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Teshome Tadesse

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TRANSIENT SOLUTIONS TO ENDURING PROBLEMS: LANSING'S SINGLE MOTHER PARENTS' STRUGGLES TO SURVIVE AMID CONFLICTING BELIEFS AND PERSPECTIVES ON POVERTY, WELFARE AND WORKFARE, AND INADEQUATE RESOURCE SUPPLIES

VOLUME I

By

Teshome Tadesse

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
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Department of Anthropology

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ABSTRACT

TRANSIENT SOLUTIONS TO ENDURING PROBLEMS:
LANSING'S SINGLE MOTHER PARENTS' STRUGGLES TO SURVIVE
AMID CONFLICTING BELIEFS AND PERSPECTIVES ON POVERTY,
WELFARE AND WORKFARE, AND INADEQUATE RESOURCE SUPPLIES

By

Teshome Tadesse

In the U.S. the poor are considered personally responsible for their disastrous economic and social circumstances by a good number of members of the public as well as officials. However, what a segment of Lansing's single mother parents (SMPs), the unit of analysis of this dissertation, do to support their children and themselves on a daily basis remains a complex question in need of some (re) examination. Although a great deal of resources, both public and private, have been deployed over the past few decades, to address the problem, a lot remains to be done as can be witnessed from the data on the rise and fall of the rate of poverty in the nation.

The dissertation asks three interconnected questions. Given that public welfare as a source of family maintenance has been drastically pruned, if not eliminated altogether beginning in 1996, what do single mothers do to improve their earning capacities to be self-sufficient? How much of the resource needs of these families is satisfied by their own meager incomes and through contributions from their extended family and friendship circles, and charity and state sources? As groups with more or less similar needs, do single mothers connect with each other and initiate mutual support strategies to overcome their common problems?

In-depth interviews, survey research and some participant observation constituted the methodologies used for the collection of the data used for writing of the dissertation. The researcher conversed with single mothers, voluntary agency and government officials and/or their representatives to collect most of the data in 2003 and 2004.

The findings of the research are that, while support from public and non-profit agencies have, in certain cases, helped some mothers to free themselves from the shackles of poverty and dependency, a lot remains to be done for many other SMPs who are still overwhelmed by the problem. The argument that the reduction of poverty and inequality requires a range of resources – economic, social and cultural as well as political capital – following Bourdieu, is employed to analyze the central points of the dissertation. Foucault's perspectives that the potential power(s) that social groups like single mothers possess could be used to change their situation more effectively if they actively pursue this particular resource also informs the dissertation's discussions.

In sum, the dissertation explores and highlights the challenges that inequality and poverty pose to both SMPs and their benefactors and how, in the views of those interviewed, the problems could be addressed better so the mothers could achieve a degree of self-sufficiency.

This dissertation is dedicated to my late father, AtoTadesse Tsigie, his parents or my grand parents, Memhir Tsigie Gebru and Weizero Tsedale Brelie who gave their unreserved love and encouragement which greatly helped me focus on my studies despite a number of problems brought about by a series of step family problems, among others. It is also dedicated to my baby brother, Solomon Tadesse, a father of two boys, who was a victim of senseless shootings by irresponsible persons in 1992 in Dallas, Texas. He supported my graduate studies here in the U. S.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Different people have contributed toward the completion of this dissertation Foremost among them are my committee members, particularly the chair of the committee, Dr. Scott Whiteford. All the members read and reread pieces, chapters earlier and the full manuscript later at a number of stages including the proposal and earlier chapter drafts. They did forward their useful suggestions toward the final product. Dr. Whiteford was instrumental in the choice I made to be engaged in the discussion of the less seriously recognized issue of homelessness and welfare in Lansing and its environs, the geographic area for this study. His guidance in the conceptualization of the problem and later the extension of the research to poverty, welfare recipiency and workfare steered the academic exercise in the direction I envisioned the study to take shape after I sat for the comprehensive examinations. His sustained encouragement and support has been instrumental in making the problematic turn to a more significant and more inclusive problems of poverty and welfare recipiency as the two relate to single mother parents, the unit of analysis of the research. Workfare, an essential extension and component of poverty and welfare, was added to the overall problem as it is very much linked to work which is also the hub of the problem linked to dependency in both private and public sources of support to those in need.

