 10% of white children were in single-mother homes (Carter and Glick, 1976).

The higher proportion of single-mother families among nonwhite populations has been attributed to several factors, as discussed by Ross and Sawhill (1975). Nonwhite families have shown a slightly higher divorce rate and a separation rate which is 1.5 times higher than the white rate. (This has generally been traced to the cost of obtaining a legal divorce; the racial differences have disappeared when socioeconomic status has been controlled.) Nonwhite women have also been twice as likely to experience the death of a spouse and 13 times as likely to have and keep a child while single. Remarriage rates have also been lower among nonwhite women.

The dramatic increase in single-parent families among both white and nonwhite populations has been linked to a number of factors related

to the widely-assumed breakdown of the American family. The most frequently cited has been the rising divorce rate. The U.S. Bureau of the Census (1979) listed the 1979 divorce rate at 5.1 per 1,000 persons (up from 2 per 1,000 in 1940) and estimated that the proportion of marriages ending in divorce was close to 40%. The percentage of women divorced by their early thirties more than doubled from 6.3% in 1940 to 15.8% in 1970 (Ross and Sawhill, 1975). Glick and Norton (1973) have predicted that 25% to 30% of women currently in their late twenties to early thirties will end their first marriages in divorce.

The proportion of divorces involving children has also increased. Carter and Glick (1976) have reported that the percentage of divorces involving children under 18 rose from 45.5% in 1953 to 62.1% in 1966. The average number of children per divorce rose from .85 in 1953 to 1.34 in 1966 (Bernard, 1970). The annual number of children involved in divorce tripled in the twenty-year period from 1956 to 1976, from 361,000 to 1,117,000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1979).

The number of unmarried women who have and raise children outside of marriage has risen, too. Between 1960 and 1975, the number of unmarried mothers doubled (McEaddy, 1976). Glick (1976) has estimated that one million single women set up households with their babies each year.

While rising divorce and illegitimacy rates have been credited with the bulk of the increase in single-parent households, other population changes may be more basic to understanding the statistics. Two base rate projection studies have provided analyses of the demographic components which account for the increase in female-headed households between 1960 and 1970. Cutright (1974) found that changes in the probability that a single mother would set up a separate household rather than move in with relatives accounted for the largest portion of

the increase (36%). The increased population of women at risk accounted for an additional 17%, while the increases in illegitimacy and marital instability accounted for only 13% and 3%, respectively.

In a similar study, Ross and Sawhill (1975) projected on different base rates for white and nonwhite populations. Factors accounting for the increase among white families included the increased population of women at risk (25%), increased marital disruption (23%), general increase in the birthrate (20%), increased probability of setting up separate households (10%), and increased illegitimacy rate (9%). The increase among nonwhite families was explained by increase in the birthrate (24%), increased illegitimacy (21%), increased population at risk (16%), increased marital disruption (15%), and higher probability of setting up separate households (8%).

Base rate projection studies of this type are open to a variety of methodological criticisms. First, they are dependent for their validity on the accuracy of the rates included in the projection equations. While census estimates are assumed to have a high degree of validity, they are less accurate for nonwhite, low income, and highly transient groups. Single mother households often fall into these classifications. Additionally, two of the variables included in the equations--illegitimacy rates and separation/divorce rates--are not based upon census data but are retrieved from court and health department records. Illegitimacy and separation rates, in particular, are difficult to determine, given the negative social meaning attached to these phenomena.

The projection equations, themselves, are open to several interpretations. Since the variables included are correlated, the percentage of the increase accounted for by each will depend on the order in which they were entered into the equation. It should also be

noted that neither study was able to account for 100% of the increase in female-headed households. Cutright's equation accounted for only 69% of the increase, while Ross and Sawhill improved the prediction to 83% - 87% by including race as a moderator variable.

While both studies have methodological limitations which bring into question the actual percentages attributed to various components of the increase, they do seem useful in drawing attention to underlying demographic trends which have contributed to the increase in the number of single-mother families. This demographic perspective departs substantially from the common view of the single parent as a symptom of a dying family institution.

Regardless of the reasons, single-parent families have become an increasingly common type of living unit for adults and children in this society. The single-parent family is obviously different in structure and composition from the modal two-parent family. The single-mother family is doubly deviant in being headed by a female. These structural differences have generally been thought to produce functional differences in the development of family members and in the needs and problems experienced by the family unit. The literature contains much speculation and some research about the experiences of the female-headed family, the nature of the effects of these experiences on the development of "fatherless" children, and the adjustment of the single mother herself. This literature will be explored in the following sections: (1) The Needs and Problems of Single-Mother Families, (2) The Effects on Children: Father-Absence Studies, (3) The Needs and Problems of Single Mothers, and (4) Variables Mediating the Adjustment of Single Mothers.

Needs and Problems of Single-Mother Families

Although there has been little formal research into the experiences of single-mother families, it has been widely assumed that they have a variety of needs and problems which differ both qualitatively and quantitatively from those of the two-parent family. With only one parent present, it has been presumed that they have fewer internal resources to deal with daily needs, especially those which are generally the responsibility of the male adult in the two-parent family.

Poverty. Poverty, one of the most basic problems of many single-mother families, has been widely documented. In 1974, the median income for female-headed families was \$6,400, less than half the median income for male-headed families (Mc Eaddy, 1976). Forty-five percent of the families under the official poverty level in 1973 were female-headed, although they constituted only 12% of the number of families (Bernstein and Meezan, 1975). In 1975, one in three single-mother families had incomes below the poverty line; one in eight male-headed families had incomes that low (McEaddy, 1976). Using one-half the median income of all U.S. families (\$7,373 in 1974), a more realistic index of poverty, over 60% of single-mother families could be labeled "poor" in 1974 (Characteristics of the Population, 1977).

The high incidence of poverty among single-mother families has been attributed to a number of factors. One is the loss of income from a male breadwinner following divorce or separation. Although it has generally been assumed that an estranged father is required to contribute to the support of his children, research has shown that this is often not the case. Brandwein, Brown, and Fox (1974) reported that, among a nationwide sample of judges, the majority awarded less than 35% of a father's earnings to his wife and children in the form of child support

payments. Moreover, the authors cited a 1972 report of the Citizen's Advisory Council on the Status of Women as finding that only 38% of all fathers ordered to pay support were in full compliance one year after the court order; 42% were making no payments at all. After four years the number making no contribution to their children's support rose to 67%. A more recent study by Jones, Gordon, and Sawhill (1976) found that only 3% of single mothers with children under 18 were receiving enough alimony and child support to be at or above the official poverty line. Sixty-one percent were receiving no payments at all.

Although single mothers have the legal right to court assistance in obtaining court-ordered child support payments, this aid has often been ineffective. The Uniform Desertion and Non-support Act, in use in most states, has allowed criminal complaint against a non-supporting parent only if the family is "in destitute or necessitous circumstances." Non-supporting fathers have rarely been prosecuted under these conditions (Brandwein, et al, 1974).

Thus, while some single-mother families have lived in continuing poverty, many others have suffered a downward shift in socioeconomic status as a consequence of becoming female-headed. Smith (1978) documented this shift in a panel study comparing families in transition to female-headship with ongoing one-parent and two-parent families. Kriesberg (1970) and Winston and Forsher (1971) provided corroboration for this point by examining the income levels of the estranged fathers of children receiving benefits from AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children). In both studies, it was found that the distribution of fathers' income and occupation levels were parallel to those of the general population; the poverty of the single-mother families was apparently not related to their income levels during marriage.

It has sometimes been assumed that relatives provide significant financial support to single-mother families. Such help has apparently been frequent, although it has not been universal and may not have been particularly substantial. Bernard (1964) found that less than one third of his low-income sample of divorced mothers received any financial help from their families. Sauber and Corriqan (1970) reported that the extent of support from relatives decreased with time: 40% of their sample of unmarried mothers listed their families as a source of financial support in the first few months after the birth of their children; after 18 months, this proportion had decreased to 20%, and after six years it had dropped to 2%.

For most single-mother families, the primary source of financial support is the mother's income. McEaddy (1976) reported that, in 1975, 54% of all children in single-mother families had mothers who were working full time. Two-thirds of the single mothers with only one child were employed, while one-third of those with five or more children worked. An additional group of single mothers worked part-time or intermittently. In 1969, 70% of all female family heads were working, although only 30% held full-time jobs for the entire year (Stein, 1970).

Having a mother who works reduces the poverty of the single-mother family somewhat, although not as much as might be expected. In 1973, when the median income of all single-mother families was \$4,729, the median income of families in which the female head was employed was \$6,193 (Carter and Glick, 1976). In that same year, however, the median income for two-parent families was \$13,909, over twice that for the employed female-headed family.

The disparity in median incomes might be attributable to the possibility of two wage-earners in the two-parent family and the potential

for only one breadwinner in the single-parent family. Indeed, in 1974, both parents were employed in nearly 50% of two-parent families (Keniston, 1977). However, the second income in many two-parent families was apparently not very substantial. The median family income of two-earner families was \$16,928 in 1974; the median for one-worker, two-parent families was \$12,028, still well over the median for single-mother families (Keniston, 1977).

Other factors have also contributed to this difference between one- and two-parent family incomes. One has been the fact that female workers earn less, overall, than male workers. In 1974, the average full-time female worker received only 57% of the earnings of the average male worker (Money Income, 1977). Moreover, women have continued to earn substantially less than men in all occupational groups and at all educational levels (Keniston, 1977). Additionally, unemployment rates have been higher for women than for men (Keniston, 1977).

Single mothers have been handicapped in the job market by other factors in addition to their being women. Stein (1970) reported that, in 1969, 70% of all poor female family heads had not completed high school; 33% had not finished grade school. Moreover, many lacked job skills and experience, having spent their adult lives maintaining households and raising children. As noted earlier, nearly 20% of single mothers are nonwhite and have faced racial as well as sexual discrimination in finding well-paying employment. In addition, single mothers may face another type of job discrimination. It has been speculated (Oldham, 1971) that employers have often been reluctant to hire single mothers, especially those with young children, for fear that their family responsibilities will interfere with their work.

Child Care. This last type of job discrimination may actually have been based in practical reality. The lack of child care facilities for working parents in this country has been well documented (Keniston, 1977). As Brandwein, Brown, and Fox (1974) have noted, the employment world has continued to operate on the assumption of a working husband with a wife at home to care for the children. This assumption, however, has become increasingly untenable: in 1975, less than one-third of American families fit this ideal (Keniston, 1977).

The single mother who works has been particularly disadvantaged by inadequate child-care facilities. With only one parent, the single-mother family has usually been totally dependent upon her income for financial support. Child care during working hours has thus been a necessity for the family's economic survival. While public schools have constituted a substantial source of day care for school-age children, other facilities have been necessary for younger children. In 1975, 25% of single mothers had children under age six (McEaddy, 1976). Stein (1970) found that, in 1969, 47% of single mothers with pre-school children were working and, presumably, requiring child care.

In addition to routine care for young children during working hours, single mothers have a particular need for contingency care and for care for school-age children during non-school hours. The single mother who is her family's sole source of support can rarely afford to take time off from work when her child is sick or when other crises occur. Nor can she be late to work in order to see her children off to school or leave work early to care for them after school. As Brandwein, Brown, and Fox (1974) have mentioned, schools which have not made provisions for supervision during lunch hours have put an additional child care

burden on the single-mother family. These child care problems are common to all families with working mothers but are particularly serious for the single-mother family, which has fewer adult members to share in child-care tasks and to provide emergency care during crises (Women in Transition, 1975).

The high cost of child care has also been well-documented (Keniston, 1977). Day-care and babysitting expenses further reduce the disposable income available to single-mother families and add to their function poverty. Thus, not only have single-mother families had lower incomes than two-parent families, but they may also have had higher expenses. Indeed, Berkman (1969) found that 41% of the single mothers in his sample reported that their incomes were inadequate, while only 7% of the married mothers saw their incomes as inadequate. This difference was thought to be greater than could be accounted for by objective differences in income levels.

In addition to the issues of cost and availability, the quality of child care facilities has been reported to be a major concern among single mothers. Sauber and Corrigan (1970), in their longitudinal study of unmarried mothers in New York City, found that 26% of the mothers who had quit their jobs during the first six years following birth listed inadequate child care as a major reason; 59% of the women who had not worked since becoming mothers listed concern with the quality of child care as the reason for their unemployment. Similarly, Hedges and Barnett (1972) found that 40% of the non-working AFDC mothers in their sample felt that their children would be inadequately cared for if they went to work.

Financial Assistance. For single mothers who do not work (whether out of concern for their children's welfare, inability to find a job, or whatever reason), the major source of income has been transfer payments from a governmental program, most often Social Security for widows and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) for mothers who are divorced, separated, or never-married. The problems associated with the AFDC program have been widely acknowledged (for example, Keniston, 1977). Benefits have varied widely from state to state, as have eligibility guidelines and application procedures. In general, the level of support has been very low, and the costs, in terms of family dignity and stigma, have been high. Bernard (1964) has made an interesting observation that the difference in level of benefits between the Social Security program and AFDC may reflect society's basic differential valuation of widowhood (a "legitimate" loss of a husband) as opposed to divorce or unwed motherhood ("illegitimate" positions attributed to personal failure or immorality).

Housing. For the majority of single-mother families, both those whose mothers work and those dependent on transfer income, poverty has been a major problem. Other difficulties associated with poverty may have been more prevalent among female-headed families. Housing, for example, has been mentioned by several writers as a particular problem for single-mother families. Berkman (1969) found that 27% of the single-mother families in his random sample of households were living in poverty areas, compared with 9% of the two-parent families. Carter and Glick (1970) reported that lowered income following divorce or separation usually forces single-mother families to move to poorer neighborhoods. Smith (1978) also found this pattern in his panel study comparing families in transition to female headship with ongoing one- and two-

parent families, adding that the female-headed families often moved out of owner-occupied houses and into rented units following separation.

These moves to poorer housing may have been caused by other factors in addition to lowered income. Several authors have suggested that single mothers, especially those receiving AFDC payments, may be the victims of discrimination by landlords and financial institutions (Brandwein, Brown, and Fox, 1974; *Women in Transition*, 1975). Single mothers have often had no credit ratings in their own names, and the fact of their divorce, separation, or unmarried motherhood may have been considered evidence of their instability and poor credit risk by banks and other lending agencies (*Women in Transition*, 1975). Thus, single mothers may have been forced to pay more for poorer housing than two-parent families of comparable income levels (Brandwein, et al, 1974). Brandwein, Fox, and Brown have also made the observation that housing and land-use patterns in most communities limit development to units designed for nuclear families, precluding extended-family housing or multi-family units which might be viable alternatives for single-parent families.

Single-mother families have also been found to move more frequently than two-parent families (Carter and Glick, 1970; Pearlin and Johnson, 1977; Sauber and Corrigan, 1970; Smith, 1978). Although some of this greater mobility may have been related to the lower incomes of female-headed families, Carter and Glick have suggested that it may also relate to strained relations between single-mother families and their neighbors. There may be some evidence for this assertion: Proctor (1968) found that many of the two-parent families in the Harvard Study of Successful Families sample reported carefully avoiding

contact with "broken" families, and Marsden (1969) found that two-parent families often limited their children's contact with children from single-mother homes and generally showed less respect for the property of single-mother families.

A Resource-Availability Perspective of the One-Parent Family.

Glasser and Navarre (1965) have developed an interesting "structural analysis" of the one-parent family which offers an explanation for some of the evidence of societal stigma and discrimination against single-mother families. Their analysis rests on a resource perspective of the family unit and makes the initial assumption that men in our society have more resources at their disposal than do women. Since families derive their social status from the amount of resources controlled by the family's head, female-headed families are inherently lower in social status than families headed by men. Moreover, female family heads must assume some tasks traditionally assumed by men (breadwinner, family advocate, etc.) and must often delegate some "female" tasks (child care, housekeeping, etc.) to others. This behavior is seen as inappropriate to the female sex-role and further lowers the single mother's status, and that of her family, in the eyes of society. Operating from this position of lower status, the single mother is less effective in obtaining resources for her family (money, services, respect), a handicap which lowers her family's status even further. Although this analysis may be somewhat overstated, it does seem to offer a useful framework for understanding some of the single-mother family's experiences in society.

This structural perspective has interesting implications for examining the internal experiences of the single-mother family as well. Glasser and Navarre have noted that fewer adult resources are available

within the one-parent family, not only because of a shortage of adult members but also because of the amount of adult energy consumed in obtaining resources from the outside world. The single mother must assume all the responsibilities which in the two-parent family are shared by two adults. According to Glasser and Navarre, this shortage of resources necessitates some modification of the family's activities:

A permanent adjustment [to single parenthood] then must involve a reduction in the tasks performed and/or a reduction in the adequacy of performance, or external assistance. (p. 100)

Scattered research findings have provided some evidence that single-mother families may have slightly different priorities for family activities. Nye (1957), for instance, found that single mother's homes were less well-kept than homes of married mothers, apparently reflecting that housekeeping was a lower priority for single mothers. Kriesberg (1970), in his study of low-income families in public housing projects, found that single mothers expected their children to attain self-sufficiency in several personal and household tasks at a slightly earlier age than married mothers, presumably to ease the household and child-care burdens of the mother. Smith (1978) and Pearlin and Johnson (1977) also reported that one-parent families were consistently less involved in community activities than two-parent families, perhaps reflecting their lack of time for non-essential activities.