As it happens, single mother parents make up a segment of the homeless population in the city and the previous work done on homelessness is tied very well to the

dissertation. The research thus was able to combine two major issues of inequality and social differentiation – welfare recipiency and homelessness in Lansing and Michigan.

Without Dr. Whiteford's encouragement and guidance, my research would not have climbed the difficult stages in the research process and where it is at now. Despite the number of adverse conditions that militated against my progress in the graduate program, his leadership and compassion saved the day several times. It would have been woefully difficult if not impossible to complete the project without his personal support and multiple inputs. Not only was his sponsorship but also his mentoring that made a big difference in getting one more student over the academic line, or to put it more succinctly, over the academic hurdle.

My immeasurable thanks also goes to Dr. J. Hinant who was my chair for the dissertation research originally planned for my own country, Ethiopia, but which was replaced in favor of Lansing, because of a force majeure. Dr. William Derman who took over the chairmanship of the my guidance committee when Dr. Hinnant was away for his own research in Bali, Indonesia, enabled me to finalize the proposal for my research in Ethiopia that was since shelved and that may be resuscitated some time in the future. Dr. Ann Ferguson was one of the most invaluable members of my committee before she decided to leave the committee for reasons she told me was beyond her control ? involvement in several projects. It was with regret that I was compelled to replace her with another member. The late Dr. J. Climo who was an absolutely superb advisor and showed leadership qualities that were useful for the survival of my dissertation along with my major professor and Dr. Linda Easily, another member of my committee. Dr. J. Duane and Dr. David Dwyer, who came aboard my committee in 2000, have made

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I owe a great deal to the single mother parents, the needy persons' support institutions, charities in Lansing in particular, the institutions of government that shared their information with me with all the trust such an access to their resources entailed at various points in the life of the project. I express my heartfelt gratitude to all of them.

Several centers and departments extended lots of helping hands. Dr. Whiteford's Center for Latin American Studies and Dr. Wiley's African Studies Center, helped in a number of ways. Mrs. J. Peterson and Mrs. Lisa Fruge of the African Studies Center helped me in the production of copies of the dissertation at both the draft and final manuscript stages. The graduate school, through the Good offices of Associate Dean Nunes, supplied me with the Graduate Research Enhancement Fellowship. I thank them all.

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Ms. Peg Whalen, and Ms. Monica Eaton, gave their unwavering support during the preparatory stages of coding the survey questionnaire data. Dr. Randy Fotu, Director of Statistical Services, at the MSU Computer Center, extended a hand in the effort to get a handle of the data on to the SPSS program.

Without the Assistance of the Graduate School's ALANA, I could not have moved much in the data collection work and the actual writing of the dissertation. Dr. Yevonne R. Smith, the current Associate Dean director and her predecessor, Dr. Dorothy H. Jones, Ms. Evette M. Chavez, administrative secretary, were all helpful in permitting me to access the resources of the program in their most generous ways and I say many thanks to all of them.

Dr. Barton, Head of the Learning Resources Center, MSU, read the chapters and one of the final copies of the dissertation, his suggestions and unlimited support were of extreme help. Mr. S. W. Nicholson, helped me in locating important bibliographical materials for the dissertation. Mrs. Tracie Moore came in during a technical difficulty in putting web page materials, tables, diagrams, and succeeded in straightening, what created innumerable difficulties to those who were proficient in the work of computing.

Last but not least, my family members, my wife Worknesh T., my daughter Hilina, my sons, Tadesse and Abel, have been extremely helpful in the word-processing aspect of the work. The draft questionnaires and texts of the various chapters were tirelessly typed and retyped by them all. The technical portion of the work would not have been successfully done without Tadesse's assistance. Tadesse helped with the collection of data, copying of cassettes on which the interviews were conducted. Yohannes Wondemagegnehu, a close friend, helped with the identification of a single mother for the in-depth interview. Yohannes Buta, a friend since my undergraduate program at Addis Ababa (formerly Haile Selassie I) University, provided me with several hundred dollars that went toward covering the costs of data entry and consulting.