Glasser and Navarre concluded their analysis of one-parent family structures by warning of the dangers they saw as inherent in family units headed by only one adult. First, they noted that the one-parent family has no reserves upon which to call in times of crisis such as the parent's illness or incapacitation; such emergencies could result in the temporary or permanent dissolution of the family

unit. Second, they characterized the one-parent family as less stable affectionally than the two-parent family. Members of the one-parent family, having fewer alternate sources of emotional support (fewer potential affectional dyads) may be less likely to display negative emotions out of fear of alienating their source of affection. Thus, a single mother may be reluctant to punish her children for fear that she will lose them as her source of affection. Similarly, children may be fearful of angering their mother for fear that they will lose their only source of love and affection. Related to this concern is the possibility that single mother, having no adult support available in the family, may expect their children to fill emotional needs that they are incapable of meeting. Finally, the authors warned that children in one-parent families may develop a less balanced view of the world than children in two-parent families. The child in the single-mother family, for instance, may receive only a female perception of the world and may expect women to be constant sources of power and affection, since they have not seen men acting in these roles.

Glasser and Navarre's warnings about the emotional dangers to children in single-mother families seem much overstated, ignoring the many opportunities which both mothers and children have for interacting with and observing the world outside the immediate family. Although research into family interactions in one-parent homes has been scant, and there has been no formal testing of Glasser and Navarre's hypotheses, there seems to be little evidence for the kinds of patterns implied by these warnings. One study which addressed child-rearing values and practices (Kriesberg, 1970) found few differences between married and single mothers in low-income housing projects. No differences were found in mothers'

values regarding obedience vs. autonomy in their children, in their use of denying vs. reasoning tactics, in their use of spanking, in the mothers' aspirations for their children, or in their behaviors related to encouraging their children in school. Single mothers were found to be slightly more restrictive of their children's behavior and to spend slightly less time engaged in leisure-time activities with their children outside the home. Kriesberg attributed these differences to the single mother's practical concerns about her children's safety and to her lack of time and money for recreational activities in general.

Summary. Research into the needs and problems of single-mother families has been sparse and extremely scattered. The poverty of many female-headed families has apparently been well documented, although the income levels of these families may have been somewhat underestimated. Income data is most subject to under-reporting among groups who are employed part time or intermittently, since such jobs are often not covered by Social Security or other federal reporting requirements. As Stein (1970) has found, many single mothers have worked under these conditions. Informal sources of help from relatives, ex-husbands, and others may also have been underestimated, since these income transfers are often unofficial and undocumented. Additionally, the income-level requirements for AFDC assistance may have contributed to deliberate under-reporting of employment earnings among mothers receiving governmental assistance. The size of the discrepancy in income between single-mother families and two-parent families, however, has appeared to be consistently much larger than could be explained by these sources of error.

Evidence for other types of problems has been less conclusive. The existence of discrimination in employment, housing, and credit has remained a speculation, extremely difficult to demonstrate. Similarly, evidence that single-mother families have been the object of social stigma has come from widely scattered attitude surveys among biased samples of respondents. Much of this evidence, published in the late sixties to early seventies, may have become outdated in light of the rapid increase in the number of single-mother families and possible attitude changes which have occurred over the last ten years.

The assumption that single-mother families have special needs for external resources in the form of child care, financial aid, house-keeping assistance, and social support has also remained a speculation. These needs have been often mentioned in the literature, and their presumed universality has provided the basis for Glasser and Navarre's (1965) resource availability perspective. Still, research into the real nature and distribution of these needs among single-mother families has been virtually nonexistent.

Most of the research evidence reported in this section has been gleaned from tangential studies undertaken for reasons other than the study of single-mother families. Thus, many of the samples have been biased, the measurement instruments limited, and the designs of the studies impossible to evaluate. The conclusions drawn from this evidence should thus be seen as highly tentative and speculative; they provide questions for further research, not answers.

The Effects on Children: Father-Absence Studies

The most widely investigated aspect of the single-mother family has been the effect of father-absence on the development of children in female-headed households. Results of various studies in this area have been used as evidence for the popular belief that single-mother families are inadequate for their major task--rearing and socializing children. For example, studies showing a relationship between father-absence and delinquency or antisocial behavior (Glueck and Glueck, 1951; Gregory, 1965; Hoffman, 1970; Mischel, 1961; Siegman, 1966) have been used to blame the single-mother family for contributing to juvenile crime. Differences between father-absent and father-present boys in their patterns of aggression (Bach, 1946; Sears, 1951), dependency (McCord, McCord, and Thurber, 1962), and other gender-linked behaviors (Biller, 1968; Biller, 1969; Lynn and Sawrey, 1959; Santrock, 1970) have been cited as evidence for inadequate development of appropriate sex-role identities in boys from single-mother families. The single-mother family has also been blamed for causing "disrupted heterosexual behavior" and "inappropriately assertive behavior with male peers and adults" in its female children (Hetherington and Deur, 1971, p. 238). More general types of psychological damage, such as childhood emotional disturbance (Pedersen, 1966) and adult neuroticism (Madow and Hardy, 1947) have also been attributed to the single-mother family. Additionally, studies showing differences in school performance measures, from drop-out rates (Gregory, 1965) to college entrance exam scores (Sutton-Smith, Rosenberg, and Landy, 1968), have contributed to the belief that the female-headed family is inadequate in fostering educational achievement in its children. A superficial glance at the research literature could lead one to attribute many of our society's ills--even attrition from

the Peace Corps (Suedfeld, 1967)--to the inadequacies of the single-mother family. A more thorough examination of these results, however, has produced different conclusions.

The bulk of the research on father-absence is seriously flawed by methodological difficulties. The most basic problem is inherent in all investigations of differences among naturally-occurring groups. Children have never been placed in female-headed homes on a random basis. Their position in single-mother families has been correlated with a number of other factors which have implications for their development. As noted above, nonwhite children have been more likely to live in single-mother families than have white children. The probability that a family will be female-headed has also been related to the parents' age, socioeconomic status, religion, values, personalities, and numerous other characteristics. A large number of these factors have inevitably been confounded in any study comparing children from one-parent and two-parent homes.

Despite this basic, inescapable limitation, it should be possible to sort out some of the confounding factors by matching comparison groups on variables known to be correlated with the developmental outcome of interest. Unfortunately, few of the studies of father-absence have controlled the effects of extraneous variables known to be confounded with family type. Herzog and Sudia, in their 1971 review of 400 father-absence studies, found only 14 in which the investigators had made a serious attempt to match the comparison groups on any meaningful criteria.

The results of the few available studies which have used matched comparison groups have suggested a much more optimistic view of the single-mother family. With race and socioeconomic class

controlled, for example, apparent differences in children's school performance (Hanusheck, 1972), adult educational level and socioeconomic status (Duncan, Featherman, and Duncan, 1972; Kriesberg, 1970), and adult marital status (Duncan and Duncan, 1969; Kriesberg, 1970) have not been supported. Controlling for race and SES in investigating other differences popularly attributed to the single-mother family could lead to additional modifications of the assumptions of father-absence, as could examination of other correlates which are potentially confounded with family type.

No amount of post-hoc matching of comparison groups can solve a basic logical problem which is closely related to the methodological issue of confounded variables. Although most of the father-absence literature has purported to make statements about causes (father-absence) and effects (developmental differences), the research designs employed have been only associational. Virtually all of the research to date has been cross-sectional: a group of children (or adults) from female-headed families has been compared at one time-point with another group (perhaps matched on some criteria) from two-parent families. Resulting differences have been said to be the "effects" of father-absence. The basic logical component of causality--that an effect be preceded by its cause--has not been present in these designs. It is conceivable that the difference labeled as an effect may have indeed "caused" or preceded the difference seen as the cause: a child's delinquent behavior could have preceded and contributed to his parents' separation. Or both "cause" and "effect" could have been concurrent effects of some other causal agent: both a child's delinquent behavior and his parents' separation could have been consequences of his father's antisocial behavior. These alternative explanations cannot be ruled

out without the use of careful longitudinal research which examines the single-mother family as a process rather than a status. Although such longitudinal investigations of family processes have been advocated by numerous reviewers (Herzog and Sudia, 1971; Ross and Sawhill, 1975; Walters and Stinnett, 1971), none has yet been undertaken.

In addition to flaws in logic and design, father-absence research has been limited by imprecise definitions of the concepts under investigation. A variety of types of families have been labeled "father-absent." Some of the most oft-cited evidence for the negative effects of single-mother families has actually come from studies of temporary father-absence due to military service (Carlsmith, 1964; Lynn and Sawrey, 1959; Pedersen, 1966). While the authors of these studies have described their samples, they have failed to limit their conclusions to similar types of family situations. Additionally, the "reconstituted" family resulting from remarriage of a single parent has been variously defined as father-absent or father-present in different studies. Families with fathers who are temporarily, "legitimately" absent and those which include stepfathers are obviously different in composition from the family in which the mother is the only parent. Failure to distinguish among these different family types has contributed to the confusion in this area of research.

Variations within family types have received attention from some researchers. The effects of family conflict on children in two-parent homes have been examined in a number of studies, some of which have included one-parent homes in comparison groups. Nye (1957) first found that boys in "unhappy intact" homes reported more delinquent behavior, more family adjustment problems, and more psychosomatic complaints than boys in "broken" homes. Similarly, McCord, McCord,

and Thurber (1962) found higher delinquency rates among children from "conflicted intact" than among those in "broken" homes, and Landis (1962) found no significant differences in dating histories or self-evaluations between adolescents in divorced and "unhappy intact" families. Although these studies found children in homes defined as "happy or nonconflicted and intact" to be better off than those in either "unhappy intact" or "broken" families, Russell (1967) failed to find differences in educational achievement among any of the three types, and Burchinal (1964) found no differences in school grade-point average, school participation, number of friends, or personality characteristics.

Similar comparisons have been made between children whose fathers are absent and those whose fathers are present but differ in their degree of involvement with their children. Blanchard and Biller (1969) found no differences in educational achievement between third graders from single-mother homes and those from two-parent homes in which the father interacted infrequently with his children. Children with highly involved fathers, however, showed significantly higher achievement scores. Aldous (1972), on the other hand, found that most fathers engaged in virtually no interactions with their young children and concluded that father-absence had little effect upon the development of children's sex-role perceptions.

Although some research has begun to acknowledge the wide variation in interaction patterns among different two-parent families, little attention has been paid to similar variations among single-mother households. When father-absent children have been compared as a homogeneous group with two-parent children from "happy" vs. "unhappy" or "father involved" vs. "uninvolved" homes, it is not surprising that single-mother children have shown up in the middle of the continuum.

Single-mother families also differ in amount of conflict and degree of parental involvement with their children. Indeed, Kopf (1970) and Westman, Cline, Swift, and Kramer (1971) have concluded that these variables are the most significant predictors of emotional adjustment and educational achievement for children in single-mother families. More meaningful research into the effects of father-absence would result from recognizing the heterogeneity of single-parent as well as two-parent families.

Just as variations within single-mother families have not been addressed in the father-absence literature, neither have a variety of conditions and experiences which often accompany single-motherhood in this society. One of these has been poverty. For a variety of reasons discussed in the previous section, female-headed households have had lower incomes than those headed by men. Moreover, single-mother families have often experienced a radical downward mobility in socioeconomic status following the departure of the male parent. Willie (1967) concluded that a substantial amount of the apparent correlation between father-absence and juvenile delinquency could be accounted for by the move to lower economic status and poorer housing following divorce or separation.

An additional concomitant of single-motherhood may have been social stigma. As Brandwein, Brown, and Fox (1974) have asserted, the single-mother family has been expected to be inadequate in rearing children; its children have been expected to have confused sex-roles, to lack discipline, and to be unhappy and distraught. These expectations have worked to invalidate some of the dependent measures used in father-absence research. As Herzog and Sudia (1968) have noted, delinquency rates, in particular, have been subject to this bias: fatherless children

have been thought to be more in need of help or restraint and so have been more likely to be apprehended and institutionalized than have other children, regardless of their level of delinquent behavior (Arnold, 1971). In a similar manner, children from single-mother homes have shown up more often in school psychologists' offices and child guidance clinics. Differences in rates of referral to these agencies may have revealed more about society's attitudes toward the single-mother family than about the ability of the single mother to socialize her children.

Many of the shortcomings of the father-absence literature have been acknowledged by researchers and reviewers in the area. The limitations have often been forgotten, however, when conclusions about single-mother families have been drawn. Hetherington and Deur (1971), for example, listed several serious methodological problems in their review of the father-absence literature but then went on to selectively describe studies which discovered negative father-absence effects and to draw the following conclusions:

Father absence appears to be associated with a wide range of disruptions in social and cognitive development in children....Further research might focus on factors which can ameliorate the harmful consequences of paternal separation. (p. 244)

Herzog and Sudia, (1971), however, drew different conclusions. In their review of 400 studies of father-absence, 14 were judged to be "reasonably sound" in methodology. Of these, seven reported adverse effects and seven found no effects attributable to fatherlessness. The reviewers also noted that, when differences were found, they were generally significant only in a statistical sense, not a practical one. A rewording of Gregory's (1965) report of significant differences in delinquency rates, for instance, showed that 98% of the boys in two-parent homes and 97% of the boys in single-mother homes were nondelinquent.

Differences of such magnitude have hardly warranted the strong conclusions which have been drawn about them. Herzog and Sudia (1968) drew the following conclusions:

Existing data do not permit a decisive answer to questions about the effects on children of fatherlessness....If all the confounding factors...could be controlled, children in fatherless homes might be classified as somewhat worse off than children in two-parent homes with regard to some (though by no means all) of the variables investigated; but the statistical differences would probably be far less dramatic than is generally assumed, and might be negligible. Even if some differences were statistically significant, we would expect their practical importance to be dwarfed by other variables. (p. 181)

Billingsley and Giovannoni (1971) made similar observations:

It does not appear that either the ill effects of fatherlessness or the processes by which these effects are rendered have been sufficiently demonstrated for any definitive statements about the matter to be made. (p. 371)

Both reviewers went on to conclude that the question of deleterious effects caused by father-absence may be irrelevant and overly simplistic. The selective generalization and exaggeration of the reported effects have largely served to further stigmatize the single-mother family and to increase the single-mother's guilt about her children's plight. Both Herzog and Sudia (1971) and Billingsley and Giovannoni (1971) have suggested that the research question be rephrased to focus upon processes and experiences within the single-mother family, factors which contribute to the health and well-being of "fatherless" children, and needs of the one-parent family which the larger society could help to meet.

Needs and Problems of Single Mothers

As the absence of a father in the single-mother home has been assumed to produce deleterious effects on children, so too has the shortage of parents been thought to place extra demands on the single mother herself. The role of single parent--being solely responsible for supporting and rearing one's children--has seemed almost certain to produce stress and anxiety. Clayton (1971), herself a single parent, summarized some of the single mother's concerns:

The single mother is left with all of the responsibilities of providing emotional and practical guidelines for the child while having to cope with home care and maintenance functions many of which previously were within the jurisdiction of the husband-father, as well as in the majority of cases holding an outside job in order to augment available finances or to provide complete support for the family. In addition she must deal with her own emotional needs for adult companionship and begin to re-establish herself as an individual. For many this situation brings about a crisis in identity that is difficult to resolve.
(p. 327)

Stress. Evidence that single mothers experience more stress than the population at large has been found in a number of studies. Berkman (1969), in a survey of 2,000 California households, found that single mothers reported significantly more chronic health problems, functional disabilities, and physical conditions which were "seriously bothersome," as well as significantly poorer evaluations of their health status than married mothers. Moreover, these differences remained within most subgroups when equated on socioeconomic status. Berkman also found significant differences between married and single mothers on measures of general "morale" (life-satisfaction), anomie, "ego resiliency," and "neurotic traits." Additionally, trends toward morbidity differences between married and single mothers remained when these personality variables were controlled,

although the differences were nonsignificant. The author interpreted these trends as indicating that the stress of single motherhood has some additional, although small, contribution to physical morbidity above its apparent effects on emotional health.

Pearlin and Johnson (1977) found that depression was also more widespread among single parents than among parents with spouses. Separated parents appeared to have the highest rates of depression, followed by widowed, divorced, never-married and married parents, in that order. Moreover, the difference in depression scores between married and single parents increased with the number of children and with decreasing ages of the youngest child. In other words, increasing parental responsibilities appeared to have a stronger relationship with depression among unmarried parents than among married parents.

Other studies have examined physical and emotional health problems among divorced populations, a large number of whom are single mothers. Renne (1971), in a survey of 4,000 urban Californians, found higher rates of physical disability, chronic illness, neurosis, and depression among divorced people than among the happily remarried. However, unhappily married and separated people appeared to be in poorer health than either group. In comparison with all married people (happy and unhappy), the divorced and separated groups scored significantly lower. Similarly, Carter and Glick (1976) and Rico-Valasco and Mynko (1973) found that suicide rates were 2 to 3.5 times higher among divorced as compared to married women. Carter and Glick also found that cirrhosis of the liver resulting in death (presumably caused by alcoholism) was 2.8 times more prevalent among divorced than married women. Gurin, Veroff, and Field (1960) found that 40% of the separated and divorced women in the sample surveyed by the Joint

Commission on Mental Illness and Health reported seeking professional help for emotional problems following their separations; an additional 20% did not seek help but felt they could have used it.

Sauber and Corrigan (1970) found similar differences in their six-year follow-up of never-married mothers. Thirty-eight percent of the mothers who were separated or divorced were classified as "impaired" according to their scores on a mental health scale. Thirty-four percent of the never-married group were rated as impaired, while only nineteen percent of the married group were considered impaired.

These studies reporting group differences between married and single parents on physical and emotional health variables are subject to the same criticisms discussed in regard to the father-absence literature. First, marital status has been confounded with a variety of other variables which are correlated with physical and emotional health. Although Berkman (1969) found that differences remained with socioeconomic status controlled, other potentially confounding variables have not been investigated. Second, the heterogeneity of single-parent households has not been recognized. Comparisons with "happily married" and "unhappily married" individuals has resulted in the predictable middle-of-the-continuum position for the divorced parent. Additionally, the validity of the measurement instruments used in these studies has not been reported. The validity of rating and self-evaluation instruments for assessing single-parent populations may be particularly questionable.

The most serious limitation, as discussed in relation to the father-absence literature, is that such studies of differences among non-random groups cannot be interpreted causally. It is unknown whether

the physical and emotional health conditions preceded and contributed to the marital status of the divorcees and single mothers studied or whether their status indeed produced such problems.

The one panel study which was available (Smith, 1978) provided some evidence for the latter interpretation. In comparing families in transition to one-parent status with ongoing one- and two-parent families, Smith found that, over the transition period, parents showed significantly lowered scores on measures of personal integration and trust plus greater feelings of loss of control over their lives. Moreover, the scores of the transition group were significantly lower at the second time-period than those of either group of ongoing family units. This would indicate that the period immediately following the transition into single-parenthood may be the most stressful for single mothers.

Goode, in his 1956 study of divorced mothers, also noted this point and observed that the time immediately following separation, not the time of the final divorce decree, was the period of most stress among his sample. He concluded that the drastic changes in living conditions and relationships after separation were the primary causes of this stress. Goode also found that divorce and single motherhood were not universally traumatic experiences. Thirty-seven percent of the women surveyed were classified as "low trauma" in terms of the problems and coping behaviors they reported.

While stress may not be universal among single mothers, and the ultimate causal direction of the stress/family status relationship has not been sorted out, there is evidence to support the contention that many single mothers experience a high level of stress. Many writers have speculated about the features of single motherhood which may produce

or contribute to this stress, although research into this question has been virtually nonexistent.

Change in Living Conditions. One of the most frequently mentioned stressors has been the radical change in living conditions which the single-mother family has usually experienced. As discussed earlier, the transition to single mother status has often been accompanied by lowered family income and has frequently involved a change of residence, most often into smaller quarters in a poorer neighborhood. Glasser and Navarre (1965) have observed that rapid changes in socioeconomic status, particularly downward shifts, have often been associated with anomie; and Weissman and Paykel (1972) have found that moving, especially to poorer neighborhoods, has been correlated with depression among women. Thus these basic changes in living conditions may contribute to the stress apparently experienced by many single mothers, especially during the transition to single parent status.

Assumption of New Family Responsibilities. Single mothers must also assume new roles and responsibilities as family heads. In many instances they must find jobs, handle family finances, represent the family in interactions with the outside world, and assume all responsibility for the functioning of the household. For many women, these are roles and responsibilities which have previously been filled by husbands or fathers. They may have little training or experience in job-hunting, computing taxes, dealing with lawyers, or fixing leaky faucets. Suddenly becoming responsible for all these tasks might be assumed to be stressful to the single mother (Women in Transition, 1975).

In addition to these new roles, the single mother must fulfill all the responsibilities of child-rearing and housekeeping for her

family. In effect, the single mother must do all the tasks which, in the two-parent family, are divided between two adults. Ilgenfritz (1971) observed that lack of time and energy plus continual exhaustion are frequent complaints among single mothers.

The single mother is often the sole source of emotional as well as physical support for her children. She usually has no other adult in the home to give advice, reassurance, or relief from her child-rearing role. Schlesinger (1975) reported that the strain of coping with the demands of young children with no relief from another adult was a frequently-reported problem among Canadian single parents. Ilgenfritz (1971) also noted that single mothers worry about what will happen to their children if they get sick or become incapacitated.

Concern about Children. Other authors have mentioned that single mothers report feeling guilty about their children. They may feel responsible for their children's adjustment problems following a divorce or separation (Hunt, 1966; Ilgenfritz, 1971); they may feel guilty for depriving their children of the benefits of a "normal" family life (Women in Transition, 1975); and they may feel guilt about discrimination against their children from other children, parents, and schools (Hunt, 1966; Schlesinger, 1975). Additionally, single mothers who work may feel they are neglecting their children by leaving them with babysitters (Schlesinger, 1975).

Other child development issues have been mentioned as worrisome to single mothers. Biller and Smith (1972) reported that the AFDC mothers in their support group voiced particular interest in learning about the effects of father-absence on children in single-mother families. Similarly, Ilgenfritz (1971) noted that concern about providing male models for their children and worry about their children's

feelings toward marriage were common among single mothers. Hunt (1966) and Ilgenfritz (1971) also found that single mothers worried about dealing with their children during adolescence, particularly in regard to sex education for male children.

As Burgess (1970) observed, society has contributed to the single mother's anxiety over the development of her children by presenting the message that it is impossible to raise normal, healthy children outside the two-parent family. Selective overgeneralizations of the father-absence literature have often been used as evidence of this impossibility, causing guilt and frustration among women who have no choice but to raise their children alone.

Goode (1956), in his early study of divorced mothers, found evidence of these concerns, but such negative feelings were not unanimous. Thirty-one percent of the women in his sample thought that their children were better off in a single-mother family than in the previous two-parent home. Twenty-seven percent voiced concerns about the lack of a male model for their children, while only nine percent thought that the single-mother family was bad for their children. The remainder thought that the type of family had no effect on their children's development.

Assumption of New Social Roles. In addition to added roles within her family and increased responsibilities for her children, the single mother must assume a new status in society at large. Goode(1956), Hunt (1966), and Kessler (1975) have all observed that society has lacked institutionalized norms for the status of single motherhood. Without prescribed role-behaviors, these authors have contended, interactions between single mothers and the rest of society have been strained. Hunt (1966) has theorized that this

strain has led to the development of a "world of the formerly married," a relatively closed subculture with its own norms and rules for social behavior. According to Hunt, divorce or separation usually leads to a breakdown of an individual's social network. Friends may have taken the former spouse's side in relation to the divorce or they may feel uncomfortable relating to one partner without the presence of the other. A spouseless individual may represent a sexual threat to existing marriages or may simply be awkward in social activities involving couples. Hunt has also theorized that the existence of a divorce or separation in a social network may be threatening to couples who fear marital problems of their own. Additionally, friends may begin to drift away following a divorce because of fewer shared interests and common types of experiences. Hunt has contended that formerly married people begin to drift into new social circles with other divorced or separated members and, because of their unique experiences and situations, develop social norms which differ from those of society at large.

The loss of friends following divorce or separation has been mentioned by a number of authors as a particular problem for single mothers (Brandwein, Brown, and Fox, 1974; Clayton, 1971; Kessler, 1975; Miller, 1970; *Women in Transition*, 1975). Goode (1956), however, found that this was not a universal experience: among his sample, 52% listed their most active friends as having continued through the divorce. Moreover, Goode found little support for the existence of a "formerly married subculture": 64% reported having no divorced or divorcing friends. Goode's sample, however, were surveyed within three years after divorce; it is possible that a major change in social network could require a longer lapse of time.

It is also possible that Hunt's theory of a subculture of the formerly married does not apply among single mothers. The situation of a single mother with family and household responsibilities may limit her opportunities to develop new relationships or enter new social networks. There is some evidence for this contention. Pearlin and Johnson (1977) reported that unmarried parents in their sample of households indicated significantly greater social isolation (fewer close friends and fewer voluntary organization affiliations) than either single people or married parents. Similarly, Marsden (1969) and Kriesberg (1970) found that single mothers reported going out socially significantly less frequently than married mothers. Goode (1956) also found a fairly low frequency of dating among his sample of divorced mothers: 48% said they never dated, while only 38% reported dating more frequently than once or twice per month. Schlesinger (1975) listed social isolation as the problem most frequently mentioned by Canadian single parents.

Several factors may contribute to greater social isolation among single mothers. Hunt (1966), Kessler (1975), and Brandwein, Brown, and Fox (1974) have noted that single mothers may be victims of social stigma and discrimination. Divorced, separated, or never-married mothers may be seen as unstable, inferior, or immoral by some members of society and even by their own relatives (Women in Transition, 1971). Clayton (1971) has observed that most social activities are generally oriented toward couples, two-parent families, or childless individuals and so exclude single mothers. Ilgenfritz (1971) has reported that many divorced mothers voice fears about adapting to their new single status in social situations, especially dating. The single mother may also have difficulty in coping with her children's

reactions to her new relationships with men (Ilgenfritz, 1971; Women in Transition, 1971). Marsden (1969), however, stressed primarily practical problems, such as lack of money and the difficulty of finding child care, as reasons for the single mother's lack of social activity.

All authors agreed that loss of friends and continued social isolation compound the stress experienced by the single mother. The isolated single mother may not have adequate opportunities to learn and practice the skills necessary for adapting to her new role as an independent adult (Hunt, 1966). Additionally, she may suffer a drop in self-esteem without social confirmation that she is indeed an attractive and worthwhile person (Ilgenfritz, 1971). Finally, in the absence of support and reassurance from other parents, she may develop unrealistic doubts about her ability to help her children through various developmental crises (Glasser and Navarre, 1965).

Summary. The accumulated results of several cross-sectional surveys and one panel study have provided evidence for the contention that single mothers experience a greater level of stress than the general population. The causal factors involved have not been fully explored, but the panel study findings of greater disruption following separation have tended to support the notion that features of single motherhood itself produce or contribute to this stress. Several writers have speculated about the features of single motherhood which could be stressful, although there has been almost no research in this area. Only one study, Goode's 1956 survey of divorced mothers, has systematically addressed the behaviors and perceptions of single mothers in their daily lives. Interestingly, he found substantial variation among

his sample on most of the questions asked. He noted that single motherhood did not appear as universally stressful, isolating, and bleak as most other authors have presumed. These apparent variations in stress level have raised the issue of variables which may mediate adjustment to single motherhood, an area which will be considered in the next section.

Variables Mediating Adjustment to Single Motherhood

Little formalized research has addressed the situational variables which may contribute to a single mother's ability to cope successfully with her lifestyle, although such investigation has been advocated by a number of writers (Billingsley and Giovannoni, 1971; Burgess, 1970; Herzog and Sudia, 1968; Sprey, 1967). Scattered correlations and observations from a variety of sources, however, have indicated some types of variables which may have some relationship to adjustment.

Demographic Variables. In several studies, demographic and family variables have been found to be related to adjustment. Pearlin and Johnson (1977) found that increasing numbers and decreasing ages of children were both predictive of depression in single parents. In addition, age and number of children were significantly related to differences in depression between married and single parents: depression differences between single and married parents became increasingly larger as the number of children increased and their ages decreased. The authors interpreted this trend as indicating that single parents were more vulnerable to the stress caused by the increased parental responsibilities of several young children.

Goode (1956) also found that divorced mothers with two or more children were more likely to be classified as "high trauma" in terms

of their reports of problem situations and coping behaviors. However, he also found that problems with child care facilities were more prevalent among mothers with older children, presumably because of the lack of part-day services for school-age children.

Age of the mother was also correlated with degree of trauma in Goode's (1956) study. Older mothers were found to have fewer friends, to report less frequent dating, and to be more often classified as having experienced "high trauma." Similarly, the mother's education was positively predictive of having more friends, dating more frequently, and experiencing lower trauma.

Social class background has also been thought to relate to the adjustment of the single mother. Kessler (1975) theorized that divorced or unmarried motherhood would be harder on middle-class women, assuming that family structures have been more value-tied in this class. Indeed, Goode (1956) found that divorced mothers whose ex-husbands had middle- or upper-class occupations were slightly more likely to be classified as having experienced "high trauma." Women with rural backgrounds were also more likely to experience trauma. The degree to which this relationship would hold up in the 1970's, after considerable change in middle-class divorce rates, however, may be questionable.

For similar reasons, race has been thought to relate to ease of adjustment to single motherhood. However, Gibbs, Ewer, and Bahr (1975) found few differences between low-income black and white mothers in their attitudes toward illegitimacy or single motherhood. Black women did, however, show less positive attitudes toward marriage and married child-rearing.

The authors of Women in Transition (1975) have presented an interesting breakdown of the different types of problems which single mothers from different social backgrounds may experience. They observed that the middle-class mother with her own independent claim to middle-class status (education, professional skills, etc.) may not experience financial problems; however, she may have more emotional difficulties in adjusting to her status because of the stronger two-parent expectations of her social background. The middle-class mother who was dependent upon her ex-husband or her father for her class status (having low education or occupational status of her own) may experience middle-class emotional difficulties plus rapid downward mobility and employment and financial problems. The lower-class single mother may have fewer emotional adjustment problems, but she must contend with "core poverty" problems such as unemployment, discrimination, and degrading services.

Schlesinger (1975) provided a similar continuum of the needs and problems of single mothers from various marital backgrounds. He contended that the never-married mother may experience the greatest difficulty in adjusting, since she faces the most social stigma and discrimination and is also more likely to be poor and lacking in education and job skills. The mother who is separated occupies an ambiguous social status, being neither married nor single, and is generally in the midst of the trauma of transition between these two positions. The divorced mother faces social discrimination and financial problems plus the difficulties of her children's adjustment to a new living situation. The widowed mother may receive more emotional and financial support from friends and relatives, but she must deal with the shock and grief over her husband's death in addition to adjusting to a new style of life.

Both presentations have underscored the observation that the adjustment experiences of various single mothers are qualitatively different and may not be easily distinguishable in terms of amount of difficulty. Some situational factors, however, have been found to act as mediators in overall adjustment to the various types of life-changes which single motherhood entails.

Financial Security. One of these factors is financial security. Berkman (1969) found that financial status was negatively associated with physical morbidity among single mothers and that it accounted for a large portion of the difference in health status between married and single mothers. Similarly, Pearlin and Johnson (1977) found that "economic stress" (self-reported income inadequacy) was correlated with depression among their sample of single parents. Additionally, the authors concluded that single parents were more vulnerable to the effects of economic stress: depression differences between married and single parents were nonsignificant at low levels of economic stress but became quite large at high levels of economic stress. Goode (1956) also found that financial security was positively related to adjustment in his sample of divorced mothers. Both full-time employment and dependable child-support payments were predictive of reports of "low trauma" in adjustment to single motherhood.

Social Support. Social support has also been observed as a correlate of adjustment. Pearlin and Johnson (1977) reported that social isolation was predictive of depression among their sample of single parents. It was also predictive of differences between married and single parents, indicating, according to the authors, a greater vulnerability to social isolation among single parents.

Bernard (1964), in his interview study of a small sample of poor single mothers, observed that having a source of emotional support appeared to be related to higher morale:

The strongest impression is that the feeling of personal adequacy, of coping, depended on support from family, friends, and community institutions. Supplemental assistance, such as money or clothing, was vital, but having people who could give advice, encouragement, and understanding was even more central to the respondent's morale. With this kind of support women were able to use the money they had in effective and fruitful ways. Without it, ...[the single mothers] seemed to feel isolated, depressed, and worn out with the struggle to maintain their families. (pp. 37-38)

Goode (1956) found similar relationships between social support and adjustment. Having opportunities to date and develop new relationships was a major predictor of membership in the "low trauma" group, while infrequent dating and having few opportunities to meet new people predicted "high trauma." Having experienced discrimination as a result of single motherhood was also associated with higher trauma, as was having a reference group which disapproved of divorce and single motherhood. Goode found some evidence that support from other single mothers was related to adjustment: a higher percentage of women in the "low trauma" group reported having friends who were divorced or divorcing mothers.

Although researchers have reported relationships between adjustment to single motherhood and potential mediating variables such as financial security and social support, these conclusions have been limited by methodological difficulties. First, these studies have all been cross-sectional and correlational. It has been impossible to determine, for example, whether lack of social support has caused stress or poor adjustment among some single mothers or whether stress and social isolation have both been caused by other personality or situational

factors. Second, the operational definitions of two of the concepts--level of social support and degree of adjustment--have varied widely across the studies. Neither the validity of the instruments used to measure these concepts nor their appropriateness for single-mother populations have been reported or discussed. Finally, the samples surveyed by at least two of these researchers were seriously limited. Both Bernard's (1964) and Goode's (1956) samples were small and included primarily poor, urban, divorced women; the experiences and behaviors reported by these women may not be representative of single mothers in the seventies.

Utilization of Services for Single Mothers. Regardless of the quality of the research, the presumed relationship between social support and adjustment has been the basis for the few services which have been developed for single mothers. Parents Without Partners, the most widely known support organization for single parents, has as its stated goals the sharing of information about single-parent child-rearing, the provision of opportunities for family activities for single parents and their children, and the development of a social network among single parents themselves (Clayton, 1971; Gould, 1968). Weiss (1973b), in a participant-observational study of one chapter of Parents Without Partners, found that the majority of its members had joined in order to meet other single parents and to find a social community where they wouldn't feel out of place.

Parents Without Partners has been widely criticized, however. An official of the organization (Clayton, 1971) has admitted that it serves primarily white, middle-aged, middle-class divorced and widowed members, the majority of whom are women. She has also hinted that poor people and parents who have never married have not been encouraged to

join. Weiss (1973b) observed that half the people who attended one meeting of the organization never returned, most citing as a reason their negative assessment of the members. Ilgenfritz (1971) also reported dissatisfaction among single mothers with the organization's expectations that members date each other.

Regardless of these criticisms, the mutual support philosophy of Parents Without Partners has been adapted to other types of support groups for single mothers. Although the effects of membership in these formalized groups have not been evaluated, two authors (Biller and Smith, 1972; Ilgenfritz, 1971) have reported impressionistic observations of increased self-confidence, improved social skills, and improved morale among members of small single-mother support groups.

In addition to social support, single parents have suggested other types of services which might aid them in adjusting to single parenthood. Schlesinger (1973; 1975) reported that an informal Canadian assessment of services needed by one-parent families found two basic suggestions. This study listed increased availability of Big Brother/Big Sister-type programs as the most-needed service, followed by classes to teach child-rearing and other survival skills to single parents.

Guyatt (1971), in another assessment of Canadian single parents, found that better provisions for financial support, followed by improved child-care facilities were the most frequently-voiced needs. She also found that single parents were concerned that services for them be integrated into other services for families in general so as to avoid further stigma and isolation. She concluded that the needs voiced by single parents were generally the same as those experienced by all families, differing only in intensity and magnitude.