All the time invested in graduate school – the preparation for the comprehensive exam, the writing of the proposal, and ultimately the dissertation did take a great deal of quality time from them. But their patience was a reward for me and eventually for them with all the benefits the outcome may bring in its wake. Nonetheless, the completion of the schoolwork has put the family in yet other similar projects, efforts in the transgenerational academic pursuits for my children in particular. Worknesh is about to finalize her nursing professional certification and the kids, sequentially and according to their ages, are proceeding quite well in their academic education ? all three of the children are attending college now. The extension of my stay in school was in part meant to let them go through high school at least without any interruptions that moving entailed. For instance, I declined a good-paying job at a big international relief agency in Baltimore in anticipation of the alternative in educational benefits to the family and myself. But the patience and the loss in income and later in other benefits were rewarded

with the highly satisfactory educational outcome of all the members of the family. Each one of them is in the process of completing their programs. It has at each stage been a noble achievement for a family with very meager incomes and limited resources to rely on.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Issues of the Dissertation and Background to the Study

In a sense, my interest in the issues relating to poverty began to take shape during my childhood days in my home country, Ethiopia. My grandfather, head of various urban and rural churches for a continuous period of 99 years, and my father, initially a priest and later a member of the civil service, were intimately connected with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. My two younger brothers and myself were expected to attend mass with our fathers at least twice a week in addition to the Sunday services at our own church, St. Stephanos, in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia.

Special churches on our father's list of priorities for attendance at mass and prayers included St. Mary, The Trinity, Sts. Michael, Gabriel, Emmanuel Church, Urael and Tekle Haymanot and distributed loaves of bread and money to a limited number of recipients. Whenever our fathers went to these churches on each Saint's Day they made sure that they had loaves of bread and quite a substantial amount of money ready for giving to the poor. Other church officials and lay people did the same thing. Many of these providers made sure that they had helpers with them so that the distribution was fair and square to the extent possible. I happened to be such a helper from my own family.

As a family, we were not that wealthy to provide a lot to the poor. My grandfather on my father's side was, however, fairly rich compared to the other immediate families on my mother's side. My father brought home a small income from work that he had found with extreme difficulty following unrelenting efforts at searching for jobs with the

government, one of the major employers outside agriculture and the church. He was a priest, but this job paid an extremely small salary that was not at all enough to feed a 'nuclear' family of five including three young children.

Before he was able to find the government job that paid a very small salary, my father had to try a combination of strategies. He prayed and prayed and served his church with diligence. He tried his hand as a scribe, a small shop (kiosk) or grocery store owner and a small grain trader during the early years of his marriage. He was denied a position by a government agency that promised to hire him on condition that he put in a three-month period of free service. He did. The foot dragging in the decision to hire him, however, was cause for his frustration.

On the advice of family members and close friends, he approached a righteous and blessed person at St. Gabriel's Church, widely known as Aba Gebrewold. This man was revered and highly credited for foretelling the destinies of individuals and praying for them so their wishes were fulfilled. My father, though reluctantly, connected with this righteous man and asked him to pray and help him find a job.

Aba Gebrewold immediately ordered his assistant that his visitor be given some food to eat, but my father intervened and said to the righteous man: "I am not here to ask you to feed me. I am here to ask for your prayers and support so that I can get a job. My problem is what I should do to feed my children? This is my worry. I am not here to just get a free lunch for today. I need to get a job that would enable me to fill up the bellies of the children."

Aba Gebrewold carefully listened, smiled (when this special person smiles, they say, it is a good omen) and immediately gave him a clue as to what was in store for him. He

said: "Your home's location is destined to be at Arada Giorgis." Arada happened to be downtown Addis Ababa where some important government offices were located.

Upon his return home, my father recounted what transpired during his encounter with Aba Gebrewold. He was, in a sense, disappointed in the encounter. No one ventured to interpret the clue that was given. My mother, however, had some sense of the riddle, but she did not utter a word about it, lest she would give a misleading interpretation of the words of the righteous man of St. Gabriel.

A month or so later the clue began to unravel in and of itself. My father found a job with the Mayor's office in Addis Ababa. The secure and dependable income, though not much, started off the family on a comparatively less rocky life that for a time engulfed the young couple and their three children.