Summary. Systematic research into the factors which mediate adjustment to single motherhood has been extremely scarce. Widely scattered studies have provided some evidence that variables such as number and age of children, financial status, and level of social support account for some portion of the variance in adjustment. However, the effects of other factors, such as the utilization of services designed to ease adjustment to single motherhood, have not been examined. Additionally, the combined contributions of these potential mediators have not been examined in a multivariate context. Socioeconomic factors, family characteristics, and social involvement have been confounded in the bivariate studies described above. A systematic examination of the relative contributions of potential mediating variables could provide better information about adjustment differences among single-mother families. Although such an investigation would not solve the causal dilemmas inherent in correlational research, it could provide useful hypotheses about the types of services which could aid these families.

Justification for Research

Several conclusions can be drawn from the available research. (1) A large and increasing percentage of our population of women and children are involved in single-mother families or will be at some point in their lives. (2) These families differ from the modal two-parent family in structure and composition and may be different in other characteristics as well. There is strong evidence that single-mother families are more often poor. Other functional differences have been assumed to exist, but research evidence has been scarce. (3) Although a large body of father-absence research has developed, the logical and

methodological problems in this area have seriously limited the conclusions which can be drawn. Overall, there seems to be little support for the popular assumption that single-mother families produce pathological children. (4) There is some evidence that the responsibilities of single motherhood are stressful and that they require considerable adjustment on a woman's part. Although many features of the single mother's life intuitively appear to be stress-producing, little is known about the actual experiences of women in this role. (5) There appear to be variations among single-mother families in level of functioning or degree of adjustment. However, little is known about the nature of these differences or about the variables which contribute to them.

In short, little is known about single mothers or their families. Billingsley and Giovannoni (1971) have attributed this lack of knowledge to research traditions which have focused attention on developing general "laws" about human behavior and institutions:

The ignorance concerning one-parent families...is attributable to another phenomenon common among social and behavioral scientists: an overriding interest in the modal and neglect of the deviant....Most typically, investigations about the deviant have been pursued not in an effort to gain information about its phenomena but rather to further enlightenment about the modal. (p. 364)

Brandwein, Brown, and Fox (1974) have noted that this ignorance has, in many ways, contributed to the problems of single-mother families:

Women single parents remain victimized by the current distortions and inadequacies of the data, both in their interactions within their families and in the larger society. Present assumptions about and treatment of single-parent families are based upon insufficient and often incomplete information. At best present practice and policies are based on ignorance; at worst, upon misleading and biased half-truths reflecting the general discrimination faced by women in our society. (p. 513)

A number of writers have stressed the need for information about the experiences, problems, coping mechanisms, and needs of single-mother

families (Brandwein, Brown, and Fox, 1974; Billingsley and Giovannoni, 1971; Burgess, 1970; Herzog and Sudia, 1968). Rose and Price-Bonham (1973) have specifically noted the need to replicate Goode's (1956) study of divorced mothers. Although it was done nearly twenty-five years ago, when attitudes toward divorce and single motherhood were much different, this study still stands as the only systematic investigation of the experiences and perceptions of single mothers.

In addition to a general need for more information, Billingsley and Giovannoni (1971) have stressed the need for a change in research focus away from "the unfortunate preoccupation...with the one-parent family as a form of social pathology rather than as a form of family life" (p. 372). These authors, as well as others (Burgess, 1970; Herzog and Sudia, 1968; Sprey, 1967) have advocated that research into differences among single-mother families, research aimed at discovering conditions most favorable to the successful functioning of these families, be given a high priority.

In line with the previous recommendations for research, the present study has been designed to gain information about the experiences of a heterogeneous group of single mothers. The primary purpose of the research is to document the women's perceptions of their problems, needs, sources of support, and reactions to services, both existing and proposed. It is hoped that the information gained in this assessment will be of use in determining service needs and priorities for the development of programs to aid single mothers and their families.

A second purpose is to examine the relationships between indices of adjustment to single motherhood and some of the situational and social support variables mentioned in the literature as possible mediators of the amount of stress involved in the single-mother role. It is therefore

hypothesized that indices of adjustment will show relationships with the following variables: (1) mother's age; (2) mother's employment status; (3) mother's educational status; (4) length of time spent as a single mother; (5) income; (6) receipt of AFDC support; (7) number of children in the home; (8) age of youngest child; (9) frequency of children's contact with their father; (10) presence of other adults in the home; (11) dating frequency; (12) number of close friends; (13) contact with other single mothers; and (14) reliance upon children for emotional support.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Sampling Procedure

Since the primary objective of this study was to assess the needs and problems of single mothers in a variety of situations, considerable emphasis was placed upon obtaining a sample representative of the diverse total population. This concern eliminated all direct means of locating potential subjects: lists of AFDC recipients would have excluded all single mothers ineligible for government assistance; membership lists from Parents Without Partners or other single parent organizations would have overlooked women who, for a variety of reasons, had chosen not to be involved in these organizations; and court records would have included only women divorced in Ingham County, excluding those who had never married, were separated or widowed, or had been divorced in other jurisdictions.

To avoid these serious biases, an indirect method of sampling was chosen. Since the majority of people in all situations send their children to public schools, the use of school records to locate single-mother families seemed to be the least-biased and most feasible sampling procedure.

One elementary school which reported that 40% of its student population resided in single-parent homes was chosen to provide the subject pool for the study. Administrative agreements with the school's principal and with the school district's director of research were negotiated to provide school sanction of the study and access to school records of students' living situations. Examination of all students'

residence records revealed that 130 of the approximately 350 students in the school were living with their mothers only. The 104 families represented by these students then comprised the initial subject pool.

Of the original group of 104 single mothers, 87 were eventually interviewed. One of these was found to be incoherent and unable to respond to questions; her interview was not included in the analysis. Two of the original 104 had remarried and one had been incorrectly classified in the school records; none of these were interviewed. Five women actively refused to participate, three passively refused (failed to appear at any of three scheduled interviews), and six could not be contacted (had moved, were away for the summer, or for other reasons could not be reached).

As a result of the sampling procedures used, some biases were introduced in terms of residential area and socioeconomic status, age of children (all mothers had at least one child of elementary school age), and possibly religion (since mothers of some faiths may have sent their children to parochial schools). However, these biases were thought to be less serious than those which would have been introduced with other sampling procedures.

Interviewing Procedures

Each of the single mothers identified from school records was sent a letter informing her of the study and requesting her participation. The letters were written on school letterhead and were signed by the community-school coordinator, who happened also to be a single mother. It was hoped that a personal letter from a school official known to many of the mothers would provide credibility to the study and encourage participation. (See Appendix A for a copy of the initial contact letter.)

Within one to two weeks after each of three groups of letters had been sent, each woman who had not refused to participate was contacted by phone by the author. At this second contact the study was more fully explained, questions about the study were answered, and a time was arranged for an interview in the woman's home.

Interviews were conducted by the author at the woman's convenience in her own home. Each woman was first asked to read and sign a consent form informing her of her rights as a subject and explaining the intent of the study. (See Appendix B for a copy of the consent form.) She was then asked to respond to the items included in the questionnaire (See Appendix C for a copy of the questionnaire.) The woman was given a copy of the questionnaire to facilitate comprehension, but all questions were read to her, and responses were recorded by the interviewer to assure completeness and accuracy.

Interviews were expected to last approximately one hour. The median length of the interviews was sixty minutes, but there was a range from forty minutes to three hours. The women were encouraged to talk freely about their experiences, feelings, ideas, and opinions both to allow them to provide input into possible future programming and to enhance the author's knowledge of the single mother's situation. Since the content of the interview was emotionally loaded for some women, frequent digressions and explanations of responses were expected and, at times, encouraged by the author.

During the course of the interview, several women made requests for information or help of an immediate nature. In response to these requests or to needs perceived by the interviewer, a number of referrals to existing services were made: seven women were referred to family

counseling services, four to the school counselor, three to women's self-help groups, two to Big Brothers, two to adult education classes, one to a drug treatment program, and one to a singles' social organization.

Several women were not at home during the time prearranged for the interview. These women were contacted again by phone, and another time was arranged. In cases where this appointment was also missed, one final attempt was made to interview the subject. When all three attempts proved futile, the subject was regarded as a "passive refusal," a phenomenon which occurred with only three women.

All interviews were completed during the period between May 1, 1975 and June 30, 1975.

Interview Format

The interview format used in this study was designed to obtain information about the single mother's situation and her experiences across a variety of areas. The format was rationally developed by the author in collaboration with school officials and several single mothers interested in the study. It was field tested in several interviews with single mothers outside the subject pool, a step which resulted in some minor changes in wording and construction to improve comprehensibility and facilitate administration.

The final form of the interview format (reproduced in Appendix C) was comprised of nine sections, each addressing a separate class of variables:

Section 1 of the interview dealt with basic demographic information including race, marital status, length of time as a single parent, age, members of household, occupation, income, source of income, and education.

Section 2 focused on each of the children living with the single mother. Questions about each child's age, sex, child care arrangements, problems, services used, and time spent with each parent were included, as was a question about any children not living with the mother.

Section 3 provided an opportunity for the woman to talk about her experiences in each of eleven possible problem areas (money, housing, child care, employment, education, raising children, female companionship, male companionship, free time, social acceptance, and feelings about self). In each area, three potential problems for single mothers were presented in checklist form in addition to open-ended questions about other problems encountered and services used. The woman was also asked to rate each problem area as "getting worse," "getting better," or "staying about the same" as an indication of her evaluation of the situation. She was then asked to rank the three problem areas currently causing her the most worry and to indicate which time period had been the most difficult for her.

Section 4 asked the woman to choose a self-defining term from a list of possible definers such as "woman," "mother," "divorcee," etc. This section was included to gather information to test Goode's (1956) hypothesis that positive adjustment to divorce may be defined as present-oriented rather than past-oriented self-perception.

Section 5 included a number of questions about social support and social involvement: number of friends, number of single mother acquaintances and friends, organizational involvement, dating frequency, and perceived sources of emotional support.

Section 6 included two open-ended questions about changes single mothers would like to see in their lives and goals they had for the future.

Responses to these questions (and to the other open-ended items in other sections) were recorded as completely as possible during the interview and were later content-analyzed and coded by the author.

Section 7 was comprised of a short depression scale adapted from Arscott (1970). While it was not the intention of this study to do any sort of intensive psychological evaluation, it was felt that the inclusion of a brief scale such as this could provide a general indication of overall "unhappiness" which could be a useful variable in later associative analyses. Pearlin and Johnson (1971) used a similar depression scale as an indicator of life stress among parents. They suggested that the commonness of depression "suggests that it may be a fairly sensitive barometer of life-strains" (p. 706).

Section 8 provided a listing of the major services available specifically for single mothers in the area. The woman was asked if she had heard of each service; if she had used it; and if so, if she had been satisfied with the service.

Section 9 included brief descriptions of new types of services for single mothers which could be developed in the future. The woman was asked to check those which looked appealing and to offer suggestions for modifications which would make the service more useful to her. She was also asked for her own ideas for other services which she would like to see developed. Two final questions asked if she would attend a meeting or work with other single mothers to organize any new types of services or organizations. These final items were included in an attempt to assess the amount of grass-roots interest and support for social action existing among this group of single mothers.

Both free-response and forced-choice items were included in the interview format to provide a balance between the consistency in type of information obtained with structured alternatives and the depth of information made possible with free-response opportunities. The latter concern was thought to be of particular importance in this study given its exploratory nature, the highly personal content of the interview, and the broad goal of learning as much as possible about the situations and experiences of single mothers.

Analysis Strategy

In accordance with the dual purpose of the present study as outlined in Chapter 1, two types of data analysis were completed. In order to obtain a descriptive picture of the situations and experiences of the single mothers interviewed, response frequencies were tabulated for all demographic data, problem checklists, social support indices, goals and self-perception items, service utilization reports, and reactions to proposed programs. This quantitative needs assessment tabulation is presented in the first section of Chapter 3.

The second purpose of the study was to examine relationships between adjustment to single motherhood and some of the situational and support variables thought to mediate the amount of stress experienced by single mothers. Multiple regression was used to analyze the relationship between several predictive variables and two scales used as indices of adjustment.

The first measure of adjustment was a short depression scale adapted from Arscott (1970). This scale originally consisted of six Likert-type items. After assessing the internal consistency of the scale with the study sample, item six was deleted. The coefficient of

internal consistency of the remaining five-item scale was .804. The depression scale items and item-total correlations may be found in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1
Depression Scale Items and Item-Total Correlations

Items	Item-Total Correlations
1. I feel the future looks bright.	.487
2. Things seem hopeless.	.564
3. I feel bored.	.483
4. I feel down in the dumps.	.626
5. I feel depressed.	.762

^a 6. I am bothered by noise.	.325
Coefficient of internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha)	.804

^aThis item was deleted from the scale due to its relatively low item-total correlation.

A second index of adjustment was a scale constructed from items assessing perceived success in dealing with each of eleven potential problem areas. The question was phrased as follows: "Would you say that your problems in this area are getting worse, getting better, or staying about the same?" It might be termed a scale of optimism about one's situation. From the original pool of eleven items, two were deleted because they revealed inadequate variance and had item-total

correlations less than .10. The coefficient of internal consistency of the resulting eight-item scale was .694. The "optimism" scale items and item-total correlations may be found in Table 2-2.

Fourteen variables were chosen to be predictor variables in the regression analysis. Several of these were basic demographic variables: (1) the mother's age, (2) the number of months that she had lived alone with her children, (3) the mother's educational attainment, (4) the mother's employment status (employed/not employed), (5) number of children living in the home, (6) age of the youngest child at home, and (7) the number of other adults in the home. Income was adjusted for size of family by dividing by the number of people supported. The percentage of the family's income received from AFDC was also used as a predictor, as was the number of times per year that the woman's children saw their father. Four variables were used as indicants of social support: (1) total number of close friends, (2) number of friends and acquaintances who are single mothers, (3) dating frequency, and (4) reliance upon children for emotional support.

The relationship between these predictor variables and the two indices of adjustment were analyzed with the stepwise regression program contained in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The results of these analyses are presented in the second section of Chapter 3.

Table 2-2

Optimism Scale Items and Item-Total Correlations

Items	Item-Total Correlations
1. Money Problems	.157
2. Child Care Problems	.256
3. Employment Problems	.359
4. Problems with Children	.482
5. Female Companionship Problems	.225
6. Dating Problems	.638
7. Leisure Time Problems	.258
8. Social Acceptance Problems	.240
9. Emotional Problems	.469

^a 10. Housing Problems	-.101
^a 11. Education Problems	.065
Coefficient of Internal Consistency (Cronbach's Alpha)	.694

^aThese items were deleted due to inadequate variance and low item-total correlations.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Needs Assessment Tabulations

As stated previously, the major purpose of the present study was to provide a quantitative description of the types of situations and experiences encountered by a group of single mothers. To this end, response frequencies for all situational variables, problem checklists, social support indices, goals, service-utilization reports, and reactions to proposed programs are presented in this section.

Situational Variables

Residence. All women interviewed lived within a one-half mile radius of the common elementary school. This district lay on the outskirts of the city and was relatively isolated by distance and lack of bus service. There were few operating businesses in the area (although there were numerous abandoned commercial buildings) and fewer recreational or service facilities. The area was divided into four rather distinct neighborhoods.

The older section, characterized by unpaved streets and small, unpainted houses, was predominantly lower class, with a large proportion of elderly residents. Only eight of the 87 women interviewed lived in this neighborhood, two in their parents' homes.

Immediately surrounding the school was a lower middle class neighborhood of single family dwellings built when the area was a promising suburb. Twelve of the women interviewed lived in this area, all but two in the homes where they had lived with their husbands.

In an outer circle around the school were a number of federally-owned, city-controlled, low-rent units (single family houses and duplexes). Eighteen of the women interviewed lived in these units, among them all but four of the black women and both Chicano women.

The remaining neighborhood was comprised of three large federally-subsidized townhouse developments built recently between the existing neighborhood and the new expressway. The remaining majority of the women interviewed, 49 of the 86, lived in these rental units. Only one of these had lived there prior to her separation from her husband.

There was thus some variability in type of living situation among the single mothers interviewed, although the vast majority of the women (87%) were recent arrivals to the area, moving into the available low-rent housing after becoming single mothers.

Race. Sixty-nine of the 86 single mothers successfully interviewed were white (80%). Fifteen women were black (17%); only two were Chicano (2%).

Age. Median age was found to be 29.4, with a range from 22 to 57. The range of this variable was, of course, restricted due to sampling procedures, since all women interviewed had children of elementary school age.

Marital Status. Sixty-eight of the women were divorced (79%). Eight women were separated (9%); eight had never married (9%); only two were widowed (2%).

History of Single Motherhood. Median length of time spent as a single mother was found to be three years, with a range from five months to ten years. The majority of women had had no previous periods of single motherhood: 73 women (85%) had been single mothers for only one

continuous portion of their lives. The remaining 13 women (15%) had had one or more previous periods of single parenthood interrupted by periods of marriage and dual-parenthood.

Education. All the women interviewed had completed at least nine years of formal education. Seventy-three had graduated from high school (85%). Of these, thirty women had had some further college or technical training (35% of the total). Four women had college degrees.

Occupation. A substantial portion of the women interviewed were holding jobs outside the home, although only forty of them were working full time (47%). A breakdown of occupational type is presented in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1
Tabulation of Occupational Status

Type of Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Homemaker	26	30.2
Secretarial	19	22.1
Unskilled Service (part-time)	11	12.8
Student	9	10.5
Skilled Service	8	9.3
Managerial	5	5.8
Factory Worker	4	4.7
Professional	4	4.7

Income. The median income per family unit was found to be \$5,286 per year, with a range from \$2,400 to \$10,800. When adjustments for family size were made, it was discovered that twenty-nine families (34% of the total sample) had incomes at or below the federal poverty index for 1975 (\$250 plus \$50 per additional family member per month).

Source of Income. Several sources of income were reported, including job earnings, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, paternal child support, Social Security, and Unemployment Insurance. None of the women interviewed were receiving alimony payments. A cross-tabulation of source of income by percentage of total income is presented in Table 3-2. Table entries represent the number of women deriving various percentages of their incomes from each of the sources listed.

Table 3-2
Source of Income by Percentage of Total Income

Income Source	Percentage of Total Income				# Receiving
	None	1-49%	50-99%	100%	
Job Earnings	35	9	27	15	51
AFDC	47	3	9	27	39
Child Support	58	26	1	1	28
Social Security	81	0	3	2	5
Unemployment Insurance	82	1	1	2	4

From Table 3-2 it can be seen that 35 women (41%) reported no job earnings and appeared to be completely dependent upon external sources of income and assistance. An additional nine women (11%) derived less than half of their total incomes from personal job earnings. Only 15 women (17%) were providing their total incomes from job earnings.

Fifty-eight of the women (67%) reported receiving no paternal child support. Included among this group were the 39 women receiving AFDC benefits, since child support payments are made directly to the Department of Social Services in these cases. When these women and the two women who were widowed were subtracted, however, there remained a group of 17 women who were not receiving the paternal child support to which they were legally entitled. Of the 45 women who should have been receiving child support payments, only 28 (62%) actually were.

Thirty-nine women (45%) reported receiving some portion of their incomes from Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Twenty-seven of these (31% of the total) received 100% of their incomes from AFDC. The remaining twelve had other additional sources of income, principally job earnings.

Members of Household. Most of the women interviewed were living alone with their children and had no other adults in their households (70 women or 81% of the total sample). Of the remainder, three were living with one or both parents; seven were living with male friends; two were living with female friends; three included adult offspring in their households; and one included a resident housekeeper.

Number of Children. Twenty-six of the women had only one child currently living with them (30%); 40 had two children with them (47%); twelve had three children (14%); six had four children (7%); two had five children (2%). The mean number of children per family was 2.05.

Seven women reported having adult offspring who were no longer living with them. Five reported having other minor children who were not currently in their custody.

Children's Contact with Their Fathers. Of the 176 children represented in the families of the 86 women interviewed, 57 were reported as never seeing their fathers (32%). An additional 33 saw their fathers very rarely or less than once a year (18%). Thirty-four children saw their fathers once a year; 27 saw their fathers between two and four times a year (14%). Only 27 children (14%) had contact with their fathers as frequently as once a month.

Problems Encountered

Most of the women reported having experienced a variety of survival and adjustment problems as single mothers. Table 3-3 presents frequencies of endorsement responses to the problem checklists provided during the interview as well as frequencies of responses to open-ended questions about additional difficulties encountered.

Inspection of Table 3-3 reveals a substantial amount of individual variation in the types of difficulties encountered by the women. There existed also, however, a surprising number of problems shared by a large number of single mothers. Most frequently mentioned problems centered around the following issues: (1) lack of money; (2) inadequate child care; (3) inadequate job skills; (4) lack of time; (5) concern about child rearing; (6) lack of opportunities for social activity; and (7) lack of self-confidence.

Rank-orderings of the eleven problem-areas listed in Table 3-3 also revealed the common experiences and perceptions of the women interviewed. The vast majority of the women indicated that money-

Table 3-3

Tabulation of Problems Encountered

Source of Problem	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Money</u>		
Inadequate money to meet needs	62	72.1
Budgeting problems	21	24.4
Inability to get credit	33	38.4
^a Inability to obtain child support	36	41.9
^a Lack of emergency funds	14	16.3
^a Adjustment to lower living standard	11	12.8
<u>Housing</u>		
Finding affordable housing	25	29.1
Finding housing in desired location	28	32.6
Housing maintenance problems	14	16.3
^a Rental discrimination due to single parent status	14	16.3
<u>Child Care</u>		
Obtaining quality child care	41	47.7
Finding child care during hours needed	27	31.4
Transporting child to child care	6	7.0
^a High babysitter turnover	11	12.8
^a Lack of school lunch program	16	18.5

^aThese items represent responses to open-ended questions; endorsement frequencies would be expected to be smaller for these items than for items from the problem checklists.

Table 3-3 (cont.)

Source of Problem	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Employment</u>		
Inability to find well-paying job	28	32.6
Inability to find enjoyable job	22	25.6
Inability to find job flexibility necessary for sole parent	15	17.4
^a Hiring discrimination due to single parent status	11	12.8
<u>Education</u>		
Inadequacy of job skills	43	50.0
Lack of money to continue education	40	46.5
Lack of time to continue education	50	58.1
^a Lack of child care to continue education	14	16.3
^a Lack of personal confidence to continue education	12	14.0
<u>Child Rearing</u>		
Lack of time for children	40	46.5
Lack of support of another adult in child rearing	53	61.6
Feelings of parental inadequacy	44	51.2
^a Concern about lack of male model	43	50.0
^a Feeling "trapped" by children	19	22.1
^a Difficulty in disciplining children	18	20.9
^a Disagreements with children's father over child rearing	7	8.1

^aThese items represent responses to open-ended questions; endorsement frequencies would be expected to be lower for these items than for items from the problem checklists.

Table 3-3 (cont.)

Source of Problem	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Female Companionship</u>		
Difficulty forming friendships with women	28	32.6
Feeling uncomfortable with married women	45	52.3
Difficulty finding opportunities to meet other single mothers	35	40.7
^a Loss of female friends upon becoming a single mother	11	12.8
^a Lack of time for female friends	9	10.5
^a Difficulty trusting women	10	11.6
<u>Male Companionship</u>		
Difficulty finding opportunities to meet men	50	58.1
Difficulty with children accepting mother's dating situation	25	29.1
Difficulty with male friends' understanding single mother's responsibilities	37	43.0
^a Difficulty trusting men	11	12.8
<u>Leisure Time</u>		
Lack of free time	54	62.8
Too much free time	19	22.1
Lack of opportunities to go out	42	48.8
^a Lack of money for leisure-time activities	18	20.9
^a Lack of child care for leisure-time activities	14	16.3

^aThese items represent responses to open-ended questions; endorsement frequencies would be expected to be lower for these items than for items from the problem checklists.

Table 3-3 (cont.)

Source of Problem	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Leisure Time (cont.)</u>		
^a Guilt feelings for enjoying self	9	10.5
^a Lack of non-couple-oriented activities	7	8.1
<u>Social Acceptance</u>		
Discomfort in social situations due to single parent status	32	37.2
Worry about other people's opinions	45	52.3
Lack of acceptance by children's teachers	23	26.7
^a Lack of acceptance by relatives	11	12.8
^a Lack of acceptance by neighbors	9	10.5
^a Lack of acceptance by couples	21	24.4
<u>Feelings about Self</u>		
Feeling that no one else has similar problems	38	44.2
Lack of confidence in own decisions	55	64.0
Feeling worthless as a person	38	44.2
^a Feeling depressed	25	29.1
^a Feelings of guilt	20	23.3
^a Weight problem	5	5.8
^a Negative attitudes toward marriage	5	5.8

^aThese items represent responses to open-ended questions; endorsement frequencies would be expected to be lower for these items than for items from the problem sheklists.

related problems were causing them the greatest amount of concern. Child-rearing problems were ranked second most frequently, followed by a variety of other problem areas at much lower frequencies. Table 3-4 displays the number of times each problem area was ranked as one of the three most serious concerns and the median rank calculated for each area.

Table 3-4
Problem Area Rankings According to Degree of Concern

Problem Area	Median Rank ^a	No. of Times Ranked in Top 3 Problem Areas
Money	1.14	71
Child Rearing	2.37	58
Male Companionship	3.25	29
Child Care	3.35	20
Employment	3.38	17
Feelings about Self	3.38	17
Education	3.39	16
Leisure Time	3.43	11
Housing	3.46	7
Female Companionship	3.49	2
Social Acceptance	4.00	0

^aIn the scoring system used, a median rank of one would indicate a "most serious" ranking by all women; a median rank of four would be calculated when a problem area had not been ranked by any of the women.

The women's own evaluations of their success in dealing with each of the eleven problem areas were assessed by having them rate each area of difficulty as "getting worse," "getting better," or "staying about the same." Tabulations of these ratings are presented in Table 3-5.

Table 3-5
Ratings of Perceived Success in Dealing with Problem Areas

Problem Area	Rating			Median Rating
	Worse (-1)	Same (0)	Better (+1)	
Money	20	45	21	.01
Housing	4	65	17	.10
Child Care	13	50	23	.10
Employment	9	67	10	.00
Education	7	66	13	.05
Child Rearing	19	26	41	.42
Female Companionship	6	59	21	.13
Male Companionship	15	34	37	.32
Leisure Time	14	51	21	.07
Social Acceptance	2	52	32	.29
Feelings about Self	9	33	44	.52

As is shown in Table 3-5, median ratings for most problem areas were close to the neutral rating of zero; the majority of women perceived their problems in most areas as staying about the same. Exceptions existed in the areas of child rearing, male companionship, social acceptance, and feelings about self; in these areas median ratings ranged from .29 to .52, indicating more positive perceptions of success in dealing with these difficulties.

Periods of Greatest Difficulty. The large majority of the women reported that their most difficult period had occurred within the first year of single motherhood. Fifteen women (18%) stated that the period immediately following physical separation from their husbands had been the most difficult. Another 13 women (15%) experienced greatest difficulty during actual divorce proceedings. Eleven women (13%) pinpointed the first six months of single motherhood; 25 others (29%) reported the first year as being most difficult. Four women who had never married (5%) stated that the time immediately following their first child's birth had been most problematic. In sum, 82% of the women interviewed listed some period during the first year as being most difficult.

Self-Definitions

In an attempt to determine what sorts of role-definitions single mothers ascribed to themselves, the women were asked to choose best-fitting role descriptions from among a list of alternatives. Tabulated responses to this task are presented in Table 3-6.

There appeared to be no one role-definition which the single mothers ascribed to themselves. Some of the most frequently-chosen definitions--woman, mother, single woman, career woman--are rather general terms, not specific to the status of women raising children

alone. The inclusion of the "mother" role in the chosen self-definition seemed to be relatively important: the word "mother" appeared in the choices of 38% of the women. It was not as pervasive as might have been predicted, however; 62% of the women did not include the "mother" role in their self-definitions.

The term "single mother" was chosen relatively infrequently (by only 15% of the total sample), despite the increasing popularity of the term among women's organizations and in popular literature. Choices of older, more negative terms such as "divorcee" and "unwed mother" were, however, even more infrequent (9% of the total).

Table 3-6
Tabulation of Chosen Role Descriptions

Role Description	Frequency	Percentage
Woman	19	22.1
Mother	17	19.8
Single Mother	13	15.1
Single Woman	11	12.8
Career Woman	11	12.8
Divorcee	5	5.8
Unwed Mother	3	3.5
Other	7	8.2

Social Interaction and Support

Number of Close Friends. The median number of close friends reported was found to be 4.56, with a range from zero (reported by two women) to twelve.

Contact with Other Single Mothers. The median number of acquaintances who were single mothers was found to be 4.77, with a range from zero to fifty. Four women reported having never met another single mother; an additional 21 had met only one or two.

The median number of close friends who were single mothers was 1.24, with a range from zero to fifteen. Twenty-six women reported having no close friends who were single mothers; an additional 23 reported having only one.

Dating. Forty-three of the women interviewed (50% of the sample) reported having an ongoing relationship with one man at the time of the interview. An additional 12 women (14%) were dating frequently or regularly. Twelve women (14%) reported dating occasionally. Nineteen women (22%) said that they dated rarely or never.

Sources of Emotional Support. In order to find out what types of significant others were relied upon for emotional support, the single mothers were asked to choose, in rank order, three people from among a list of possible sources of support. Tabulations of responses to this task are presented in Table 3-7.

As can be seen from the relatively high median ranks across all potential sources of emotional support listed in Table 3-7, there was much individual variation within the group of single mothers on this variable. "A male friend" was clearly the most frequently chosen alternative: 54% of the women ranked a person in this relationship as among their most important three sources of emotional support. Moreover,

Table 3-7

Rankings of Sources of Emotional Support

Source of Support	Median Rank ^a	No. of Times Ranked in Top 3 Sources
Male Friend	2.75	46
Children	3.07	40
Parents	3.09	39
Female Friend (not single mother)	3.11	38
Single Mother Friend	3.19	33
Female Relative	3.29	26
Therapist	3.46	6
Social Worker	3.48	3
Minister	3.48	4
Male Relative	3.48	2
Child's Father	3.48	4

^aIn the scoring system used, a median rank of one would indicate that all women reported receiving their primary emotional support from a given source; a median rank of four would be given to sources receiving no endorsement as a source of emotional support.

among the 46 women who ranked a male friend as a source of support, 37, or 80%, listed this person as their primary source.

Second most frequently ranked alternatives were the woman's children and her parents, a finding not too surprising since one generally expects the immediate family to provide its members a great deal of emotional support. The relatively high ranking of the women's children as providers of emotional support was unexpected in this sample, however, since the median age of the oldest child in these families was only nine. The majority of the women interviewed had children who might be considered too young to be able to provide emotional support for their mothers.

The next most frequently ranked sources of support involved female friends and non-parental relatives, including other single mothers. While the median ranks for these alternatives were relatively high, female friends were seldom chosen as most important sources of support; they were most frequently picked as second or third in importance.

Lowest rankings were given to "professional supporters"--therapists, social workers, and ministers--and to male relatives and former spouses. The women interviewed apparently saw these sources as providing them little emotional support.

Goals for the Future

Two open-ended questions were asked in order to determine what sorts of changes the women wanted in their lifestyles and what sorts of goals they had for the future. The first was a fantasy question asking what they would change given magical powers to reorder their lives. Categorized responses to this item are presented in Table 3-8.

The most frequent response to this question was the desire to be married, a wish reported by 43% of the women interviewed. While this

Table 3-8

Tabulations of Wished-for Changes

Desired Change	Frequency	Percentage
Be married	37	43.0
Have financial security	23	26.7
Have a good job	15	17.4
Not have to work	13	15.1
Better house or apartment	12	14.0
Have more education	11	12.8
Not have gotten married	9	10.5
Not have had children	9	10.5
Be in better mental health	7	8.1
Be in better physical health	3	3.5
Be able to travel	3	3.5
Have more friends	3	3.5

frequency of response was high, its converse was higher: 57% did not mention marriage as a wished-for change.

The next five responses listed in Table 3-8 relate to financial security, employment, housing, and education, all of which deal, at least tangentially, with the issue of money. The high response frequencies in these areas are in line with the previously discussed ranking of money-related problems as the most pressing among the single mothers interviewed.

Past-oriented wishes of not having gotten married and not having had children were each reported by 10% of the women. (These responses were not made by the same women--the two items have an intercorrelation of only .26.) These response frequencies are not particularly high but, considering the social desirability factors which must mitigate against such responses, should be seen as a substantial indication that these feelings exist among single mothers.

The second free-response item asked what sorts of realistic goals the women had for the future. Categorized responses to this question are displayed in Table 3-9.

By far the most commonly reported goals related to child-rearing: 73% of the women listed "doing a good job of raising my children" as one of their most important goals.

Getting married was, again, a frequently-listed goal, reported by 27% of the women. An additional 20% listed "developing a lasting love relationship" which would not necessarily involve marriage. The sum of these response frequencies shows this goal to be quite prevalent but not pervasive, as discussed previously.

The next most frequently mentioned goals related to employment, financial security, housing, and education, in much the same order as

Table 3-9
Tabulations of Goals for the Future

Goal	Frequency	Percentage
Raise children well	63	73.3
Get married	23	26.7
Get a better job	23	26.7
Build financial security	20	23.3
Buy own home	18	20.9
Develop lasting love-relationship	17	19.8
Get more education	16	18.6
Improve self psychologically	15	17.4
Be happy	8	9.3
Lose weight	7	8.1
Travel	7	8.1
Get off AFDC	3	3.5

previously displayed in Table 3-8. In general, the types of goals mentioned conformed quite closely to the changes wished for as reported in response to the preceding question. The major exception was in the area of child-rearing, which was addressed in the fantasy question only by the small minority of women who wished they had not had children.

Service Utilization

The women interviewed were found to have had little experience with many of the local services designed specifically for single mothers. With the exception of the obligatory financial aid services, Aid to Families with Dependent Children and the Friend of the Court, utilization rates were low--under ten percent for most services. Some of the programs were fairly widely known, however; particularly those with frequent media exposure such as Big Brothers and Parents Without Partners. Percentages of women who reported having heard of or having used each of the services listed are presented in Table 3-10.

Only two of the services listed had been used by more than half of the women interviewed. The services of AFDC were familiar to all the women and had been used at some point by nearly 63% of them. This is hardly surprising since AFDC stands as the only source of financial support for most nonworking single mothers. One finding is worthy of special note: of the 54 women who had received AFDC benefits at some point during single motherhood, only 39 were receiving benefits at the time of the interview. Twenty-eight percent of the one-time AFDC recipients were supporting themselves through combinations of job earnings and child support at the time they were interviewed.

The Friend of the Court was also known to nearly all the women interviewed. It, too, is an obligatory financial aid service, being the court's enforcement arm for collection of paternal child support payments.

Table 3-10

Knowledge and Utilization of Single Mother Services

Service or Organization	Percent Who Knew of Service	Percent Who Had Used Service
Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)	100	62.8
Big Brothers/Big Sisters	95.3	16.3
Friend of the Court	94.2	51.2
Parents Without Partners	83.7	18.7
Catholic Social Services	58.1	3.5
Family and Child Services	55.8	9.3
Single Parents Club	39.5	2.3
Solo Parents Club	37.2	7.0
Women's Center	23.3	7.0
Open Door Women's Program	15.1	0.0
Michigan State University Women's Resource Center	15.1	1.2
Lansing Community College Women's Center	9.3	0.0

Fifty-one percent of the women had dealt with this office directly. This figure is particularly interesting in that it reflects primarily the percentage of women who had had difficulty in obtaining support payments. Personal contact with the Friend of the Court is generally not necessary except in cases with collection or payment level problems.