The words that my father and Aba Gebrewold exchanged through his deacon interpreter provide an interesting exchange that summarizes the central issues of this dissertation. My father's refusal to enjoy the free lunch is on par with the relief assistance provided to the poor and single mother parents in this dissertation. His request for Aba Grebrewọld's mediation with the Almighty so he would find a secure job is similar to the desire for 'good-paying' permanent jobs demanded of the market economy and/or the State by single mothers and other poor people in order to make the need for relief or welfare programs or contingent public support unnecessary.

My father and his family were lucky indeed. Though my father made a modest salary, the emergence of problems intimately connected to the marriage took their toll and moved our family's life in an unexpected direction. The couple broke their marriage.

Both my father and mother were caught up with other sets of problems that led to sequences of sufferings.

My father, as a working person, had to take custody of me the eldest of the children, first and then my younger brothers, as they grew up a bit and needed less care from our mother. The single father, at this point, had to contend with the feeding, caring and sheltering of us, the children. By tradition, the male was not supposed to cook. This was the domain of women. Single fathers, therefore, had to have a woman, a relative or a nanny and a cook at one and the same time, to do the jobs. My father was not able to make such an arrangement immediately and in the interim we suffered from a lack of nutritious food. We became sickly because of the improper feeding that we were exposed to for months. Serious skin irritations affected the better part of our hands and fingers.

This condition became a turning point for my father who eventually took the hand of another woman in marriage, and brought a stepmother for us. Life under her care was materially, particularly in terms of feeding, good, but the devastating psychological and emotional impact of that step family life has left many negative marks on our lives to this day. However, the strength and dual care our father provided (apparently a father-mother care in one) served as a consolation and helped turn the partial disasters that befell the family into opportunities. We, the children, worked hard, within an extremely narrowed down time left over from menial household chores and messenger boy duties, but in the end, we made it through the educational system with flying colors.

This story is a brief narration of what poverty and broken marriages can do to a family. Each family member but particularly the father and/or the mother from such

homes have unique stories that they can talk about. They need to be listened to in their own right and their words should serve as the foundation stones for addressing the roadblocks that are in the way of their self-sufficiency. In other words, these are the stories that should serve as the ethnographic data that should inform policy and programs aimed at controlling and preventing destitution of single mother's in the context of this dissertation.

I now would like to briefly relate two important points: the assistance that my family as any other provided to the poor through our church, and later as a professional, what I was able to do to serve the cause of the poor. My father and grandfather shared a bit of what each had to the poor through our church. On Sundays and the monthly 'saints' memorial days' both fathers went to the churches, individually or together, and they attended and participated in the mass and prayed. But they both had another mission. This included the distribution of loaves of bread and larger amounts of money to those who were poor and were either sheltered and/or came from far and near neighborhoods to share in the 'bounties' put up by individual benefactors who went to church and at the same time did the good expected of all Christians.

In addition to the regular contributions to their own and other churches, both my father and grand father participated in the out-door distribution of money and loaves to the poor who made it a point to go to these institutions where free food and cash were regularly handed out to those who felt they were incapable of helping themselves. No one determined some one was a deserving or non-deserving recipient. The very fact that any poor person from far and near went to one of the churches, sat down or stood at what was sometimes identified as the 'alms corner' in line qualified them as recipients and they

benefited from the giving that sometimes turned out to be a real windfall. This arrangement was on a par with what I identify as 'out-door relief' that was a very common practice in Western countries.

Our family's giving was personally distributed by my grand father and my father whenever they happened to go together the same day to particular Addis Ababa churches that they frequented. The family's giving was thus organized and managed by our fathers. But they needed some help in the work. My brothers and I went to church with our fathers. But, as the elder son of the three of us, I was assigned a special job in this service to the poor.

My primary duty in this beneficence was to oversee the equitable distribution of the loaves and money from the family. My job was to screen the cunning of the recipients so the fair share of those in need was not 'amassed' by the few. I made sure that the cunning and the strong among the poor did not take more than once, that is, more than their fair share, of the modest gifts going around.

I was thus a helper in the distribution of the loaves and money to the poor who congregated to receive support from the generosity of comparatively better-off individual providers. The job usually went well. Most of the recipients liked the justice of it.