The Big Brothers and Big Sisters programs were known to 95% of the women but had been used by only 16%. This service has been widely publicized in the media but has experienced difficulty in recruiting volunteers to provide its services. An additional eight women reported having tried to enroll their sons in the program only to be put on a long waiting list or to be told that their sons were too young for the program.

The two family counseling agencies with programs for single parents--Catholic Social Services and Family and Child Services--were each known to over half the women interviewed but had been utilized by only 4% and 9%, respectively.

Only one of the social organizations was recognized by a large percentage of the single mothers. The national organization, Parents Without Partners, was known to 84% and had been used by 19%. The majority of the women who reported having utilized the service, however, had made only one experimental visit to a club social function. Only two of the women interviewed were regular members of the organization. The two local clubs for single parents--the Single Parents Club and the Solo Parents Club--were familiar to less than 40% of the women and had been visited by very few. None of the women reported belonging to either group.

The women's self-help organizations with programs for single mothers shared the lowest recognition and utilization rates. These programs, with the possible exception of the Open Door Program, have been oriented primarily toward younger, college-age women and have not

been highly publicized. The fact that they had not been heard of or utilized by the sample of women interviewed is not particularly surprising.

Since utilization rates for most of the services listed were found to be low, the question of satisfaction with services received was, in most cases, impossible to evaluate. Some meaningful information was obtained, however, in regard to satisfaction with the few services which had been fairly widely used.

Of the 49 women who had had direct contact with the office of the Friend of the Court, 30 (61%) reported having been dissatisfied with its services. The most frequently cited reason for dissatisfaction was ineffectiveness in terms of enforcing court-ordered paternal child support agreements. Other women disliked the coercive tactics used by the office; some reported that they or their children had been abused by their former spouses following threats of arrest for non-support made by the Friend of the Court.

Thirty of the 54 women (56%) who had received AFDC benefits felt dissatisfied with the services provided by this agency. Reasons most frequently given were (1) inadequate benefit levels; (2) excessive red tape; (3) impersonal attitudes of caseworkers; and (4) embarrassing checks for fraudulent claims, including questioning of neighbors and friends.

A surprising nine of the fourteen women whose children had had Big Brothers or Big Sisters reported being dissatisfied. All of these women gave bad experiences with unreliable or unstable volunteers as the reason for their dissatisfaction. Several reported that their child's volunteer had simply disappeared without warning, leaving the child confused and hurt; others reported conflicts with the volunteer over more specific issues such as supervision of the child, appropriate activities, etc.

Dissatisfaction with Parents Without Partners was similarly high--twelve of the sixteen women who had attended a Parents Without Partners function had not felt comfortable with the organization. Those dissatisfied unanimously reported discomfort with the "coupling" expectations of the group, stating that they felt they were on display for the male minority of the club.

Reactions to Proposed Programs

In order to determine what additional types of services or programs would be seen as useful by single mothers themselves, the women were asked to choose from among brief descriptions of proposed programs those which seemed appealing. They were also asked to describe additional program ideas of their own. Frequencies of endorsement of each of the program descriptions provided and categorized responses to the open-ended question are presented in Table 3-11.

Willingness to Work on New Programs

A surprisingly large number of the single mothers indicated an interest in meeting and working with other single mothers to implement new programs on their own behalf. Seventy-five women (87%) expressed interest in attending an initial problem-solving meeting, while sixty-one (71%) indicated willingness to work toward setting up new programs. This apparent interest may be deceptive, however, given the acquiescence effects involved.

Table 3-11

Tabulations of Endorsement of Proposed Programs

Proposed Service	Frequency	Percentage
Mother-child recreational activities	54	62.8
Class on "Survival Skills for Single Mothers"	39	45.3
Parent-child communication workshops	34	39.5
Single mother rap groups	33	38.4
Counseling services specifically for single-mother families	31	36.0
Task force of single mothers to communicate with agencies and institutions	30	34.9
Resource sharing among single mothers	24	27.9
Cooperative child care	22	25.6
Coffee house or center for single mothers	18	20.9
^a Recreational programs for children	17	19.8
Emergency temporary housing	14	16.5
^a School lunch program for children	13	15.1
^a Hotline counseling for single parents	9	10.5
^a Big Brothers for boys under age 9	6	7.0
^a Increased single-mother participation in schools	6	7.0
^a More information about existing services	5	5.8
^a Rap groups for children of single mothers	4	4.7
^a Peer counseling for divorcing women	4	4.7
^a Directory of babysitters	3	3.5
Residential cooperative	2	2.3

^aThese items represent responses to open-ended questions.

Correlates of Adjustment

As outlined in Chapter 2, stepwise regression procedures were used to examine the relationships between fourteen situational and support variables and the two indices of adjustment to single motherhood. The first of these indices, the depression scale, was found to have a mean of 16.58 and a standard deviation of 3.49. The optimism scale had a mean of 16.23 and a standard deviation of 3.12. Both measures showed adequate variance to act as criterion variables.

Prior to the regression analysis, the intercorrelations among the predictor variables were inspected for colinearity. The matrix of correlations among these predictors may be found in Table 3-12. The mean intercorrelation was found to be .14, with only two correlations exceeding .50. The predictors did not appear to contain excessive colinearity. The two measures of adjustment were found to be correlated at -.41.

The correlations between individual predictor variables and the two indices of adjustment were surprisingly low, as can be seen in Table 3-12. None exceeded .35. The results of the two regression analyses confirmed this generally low linear relationship.

Prediction of Depression

Thirty-four percent of the variance in depression scores could be accounted for by the linear combination of all fourteen predictor variables. This R^2 of .34 was significant at $\alpha = .005$ ($F=2.59$). However, only three of the predictors--dating frequency, amount of contact with other single mothers, and number of children--made a significant unique contribution to the prediction. The first two showed a negative relationship with depression, while the third, number of children, was positively associated with the depression index. With

Table 3-12

Matrix of Intercorrelations Among Situational Variables and Adjustment Indices

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(1) Mother's Age								
(2) No. Adults in home	.00							
(3) Employment	-.03	-.12						
(4) Receipt of AFDC	-.14	.19	-.41					
(5) Education	.00	-.01	-.01	-.19				
(6) No. children	.15	.08	-.02	.09	-.21			
(7) No. close friends	-.11	-.03	.11	.02	.34	-.01		
(8) Dating frequency	-.26	-.04	.13	.08	.21	-.16	.08	
(9) Emotional support from children	.10	-.07	.08	-.18	-.04	-.04	-.07	-.02
(10) Income	-.09	-.10	.49	-.67	.32	-.47	.06	.17
(11) Age of youngest child	.54	-.16	.07	-.41	.10	-.25	-.02	-.06
(12) Contact with single mothers	.24	-.11	.09	.04	-.01	.12	.28	.08
(13) Children's contact with father	.07	-.03	.16	-.06	.01	.09	.22	-.15
(14) No. months as single mother	.31	-.16	.03	.01	-.13	-.11	-.11	-.11
(15) Optimism	.05	-.10	.17	-.14	.19	.01	.33	.30
(16) Depression	-.16	.09	-.08	.02	-.23	.25	-.13	-.35

Table 3-12 (cont.)

Variables	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)
(1) Mother's age							
(2) No. Adults in home							
(3) Employment							
(4) Receipt of AFDC							
(5) Education							
(6) No. children							
(7) No. close friends							
(8) Dating frequency							
(9) Emotional support from children							
(10) Income	.00						
(11) Age of youngest child	-.05	.35					
(12) Contact with single mothers	.05	-.04	.16				
(13) Children's contact with father	.04	-.06	-.17	.16			
(14) No. months as single mother	.22	-.11	.05	.31	-.01		
(15) Optimism	.06	.17	-.15	.14	.22	-.11	
(16) Depression	-.11	-.13	-.15	-.27	-.15	-.13	-.41

only these three variables in the equation, the amount of variance accounted for was reduced to 24% ($R^2=.24$) but was still statistically significant at $\alpha=.001$ ($F=8.42$). The standardized Beta weights for these three predictors and their associated F values may be found in Table 3-13.

Table 3-13
Significant Beta Weights for Prediction of Depression

Predictor Variables	Standardized Beta Weights	F
Dating Frequency	-.271	7.43
Contact with Single Mothers	-.273	7.88
Number of Children	.212	4.49

Prediction of Optimism

Only twenty-eight percent of the variance in the optimism scale could be accounted for by the linear combination of all fourteen predictor variables. This R^2 of .28 was significant at $\alpha=.03$ ($F=1.99$). Three of these variables made significant unique contributions to the prediction: number of close friends, dating frequency, and frequency of children's contact with their father. All three predictors were positively related to optimism. With only these three variables in the equation, the amount of variance accounted for was slightly reduced to 22% ($R^2=.22$), which was statistically significant at $\alpha=.001$ ($F=7.72$). The standardized Beta weights for these three predictors and their associated F values may be found in Table 3-14.

Table 3-14

Significant Beta Weights for Prediction of Optimism

Predictor Variables	Standardized Beta Weights	F
Number of close friends	.248	5.31
Dating frequency	.291	8.07
Frequency of children's contact with father	.195	3.52

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The single mothers interviewed during this study provided a great deal of useful information about their lives. Many of their reported experiences and perceptions confirmed previous authors' speculation about their lifestyles. Some, however, did not. In this chapter, the information gained from these interviews will be compared with previous speculation and research about the problems encountered by single mothers and the factors involved in adjustment to the single mother role. Finally, the reactions of single mothers to proposed services will be discussed, and implications of the research for future program development will be explored.

Needs and Problems of Single Mothers and Their Families

Financial Problems

Poverty. The problem most convincingly documented in previous research--poverty--was well-supported in the present sample as well. The median income for these families, sampled in 1975 (\$5,286), was actually over \$1,000 lower than the median income of \$6,400 reported for the U.S. population of single mothers in 1974 (McEaddy, 1976). This apparently greater extent of poverty may actually have been an artifact of the sampling procedure, since the school sample introduced biases associated with area of residence.

The percentage of families at or below the federal poverty index was found to be almost identical to that estimated by McEaddy. His population estimate was 33%; the sample percentage was 34%.

Lack of money was perceived as the major source of their problems by a majority of the women interviewed. Fifty-eight percent listed it as the problem causing them most concern; 87% ranked money as one of their three most difficult problem areas. In more specific terms, 72% of the women reported that their incomes were inadequate to meet their family's needs. In response to open-ended questions, 21% noted that they had no money for leisure-time activities, and 16% said that they lacked funds for emergencies.

Lowered Standard of Living. Several of the women mentioned that their divorce or separation had resulted in a drastic lowering of their family's standard of living. Thirteen percent of the mothers mentioned difficulty in adjusting to this downward social mobility in response to an open-ended question about "other money problems." Others mentioned problems adjusting to the change of residence following separation. This phenomenon was quite pervasive: 87% of the sample had moved into rented housing in the area after becoming single mothers.

Housing. Housing problems were perceived as major areas of concern by only a small portion of the sample (8%). However, 29% reported having experienced difficulty finding housing they could afford and 33% reported difficulty finding housing in an area where they wanted to live. An additional 16% felt they had experienced rental discrimination due to their single parent status, and 38% said that they had been unable to get credit as single mothers.

The apparent discrepancy between the frequency of housing problems encountered and the women's rating of housing as a relatively low priority concern may be reflective of the living situations of the women at the time they were interviewed. Fifty-seven percent of the women were living in relatively new townhouse units in a federally-

subsidized housing complex. For many of the women, moving their families into these low-rent units apparently resolved most of their previous housing problems.

Paternal Child Support. One contributor to poverty among single-mother families--non-support from the children's father--was also prevalent among this sample. Among the 45 women whose ex-husbands had been ordered to pay child support, only 28 (62%) were receiving payments. This percentage seems somewhat better than the 33% to 58% rates reported by Brandwein, Brown, and Fox (1974), but it does not take degree of compliance or regularity of payments into account. Thirty-six women (42% of the sample) mentioned difficulties in obtaining child support payments in response to an open-ended item about "other money problems." This figure indicates the existence of more problems in this area than would be concluded from the number of families receiving support; moreover, even this may be considered an underestimate of the prevalence of child-support problems since the question was not explicitly raised by the interviewer.

Satisfaction with the agency responsible for enforcement of child support payment orders was also low. Sixty-one percent of the women who had had contact with the Friend of the Court found it to be ineffective or felt that its collection tactics were overly coercive.

Employment. A majority of the single mothers interviewed were employed outside the home (59%), although only 47% were employed full-time. These percentages were fairly similar to those reported by McEaddy (1976) and Stein (1970). Only 17% of the women were providing their total incomes from job earnings. The remaining 42% of working mothers derived some portion of their incomes from paternal child support, AFDC, or Social Security.

Employment and education were frequently mentioned as areas of concern. Thirty-three percent of the women reported problems in finding a well-paying job, and 50% perceived that they lacked adequate job skills. Forty-seven percent reported that they lacked the money to continue their educations, and 58% noted that they lacked the time to go back to school. Additionally, 13% of the women mentioned, in response to an open-ended question, that they had experienced job discrimination due to their single parent status. Employment was listed among the three problems causing greatest concern by 20% of the women; education was so ranked by 18%.

AFDC. Forty-five percent of the women were receiving AFDC assistance at the time of the interviews. An additional 17% had received AFDC support at some point but were currently employed and supporting their families through job earnings. Dissatisfaction with AFDC services was widespread. The widely-reported complaints of low payment levels, excessive red tape, impersonal caseworkers, and social stigma were repeated by this sample.

Financial Goals. A number of the goals listed by the single mothers related to financial improvement: 27% said that they wanted to get better jobs; 23% planned to build financial security for their families; 21% wanted to buy their own homes; 19% intended to get more education; and 4% specifically wanted to be able to get off AFDC.

Summary. Most of the financial problems mentioned in previous research were found among this sample of single mothers. The median income for this group was lower even than that estimated for the national population of single mothers. A majority of the women felt that money was their most severe problem. A substantial portion of the women had experienced housing problems, although most were fairly satisfied with

their current living situations. Many had experienced difficulty obtaining paternal child support, and a large number felt that the court's enforcement arm was ineffective in helping them. The majority of the single mothers were working outside the home, most of them full time. Half the women, however, felt that their job skills were inadequate and listed lack of both money and time as blocks to furthering their education. Nearly half the women interviewed were receiving AFDC assistance at the time of the interviews, and nearly two-thirds had received AFDC at some point. Many of these women had been dissatisfied with some aspect of AFDC services.

Although financial goals were not pervasive among this group of single mothers, nearly two-thirds listed some sort of financial improvement as an important plan for the future. The majority appeared to share the goal held by many family heads, both male and female-- providing financial security for their families.

Child-Rearing Problems

Child-rearing problems or concerns were ranked second to money as major sources of worry among the women interviewed. Sixty-seven percent of the single mothers ranked problems in raising their children as among the three areas causing them most concern; 20% listed child-rearing problems as their largest area of difficulty.

Sole-Parent Responsibilities. The most frequently voiced concern was exhaustion or frustration from raising their children without the aid and support of another adult (reported by 62%). The reality of this concern was emphasized by the apparent lack of involvement of the children's fathers in their lives. Only 16% of the children in the sampled families saw their fathers as frequently as once a month. Half the children never saw their fathers or had contact with them less than once a year.

Forty-seven percent of the women reported that the multiple responsibilities of single parenthood left them with insufficient time to spend with their children. This finding provides some support for Glasser and Navarre's (1965) structural perspective on the limited resources contained within the one-parent family. Other experiences reported by the women may lend credence to other parts of Glasser and Navarre's theory. In response to open-ended questions about "other child-rearing problems," 22% reported feeling "trapped" by their children, and 21% said that they had trouble disciplining their children. Both reactions were listed by Glasser and Navarre as dangers inherent in the "affectionally unstable" family with only one adult. These reactions, however, were not pervasive among the single mothers interviewed and, in any case, may be quite universal parental feelings, common in two-parent as well as one-parent homes.

The women's perceptions of their children as sources of emotional support were also predicted by the structural analysis perspective. Glasser and Navarre warned that the shortage of adult affectional resources in the one-parent family might lead single parents to make unrealistic emotional demands on their children. In this sample, 47% of the women listed their children among their three most important sources of emotional support; 19% saw their children as their most important source of support. These percentages are particularly surprising in light of the fact that the median age of the oldest child among the families sampled was only nine. The majority of the women interviewed had children generally considered to be too young to provide emotional support for a parent.

Glasser and Navarre (1965) might interpret this finding as an example of inappropriate expectations forced upon children in families

which lack adult resources. However, it is also possible that single mothers are able to derive support from their children without making unrealistic emotional demands upon them. The question is unanswerable without research into the structure and function of interactions within one-parent families.

Concern about Parental Adequacy. Approximately half of the women reported concerns about their children's development in a single-mother home. Fifty-one percent reported feelings of inadequacy as a parent, while 50% mentioned concern over the lack of a male model for their sons in response to an open-ended question about "other child-rearing problems" Given that references to "male role models" were initiated by the mothers themselves, this latter percentage seems quite high. These concerns could represent accurate appraisals by the women of their parenting abilities. They could also, however, reflect the anxieties to which popular overgeneralizations from the father-absence literature have contributed.

Child Care. A sizeable proportion of the women interviewed had experienced problems in finding adequate child care facilities. Child care problems were given the fourth highest ranking in terms of amount of current concern, being ranked among the top three problem areas by 23% of the women. Forty-eight percent reported difficulty obtaining quality child care that they could afford. Thirty-one percent had had trouble finding child care during the hours that they needed substitute care. In response to an open-ended question about "other child care problems," 13% reported problems caused by high babysitter turnover, and 19% noted that the local elementary school's lack of a supervised lunch period posed special child care problems for them.

Lack of child care was also mentioned as an impediment to the single mothers' activities. In response to open-ended questions, 16% listed child care problems as a block to continuing their education, and 16% mentioned lack of child care as limiting their leisure-time activities. Additionally, 17% of the women noted that they had experienced problems finding a job which allowed them the flexibility needed for sole-parent child-rearing. This problem could be linked at least partially to inadequate or unreliable child care arrangements and to the difficulty of finding contingency or emergency child care.

Child-Rearing Goals. The most frequently-mentioned goal for the future related to child-rearing: 73% of the women listed raising their children well as an important goal. Eleven percent, however, admitted the wish that they had not had children. This percentage is not particularly large but, given the social desirability factors which must mitigate against such responses, should be seen as substantial. It is unknown how pervasive such feelings may be among married parents.

Summary. Many of the child-rearing concerns thought to be problematic for single mothers were reported among this sample of women. The general area of child-rearing problems received the second highest ranking in terms of current concern, following money-related problems. Most of the women appeared to have fairly complete responsibility for the upbringing of their children: only 17% of the children in the sampled families had contact with their fathers as frequently as once a month; half saw their fathers very rarely or never. Nearly two-thirds of the women reported feelings of exhaustion resulting from this sole responsibility. Nearly half reported having insufficient time to spend with their children. Feeling "trapped" and having trouble disciplining

their children were each mentioned by approximately 20% of the women. Surprisingly, nearly half the mothers perceived their children as major sources of emotional support. All of these reports could provide evidence for Glasser and Navarre's (1965) notion that single-parent families have inherent structural resource deficits. They do not, however, provide direct support for their contention that single-parent families are emotionally dangerous for either parents or children.

Parental anxieties were also reported: fears of inadequacy as a parent and concern over the lack of a male model for their children were each voiced by 50% of the women. These concerns may reflect popular conceptions about the inferiority of single-mother families more than accurate appraisals of parental adequacy.

Child care problems received the fourth highest overall ranking of areas of concern. Nearly half the women reported trouble finding good, affordable child care. More specific child care problems, such as lack of extended-hour facilities, babysitter turnover, and lack of supervised school lunch programs were also mentioned. Child care problems were quite prevalent despite the fact that 78% of the women had no preschool-age children. These problems might be expected to be more numerous (or at least different) in samples of women with younger children.

The desire to do a good job of raising their children was the most widespread goal for the future among these single mothers, reported by nearly 75% of the women. Like the goal of financial security, this desire would seem to be common among most parents, both married and single.

Social Interaction

Social isolation has frequently been mentioned in the literature as a major problem for single mothers. A large number of women reported

difficulties in this area, although they did not appear to be as isolated as previous writers have speculated.

Male Companionship. The third most pressing concern ranked by the sample was the area of male companionship: 34% of the women ranked this issue among their three biggest concerns. Finding a male companion was listed as an important goal for nearly half the women interviewed: 27% included getting married as a goal for the future, while 20% mentioned developing a lasting love relationship which would not necessarily involve marriage.

A number of women had experienced problems in pursuing these goals. Fifty-eight percent reported difficulty in finding opportunities to meet men. Forty-three percent reported problems with male friends' understanding their responsibilities as single mothers, and 29% mentioned conflicts with their children over the mother's dating situation. Thirteen percent mentioned that they found it difficult to trust men.

Despite these problems, a large percentage of the women reported fairly frequent dating activity. Half the women said that they had an ongoing relationship with one man. An additional 14% were dating frequently or regularly, and 14% were dating occasionally. Only 22% reported dating rarely or never. Male friends were also the most frequently-ranked source of emotional support: 54% listed a person in this relationship as among their top three sources of support; 43% listed a male friend as their most important source of support.

Female Companionship. Female companionship was not given a high priority in terms of either pressing current concerns or goals for the future. Although most women did not rank this area as a major concern or mention it as a goal, many did report having experienced problems

related to female friends. Thirty-three percent reported having difficulty forming friendships with other women, and 41% had found it difficult to meet other single mothers. Thirteen percent mentioned that they had lost female friends when they became single mothers. This percentage is not particularly large but, given that it represents responses to an open-ended question, should be seen as substantial. The perception of this phenomenon, along with the report by 52% of the women that they felt uncomfortable with married women, may provide some support for Hunt's (1966) contention that divorcing people drift away from married friends and into a "World of the Formerly Married."

Reports of actual contact with other single mothers were high, but not universal. The majority of the women said that they had met several other single mothers, although 5% said they knew none and 24% had met only one or two. Thirty percent reported having no close friends who were single mothers, and 27% said that only one of their close friends was a single mother. This reported contact shows some evidence of a social network among single mothers, but it does not seem as pervasive as Hunt's analysis would suggest.

Other single mothers were a fairly frequent perceived source of emotional support. Thirty-eight percent of the women listed a single mother as a major source of support, although only 7% ranked a single mother as the primary source. Female friends who were not single mothers were ranked even more frequently, by 44% of the sample. Only 4% ranked a non-single-mother female friend as the primary source of support.

With single mother and non-single mother categories combined, female friends were ranked more frequently as sources of emotional

than were male freinds. In general, however, male friends were ranked as primary sources of support while female friends were ranked as second or third in importance. This pattern appears to parallel the traditional norms of society at large, with women deriving primary emotional support from a heterosexual relationship and secondary support from one or more female friends.

Social Acceptance. Although social acceptance problems were not ranked as major concerns by any of the single mothers, a number of women reported experiences of social stigma or social discomfort. Fifty-two percent reported worrying about other people's opinions of them as single mothers. Thirty-seven percent had experienced discomfort in social situations due to their single parent status. Other women mentioned problems in being accepted by various segments of society: their children's teachers (27%), couples (24%), and neighbors (11%). Additional forms of discrimination were reported in employment (13%), housing (16%), and credit (38%).

Although 13% of the women mentioned lack of acceptance by relatives, a larger number ranked relatives as major sources of emotional support. Forty-five percent ranked their parents, and 30% ranked female non-parental relatives.

In general, although substantial numbers of women reported encountering instances of social stigma, discrimination, and discomfort, these experiences were apparently not seen as overwhelmingly problematic. These issues seemed less important to this sample of women than would have been predicted from the literature. The increasing commonness of single-mother families in recent years may have lessened the social stigma reported by Goode (1956) and other earlier researchers.

Social Activities. Although leisure-time problems were ranked as important concerns by only 13% of the women, a large percentage reported having encountered difficulties in this area. Lack of free time was mentioned as a problem by 63%, while having too much free time was a problem for 22% of the women. Forty-nine percent reported that they lacked opportunities to go out socially. In response to open-ended questions, 21% noted that they lacked money for leisure-time activities, while 16% said that lack of child care inhibited them from going out. Eight percent noted that there was a shortage of activities oriented toward people other than couples. Eleven percent reported that they felt guilty about enjoying themselves socially.

Despite these problems, the majority of women appeared to engage in some social activities. Ninety-eight percent reported having at least one close friend, and 60% reported dating regularly.

Single-Parent Social Organizations. While most of the women had heard of at least one of the local social organizations for single parents, very few had had contact with any of them. The most widely utilized, Parents Without Partners, had been visited by 19% of the women. Only two of these, however, had joined the organization. The remainder had not felt comfortable with the perceived expectation that members date each other and had not joined.

Summary. Many of the social interaction problems mentioned in the literature had been experienced by substantial percentages of the women in this sample. Most of them however, seemed to have resolved or adjusted to many of these problems and appeared to be less socially isolated than previous writers have suggested.

Male companionship received the third highest ranking as an area of concern, following money and child-rearing. Getting married or

developing a lasting love-relationship were also the second most frequently mentioned goals, after child-rearing goals. Although many problems had been encountered in meeting potential companions and resolving dating conflicts with their children, a large number of the women were apparently dealing with these problems: 50% of the women had established an ongoing relationship and an additional 28% were dating with some frequency. Over half the women listed a male friend as an important source of emotional support.

Although female companionship was not listed as a major source of concern and was not addressed as a goal for the future, many of the women reported difficulties in meeting other single mothers, forming friendships with women, and feeling uncomfortable with married women. A small percentage also reported having lost female friends when they became single mothers. Despite these problems, most of the sample appeared to have contact with other women. Over two-thirds of the women had at least one close friend who was also a single mother. Female friends (both single mothers and others) were also the most frequently ranked sources of emotional support.

Problems of social stigma, social discomfort, and discrimination were frequently reported, although they were not ranked as areas of major concern. Similarly, problems related to leisure time and social activity were common but were perceived as major concerns by few women. The major organization which specifically addresses the social interaction problems of single parents, Parents Without Partners, had been investigated by fewer than 20% of the women. The majority of these had felt that this organization could not meet their needs and had not joined.

Although a variety of the social interaction and social isolation difficulties mentioned in the literature had been experienced by this

group of single mothers, the difficulties did not seem as universal or as problematic as previously suggested. Only one area, male companionship, was ranked as a major concern or listed as an important goal. Many of the women appeared to be resolving these problems on their own, reporting fairly frequent dating and social interaction. Others appeared to perceive these problems as of lower priority than more pressing concerns such as money and child-rearing.

Emotional Adjustment

Several authors (Berkman, 1969; Pearlin and Johnson, 1977; Renne, 1971) have reported higher incidence of emotional problems among single mothers than among other groups of people. While it was not the purpose of this study to make such comparisons or to do intensive examinations of emotional health, some indices of adjustment were included in the interviews.

Perceived Emotional Problems. Emotional adjustment to single motherhood was ranked as a major area of concern by only 19% of the women. Higher percentages, however, indicated that they had experienced one or more adjustment difficulties. Sixty-four percent reported lacking confidence in their own decisions, and 44% reported having felt worthless as a person. Despite the fact that over two-thirds of the women had friends who were single mothers, 44% said that they felt no one else had encountered problems similar to theirs. In response to an open-ended question about emotional adjustment, 29% reported feelings of depression and 23% reported guilt feelings. In response to the fantasy question about changes they would like in their lives, 8% wished for better mental health. Seventeen percent listed some sort of psychological improvement as a goal for the future.

Periods of Greatest Difficulty. In concurrence with speculation in the literature, the vast majority of the women (82%) listed the first year of single motherhood as the most difficult. Only 14% of the sample had been single mothers for less than a year at the time they were interviewed.

Role Descriptions. Goode (1956) hypothesized that successful adjustment to single motherhood involved developing present- rather than past-oriented role perceptions. Only 9% of the women in this sample chose self-descriptors which might be classified as "past-oriented"-- divorcee or unwed mother. The majority chose terms not limited to single mothers--woman, mother, single woman, career woman. Only 15% chose the term single mother. The popularity of the general terms may provide some indication that the "single mother role" was not the most salient feature of most of these women's lives.

A large majority of the women also appeared present- and future-oriented in their wishes for change in their lives. Past-oriented wishes, such as "not having gotten married" or "not having had children" were each listed by only 11% of the sample. In general, the wished-for changes closely paralleled the list of goals for the future, indicating a fairly realistic, present-oriented perception of life among most of the women.

Summary. Emotional adjustment was seen as a major area of concern by less than 20% of the women interviewed. A number of women reported having encountered emotional problems such as lack of self-confidence, feelings of isolation and worthlessness, depression, and guilt. The majority, however, could look back and perceive that their most difficult period of adjustment, generally some time during the

first year, was behind them. The majority of the women chose present-oriented role descriptors and listed future-oriented, realistic wishes for change in their lives. In general, although the women had encountered emotional adjustment difficulties, most appeared to be making the necessary adjustments better than previous literature has suggested.

Mediators of Adjustment

Demographic, situational, and social support factors were mentioned in the literature as possible mediators of adjustment to single motherhood. A number of these variables were included in this study and were used in multiple regression analyses predicting two indices of emotional adjustment.

Many of these factors showed no significant linear relationship with the indices of optimism and depression used in this study. The variables which did not have a significant bivariate correlation with either adjustment measure included demographic factors such as age, employment, receipt of AFDC, income, age of youngest child, and number of adults in the home. Although these factors had been speculated to be important mediators of adjustment, they were not found to correlate with the adjustment indices used with this sample.

Although most of the women indicated that their adjustment to single motherhood had improved with time, the length of time spent as a single mother did not show a significant linear relationship with either depression or optimism. As noted earlier, only 14% of the sample had been single mothers for less than one year; the distribution of this variable could account for the lack of a significant correlation with adjustment.

Another variable thought by Glasser and Navarre (1965) to correlate with adjustment, reliance upon children as a source of emotional support,

also showed no significant linear relationship with optimism or depression. Perhaps the perception of one's children as a source of support may not be as negative a phenomenon as has been assumed, at least in terms of the single mother's emotional adjustment.

In predicting amount of depression, dating frequency, amount of contact with other single mothers, and number of children all made unique contributions to the linear relationship. The two social support factors, dating frequency and contact with other single mothers, were negatively related to depression; these variables might be seen as mediators of the stress involved in adjusting to single motherhood. Number of children was positively related to depression and might be seen as a direct contributor to depression, as Pearlin and Johnson (1977) have reported. Number of children might also be seen as a moderator of the relationship between social support and depression, inhibiting the amount of social interaction and social support available to a single mother.

In the second prediction, number of close friends, dating frequency, and frequency of children's contact with their father were all positively related to degree of optimism. In this relationship, the support variables--number of friends and dating frequency--might be viewed as direct contributors to optimism. Frequency of children's contact with their father might also be viewed as a contributor: frequent contact would seem to indicate greater involvement of fathers in their children's lives and consequently more shared parental responsibility for child-rearing. Frequency of contact might also be seen as a moderator of the relationship between social support and optimism: a father who regularly takes his children for visits may provide the single mother with greater opportunities for social activity while her children

are away. The significant correlation between frequency of paternal visits and number of friends listed by the mother ($r=.22$) may provide some support for this latter interpretation.

In both regression analyses, social support variables accounted for the largest portion of the variance in the linear relationship with depression and optimism. This would seem to indicate that social support factors are important mediators in adjustment to single motherhood, as has been often suggested in the literature. The amount of variance in adjustment accounted for by these variables was not high, however, (24% for depression and 22% for optimism) and should not be overinterpreted. Factors other than those measured in this study were apparently more important in accounting for adjustment differences than were the social support factors under discussion.

Additionally, any correlational findings such as the relationship between social support variables and indices of adjustment must be interpreted with caution. The direction of causality cannot be determined from the present study. The argument that personality features such as depression or optimism determine the amount of social support a single mother is likely to get could be equally persuasive.

Implications for Program Development

As outlined in Chapter 1, the primary purpose of this study was to document the needs, problems, and experiences of a group of single mothers and to use this information in determining service needs and priorities for the development of programs to aid single mothers and their families. The following section will address implications for program development in the areas of financial assistance, child care, and social support.

Financial Support

The most serious, pressing concern among this group of women was poverty. In objective terms, many of the families were poor: the median family income was over \$1,000 lower even than the national estimated median for single mother families, already less than half the median for two-parent families. One third of the families were living at or below the federal poverty line. In subjective terms, 87% of the women perceived money to be among their three most pressing concerns; 58% saw money as their biggest problem.

The first priority in services to single mother families must then be financial. Ways must be found to provide single mothers with adequate means for supporting their families. Many of the recommendations made by the Carnegie Council on Children (Keniston, 1977) for alleviating poverty among families in general are relevant to single-mother families as well. A guaranteed, reasonable level of income available to all families would be of particular benefit to single-mother families. As a guaranteed right of all families, such an income support program would eliminate much of the social stigma widely associated with the particularistic AFDC system. A program based on the universal needs of all types of families would not only alleviate financial need but would lessen the social isolation and societal stigma now felt by many single-mother families, especially those receiving AFDC.

Better provisions for paternal contributions to children's financial support could also relieve the poverty of some single-mother families. More realistic court support orders and more thorough enforcement efforts have been recommended, as have more creative solutions such as "divorce insurance," purchased during marriage to provide support for the children in the event of divorce or separation.

The most lasting, satisfactory resolution to a single-mother family's poverty is likely to come from the employment of the mother. Many single mothers, in order to obtain adequate jobs that will enable them to support their families, need further training and education. Half the women interviewed in this study perceived their job skills as inadequate. They listed lack of time, money, and child care as blocks to improving their skills and continuing their education. Clearly, employment training programs for single mothers must include provisions for financial support and child care and must be flexible enough to allow single mothers to pursue their child-rearing responsibilities while going back to school.

Flexibility is needed in the employment world, as well. Increased availability to flexitime work schedules and part-time jobs would help many single mothers balance the dual responsibilities of solo child-rearing and employment. Jobs allowing for full-time work during the school year and part-time work during summers and vacations are also needed, as are improved provisions for "child-rearing time off" to care for sick children and family emergencies.

Child Care

Closely related to the financial needs of single-mother families are their needs for adequate child care. Again, the need for child care is common to all types of families; its lack is most sorely felt, however, in families with only one adult. The need for care of preschool children during working hours has been widely discussed and is being addressed in most communities, although questions of quality and availability still exist.

Single mother families, however, have needs for other types of child care. They need before- and after-school supervision for school-age children, as do many dual-career families. Many of them hold jobs with irregular work schedules or routinely work in the evening or at night and need child care during these hours. They need babysitters or other care during evenings to maintain some level of adult social life. They need contingency care when the school has a holiday or the regular babysitter is sick. They also need drop-in care for their children in emergency situations.

The concept of cooperative child care, in which mothers trade babysitting services with each other, has been advanced as a solution to many of these problems. The idea was presented to the single mothers but was only endorsed by 26% of them. Several women mentioned that it might meet some needs, such as the need for occasional leisure-time care, but that cooperative care would not meet the basic need for regular extended-hour supervision. As one woman put it, " I tried co-op babysitting, but I quickly learned that I had just as little time as I had money."

There seems no way around the basic need for low-cost, high-quality, widely-available, extended-hour child care facilities. Again, the recommendation converges with that made by the Carnegie Council on Children (Keniston, 1977) in regard to families of all types. A wide variety of child care options should be available to all families, with costs held down by governmental subsidy or direct payment to family units. The issues of quality should be addressed by evaluation and monitoring, and parental input into programming decisions should be routinely solicited and utilized in planning facility services.

Social Support

Most of the proposed programs presented to the single mothers for their reactions dealt with social support, emotional adjustment, and child rearing concerns. Most of them had been designed to capitalize on an assumed level of grass-roots support for organizing mutual-help services. This support appeared to be extremely high: 87% of the women expressed interest in attending an initial organizational meeting, and 71% said that they would be willing to work with other single mothers in developing self-help programs. Even when the social-desirability biases in these percentages are considered, there seemed to be substantial support for grass-roots organization among the group.

The levels of social isolation did not appear to be as high as was anticipated from the literature. Most of the women reported having friends and engaging in social activities. Nearly 80% were dating with some frequency, and over two-thirds reported having at least one single-mother friend. Of the social interaction and social acceptance problem areas, only male companionship was ranked as a serious concern.

Child-rearing concerns, however, were seen as quite important. The women were particularly worried about their adequacy as parents, the importance of male models in their children's lives, their lack of time to spend with their children, and their frustration and exhaustion at assuming full responsibility for child-rearing.

The program proposals which received favorable reactions from a substantial number of women addressed the dual areas of child-rearing and social support. The most popular (endorsed by 63%) was the idea of recreational activities for single mothers and their children. Forty-five percent found the idea of a class on "Survival Skills for Single Mothers" to be appealing. Parent-child communication workshops

and single-mother rap groups were endorsed by 40% and 38%, respectively. Counseling services for single-mother families and a liaison-type task force of single mothers were each approved by approximately 35%.

The proposals which received support from more than 30% of the women are similar in a variety of ways. First, they all involve an element of social or emotional support, factors which made significant contributions to the prediction of emotional adjustment, discussed above. Second, they all address issues of child-rearing, at least tangentially. These issues were ranked second only to money problems as an area of concern and constituted the most frequent goal which the single mothers had for the future. Third, these programs could all be planned, developed, and operated by single mothers themselves, with minimal cost and minimal professional involvement.

In short, the types of programs described above appear to address concerns which are relevant to single mothers, they capitalize upon the apparent relationship between social support and adjustment to single motherhood, and they allow for development of the grass-roots potential which seems to exist, at least among this group of single mothers. Moreover, these proposals for mutual-help programs seem appropriate in intensity. The vast majority of the single mothers did not appear to be in need of extensive professional counseling or child-rearing assistance. After the basic needs of adequate incomes and realistic child care services, most of them appeared primarily in need of opportunities to share information, concerns, and responsibilities with other adults and to be assured that they were providing healthy childhoods for their children.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INITIAL CONTACT LETTER

Dear _____,

I am contacting you specifically because you are a single mother, as I need your assistance in planning a program for single parent families.

In the past six months that I have been employed at _____ School as the community school coordinator, single parent families have come to my attention as a very special group of persons. As a single parent myself, I am aware that we make valuable contributions to our communities. However, our own needs often are not met by our communities as society generally continues to orient itself to double parent families.

I have recently begun to work with Deborah Bybee, a woman extremely interested in the concerns of single mothers. We are developing a program to provide services for single mothers in the community.

Deborah and I need your help in order to do this. We want you to participate in designing this needed program for our community. We have developed an interview which will allow you to discuss your experiences as a single mother as well as tell us what services you need and want in the program.

Either Deborah or I will contact you by phone to set a date for our first get together. If you have any questions about this project or do not wish to participate, please contact me at _____ (phone).

Sincerely,

Community-School Coordinator

P.S. Deborah and I are very excited about this project and are looking forward to listening to you.

APPENDIX B

SURVEY CONSENT FORM

1. I have freely consented to take part in a needs survey conducted by Deborah Bybee and _____ (Community-School Coordinator) under the supervision of Dr. Robert Calsyn.
2. The study has been explained to me and I understand the explanation that has been given and what my participation will involve.
3. I understand that I am free to discontinue my participation in this study at any time without penalty.
4. I understand that the results of the study will be treated in strict confidence and that I will remain anonymous. Within these restrictions, results of the study will be made available to me at my request.
5. I understand that my participation in the study does not guarantee any beneficial results to me.
6. I understand that, at my request, I can receive additional explanation of the study after my participation is completed.

Signed _____

Date _____

APPENDIX C

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Administered by _____

Date _____

Time Begun _____

Time Finished _____

SECTION 1

Ethnic background: _____ Black
_____ Caucasian
_____ Chicano
_____ Oriental
_____ Other (specify: _____)

First, I'd like to ask you some questions about your present situation.

1. What is your life status?

_____ Never married
_____ Separated
_____ Divorced
_____ Widowed

2. How long have you been a single parent? _____

3. What is your age? _____

4. Please list the people who presently live in your household:

<u>Relationship to you</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

5. What is your occupation? _____
6. What is your approximate monthly income? _____
7. How many people does this income support? _____
8. Where does your financial support come from? (Please give approximate percentages for those sources which apply.)

_____ % earnings from your job

_____ % paternal child support

_____ % alimony

_____ % AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children)

_____ % Social Security

_____ % help from your parents

_____ % scholarship, loan, etc. for your education

_____ % public assistance (non-AFDC)

_____ % unemployment insurance

_____ % other (please explain: _____)

9. What is the highest grade level that you have completed in school?

Grade School								High School				College or Technical				Graduate or Professional			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20

SECTION 2

Now let's talk about each one of your children individually. In order to develop services to meet your needs, we need to find out what your experiences are with each one of your children on a day-to-day basis. These questions are not meant to see how good a mother you are or to be in any way judgmental. We are just trying to learn what we can about your situation so that we can best help.

Child # _____

1. Age _____

2. Sex _____

3. What kind of child care arrangements do you have for this child?

_____ none needed

_____ paid babysitter

_____ stays with friend

_____ stays with relative (specify: _____)

_____ day care center

_____ nursery school

_____ cooperative or shared babysitting with another mother

_____ other (explain: _____)

4. How often does this child see his/her father? _____

5. How many waking hours per day (on the average) do you spend with this child? _____

6. Has this child had any problems at home or at school?

_____ yes

_____ no

7. If yes, please describe the problem briefly: _____

8. Have you sought help for this child from any of the following?

- ☐ no help sought
- ☐ social worker (case worker)
- ☐ school specialist (counselor, social worker, etc.)
- ☐ mental health center or clinic
- ☐ private therapist
- ☐ juvenile court services
- ☐ family services agency
- ☐ minister, priest, or rabbi
- ☐ Big Brother/Big Sister
- ☐ other (please explain: _____)

9. Do you have any children who are not living with you?

- ☐ yes, adult
- ☐ yes, minor
- ☐ no

SECTION 3

Let's focus on some of the problems and needs you have encountered.

Below is a list of problem areas. Within each area are several problems which you may have run into. Please indicate if you have encountered any of these problems in the entire time that you have been a single mother.

1. Money - Have you found any of these to be problems for you?

- _____ getting enough money to meet the needs of your family
 _____ budgeting your money
 _____ getting credit or loans

a. Are there any other money problems that you have had since you have been a single mother? _____

b. Would you say that your money problems on the whole are:

- _____ getting worse
 _____ getting better
 _____ staying about the same

c. Have you received help from any person or service for any of your money problems? If so, from whom or from what service?

Is there anything about this service that you weren't completely satisfied with?

Person or Service

Satisfaction

2. Housing - Have you found any of these to be problems for you?

- _____ finding adequate housing that you can afford
- _____ finding a place to live in an area or neighborhood where you would like to live
- _____ taking care of your house or apartment

a. Are there any other housing problems that you have had since you have been a single mother? _____

b. Would you say that your housing problems on the whole are:

- _____ getting worse
- _____ getting better
- _____ staying about the same

c. Have you received help from any person or service for any of your housing problems? If so, from whom or from what service?

Is there anything about this service that you weren't completely satisfied with?

<u>Person or Service</u>	<u>Satisfaction</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

3. Child Care - Have you found any of these to be problems for you?

- _____ finding good child care that you can afford
 _____ finding child care during the hours that you need it
 _____ transporting your child (children) to and from daycare or
 babysitter

a. Are there any other child care problems that you have had since
 you have been a single mother? _____

b. Would you say that your child care problems on the whole are:

- _____ getting worse
 _____ getting better
 _____ staying about the same

c. Have you received help from any person or service for any of
 your child care problems? If so, from whom or from what service?

Is there anything about this service that you weren't completely
 satisfied with?

Person or Service

Satisfaction

4. Employment - Have you found any of these to be problems for you?

finding a job that pays enough to support your family

finding a job that you enjoy

_____ finding a job with the flexibility necessary for your situation
(in terms of working hours, time off, etc.)

- a. Are there any other employment problems that you have had since you have been a single mother? _____

- b. Would you say that your employment problems on the whole are:

_____ getting worse

getting better

staying about the same

- c. Have you received help from any person or service for any of your employment problems? If so, from whom or from what service?

Is there anything about this service that you weren't completely satisfied with?

Person or Service

Satisfaction

[illegible]

5. Education - Have you found any of these to be problems for you?

- _____ having inadequate training for a good job
 _____ finding the money to continue your education
 _____ finding the time to go back to school or receive additional training

a. Are there any other education problems that you have had since you have been a single mother? _____

b. Would you say that your education problems on the whole are:

- _____ getting worse
 _____ getting better
 _____ staying about the same

c. Have you received help from any person or service for any of your education problems? If so, from whom or from what service?

Is there anything about this service that you weren't completely satisfied with?

Person or Service

Satisfaction

6. Raising your Children - Have you found any of these to be problems for you?

- _____ finding time to be with your children
 _____ handling your children without the help or support of another adult
 _____ feeling adequate as a parent

a. Are there any other problems related to raising your children that you have had since you have been a single mother? _____

b. Would you say that these problems on the whole are:

- _____ getting worse
 _____ getting better
 _____ staying about the same

c. Have you received help from any person or service for any problems related to raising your children? If so, from whom or from what service?

Is there anything about this service that you weren't completely satisfied with?

Person or Service

Satisfaction

[illegible]

8. Male Companionship - Have you found any of these to be problems for you?

- _____ finding opportunities to meet men with whom you can form relationships
- _____ explaining your dating situation to your children
- _____ finding men who can understand your situation as a single mother

a. Are there any other problems relating to male companionship that you have had since you have been a single mother? _____

b. Would you say that these problems on the whole are:

- _____ getting worse
- _____ getting better
- _____ staying about the same

c. Have you received help from any person or service for any problems related to male companionship? If so, from whom or from what service?

Is there anything about this service that you weren't completely satisfied with?

Person or Service

Satisfaction

9. Free Time - Have you found any of these to be problems for you?

- _____ finding time to do things that you want to do
 _____ having too much free time on your hands
 _____ finding opportunities to enjoy yourself socially

a. Are there any other problems relating to free time that you have had since you have been a single mother? _____

b. Would you say that these problems on the whole are:

- _____ getting worse
 _____ getting better
 _____ staying about the same

c. Have you received help from any person or service for any problems related to free time? If so, from whom or from what service?

Is there anything about this service that you weren't completely satisfied with?

Person or Service

Satisfaction

10. Social Acceptance - Have you found any of these to be problems for you?

_____ feeling comfortable as a single mother in social situations

_____ worrying about other people's opinions of you as a single mother

 feeling accepted and understood by your children's teachers

- a. Are there any other problems relating to social acceptance that you have had since you have been a single mother? _____

- b. Would you say that these problems on the whole are:

 getting worse

 getting better

 staying about the same

- c. Have you received help from any person or service for any problems related to social acceptance? If so, from whom or from what service?

Is there anything about this service that you weren't completely satisfied with?

Person or Service

Satisfaction

11. Feelings about Yourself - Have any of these been difficult for you?

- _____ feeling as though no one else has problems like yours
- _____ feeling confident about your decisions (that you "did the right thing")
- _____ feeling worthwhile as a person

- a. Are there any other problems related to your feelings about yourself that you have had since you have been a single mother?

- b. Would you say that these problems on the whole are:

- _____ getting worse
- _____ getting better
- _____ staying about the same

- c. Have you received help from any person or service for any difficulties related to your feelings about yourself? If so, from whom or from what service?

Is there anything about this service that you weren't completely satisfied with?

Person or Service

Satisfaction

_____	_____

_____	_____

_____	_____

12. Which three problem areas cause you the most worry at the present time?

- ☐ Money
- ☐ Housing
- ☐ Child Care
- ☐ Employment
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Raising Your Children
- ☐ Female Companionship
- ☐ Male Companionship
- ☐ Free Time
- ☐ Social Acceptance
- ☐ Feeling Good About Yourself

13. Are there any other problems which you have experienced that we have not talked about?

14. Looking back over the time since you first became a single mother, what has been the most difficult period for you?

SECTION 4

Try now to think about how you view yourself.

1. Which one of the following words best fits how you think of yourself. Pick only one. (Ignore those which do not apply.)

- ☐ woman
- ☐ worker (i.e., salesperson, secretary, teacher, etc.)
- ☐ unwed mother
- ☐ friend
- ☐ mother
- ☐ girl
- ☐ divorcee
- ☐ student
- ☐ single mother
- ☐ widow
- ☐ single woman
- ☐ ex-wife
- ☐ other (please explain: _____)

SECTION 5

1. How many people do you consider close friends? (A close friend is someone you can talk to about your feelings and to whom you can turn to for help.)

2. How many other single mothers do you know? _____
3. How many of your close friends are single mothers? _____
4. Which statement best describes your present dating situation?

_____ have a steady relationship with one man

_____ date regularly

_____ date frequently

_____ date occasionally

_____ date rarely

_____ never date

5. What are the top three sources of emotional support for you at the present time (with 1 indicating the most important). Ignore those which do not apply. (A source of emotional support is someone who really cares.)

_____ social worker

_____ your child's (children's) father

_____ your parents

_____ your children

_____ another relative (specify: _____)

_____ your counselor or therapist

_____ minister, priest, or rabbi

_____ another single mother

_____ a female friend (not a single mother)

_____ a male friend

_____ other (specify: _____)

SECTION 6

Now try to picture your life as you would like for it to be.

1. If you could magically change anything at all in your life, what would you like to be different.

2. What do you see as your 3 most important goals for the future?

- 1.

- 2.

- 3.

SECTION 7

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about the way you feel.
Choose the response that best fits how you feel.

1. I feel the future looks bright.

- ☐ Almost always true
- ☐ Often true
- ☐ Sometimes true
- ☐ Seldom true
- ☐ Never true

2. Things seem hopeless.

- ☐ Almost always true
- ☐ Often true
- ☐ Sometimes true
- ☐ Seldom true
- ☐ Never true

3. I feel bored.

- ☐ Almost always true
- ☐ Often true
- ☐ Sometimes true
- ☐ Seldom true
- ☐ Never true

4. I feel down in the dumps.

- ☐ Almost always true
- ☐ Often true
- ☐ Sometimes true
- ☐ Seldom true
- ☐ Never true

5. I feel depressed.

- ☐ Almost always true
- ☐ Often true
- ☐ Sometimes true
- ☐ Seldom true
- ☐ Never true

6. I am bothered by noise.

_____ Almost always true

_____ Often true

_____ Sometimes true

_____ Seldom true

_____ Never true

SECTION 8

Let's talk about some of the services that exist here in this community.

Below is a list of Lansing area services and organizations for single parents. Indicate if you have heard of the service, if you have used it, and whether there is anything about the service that you were not completely satisfied with.

	<u>Heard of the Service</u>	<u>Used the Service</u>	<u>Anything you were dissatisfied with</u>
1. Parents Without Partners	_____	_____	_____
2. Catholic Social Services	_____	_____	_____
3. Solo Parents Club	_____	_____	_____
4. Family & Child Services	_____	_____	_____
5. Friend of the Court	_____	_____	_____
6. Single Parents Club	_____	_____	_____
7. Women's Center	_____	_____	_____
8. Open Door Women's Division	_____	_____	_____
9. MSU Women's Resource Center	_____	_____	_____
10. LCC Women's Group	_____	_____	_____
11. Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)	_____	_____	_____
12. Other Department of Social Services (DSS)	_____	_____	_____
13. Big Brothers/Big Sisters	_____	_____	_____

SECTION 9

We've talked about your experiences with services that presently exist. Now let's look at some new ideas for the future.

1. Which ideas are most appealing to you? Conditions for use

- _____ cooperative or shared child care with other single mothers
- _____ rap groups for single mothers to share their feelings, concerns, and support
- _____ parent-child communication workshops designed specifically for single-mother families
- _____ recreational programs for single mothers and their children (camping, swimming groups, trips, etc.)
- _____ temporary housing for single mothers and their children during crisis or transitional periods
- _____ a permanent living cooperative with other single-mother families
- _____ a class on "Surviving as a Single Mother" to teach new skills in managing money, raising children alone, handling legal hassles, getting a job, etc.
- _____ a coffee house or center where single mothers could go to relax (with child care provided)
- _____ counseling facilities specifically for single-parent families
- _____ shared resources among a group of single mothers (transportation, emergency food and clothing, skills, talents, etc.)
- _____ a panel of single mothers to discuss the experiences of single-parent families with teachers, professionals, and other groups in order to facilitate better understanding and communication

2. Are there any conditions you would have for participating in any of the programs you picked (such as low cost, child care provided, specific times of the day, etc.)?

3. What additional kinds of organizations, services, or facilities for single mothers and their families would you like to see developed in this area? Please describe any ideas you have.

4. Would you be interested in coming to a meeting to discuss shared problems and solutions with other single mothers in the area?

_____ yes

_____ no

5. Would you be willing to work with other single mothers to set up any programs (those listed above or any other ideas)?

_____ yes

_____ no