This exposure helped me appreciate the level of need of segments of the destitute in the environment of the church and the role this institution played in provisioning those without the means to get by. I thought that, one day in the future, I would work for an institution that would support the unfortunate in the community in addition to the individual 'givings' that were so essential to satisfy the daily needs of the poor.

As it happened, the 1972-74 Wello, a northern province of Ethiopia, drought took the lives of an estimated 200,000 people of the three million affected. People talked about what needed to be done to ameliorate the situation and save lives. Many volunteered to give, but not through the government, which they considered corrupt. A unit within the University was given the go ahead by many contributors to do the job, but the magnitude of the problem was such that a huge institution, supported by the government, needed to be in place to manage the distribution of relief and later on some long-term assistance.

I seized upon an opportunity that came by in the late 1970's and I ended up working with the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission that coordinated the distribution of food and other basic need supplies to those hit by the drought. My involvement in this work and my childhood exposure always sparked a sense of calling in me to study the problem of poverty and make some contribution to get a still further understanding of the concept of poverty and make some suggestion for its reduction.

I have thought and observed a lot about the problem through my involvement both from the private home giving and from the broader institutional angles. I have seen governments thrown out of power by forces that made their platform the eradication of poverty. But I have also witnessed the worsening of the situation, as far as the experience of Ethiopia at least shows. There, poverty engulfs more than twenty million people today. It has been widening its touch of the lives of increasing numbers of people.

In the case of the U. S., an advanced industrial giant, poverty continues to pose the same questions that challenged the minds of those decision-makers in government and the larger society decades ago. It turned out to be a matter that has become a puzzle to

grapple with in this country where the rich live the comfortable life and an increasing number of people find it difficult to make enough money to manage their lives.

I was first introduced to the problem of poverty in the United States when, in 1992 I volunteered to study the problem of the homeless in Lansing. I wrote two semester papers for the 'Theories in Sociocultural Change' (ANP 862) and a Field School course (ANP 891), both relating to the homeless. I later decided to make the homeless issue a topic for any dissertation. Ultimately I changed the topic to poverty and welfare, which also included the homeless. Poverty causes complications in life for many groups of people in the U.S.

I always ask the question "what factors make poverty a mystery in America hidden from public discourses?" Is it the lack of political will or the complexity of the problem that hinders any respectable responses to control it and/or prevent it that we need to think about more and go from there? What can the poor do to handle the problem? Can they do something on their own and/or with others to change their fates? This dissertation attempts to examine these problems, to the extent possible, through the eyes of those suffering from it and those who try to help reduce its persistent negative impact.

The stories the single mothers share with us in this dissertation and the observations of their benefactors are the sources of this work. The stories are more authentic and useful and all possible effort should be made to capitalize on the data drawn from them to arrive at realistic conclusions that can feed policy construction and implementation of projects catering to the fragile population of poverty-stricken single mothers and their children.

2. The Research Problem

The purpose of this study is to examine the conditions of poverty of women or single mother parents (SMPs here after) in Lansing, Michigan, and its surrounding areas. The dissertation looks at the extraordinary efforts many of the mothers make to assemble resources that can tide them over spells of crises that they are enmeshed in as a result of resource shortages — critical material and opportunity resources — to be self-reliant.

It focuses on the endless struggles they wage to carry on from one day to the next at the time the interview was conducted during 2003 and 2004 and broadly between 1991 and 2004. It examines the problems SMPs face in caring for their children and their families under a number of constraining conditions such as lack of adequate resources. These resources include food, clothing, housing, and such critical services as health and childcare and transportation to and from school and work, both for the mothers and their children.

In this dissertation, both macro- and micro-level issues are examined in order to present a fuller picture of the problems single mother parents face. At the macro level, the dissertation examines the relationships between inequality and poverty and the mechanisms — welfare, workfare and the free market system — partially utilized to control or avert the catastrophes, or the threat of them, that SMPs find suspended over their heads while they negotiate everyday life. Also at the micro level, the dissertation investigates the daily struggles these women make at every turn in their lives to provide for their families.

The meager income single mothers bring home from work is not adequate to keep them above the poverty line. Yet, they are constantly reminded of the message that they

need to work, keep their jobs and earn their living in a work world where jobs, good-paying jobs in particular, are in short supply. There is a gap between what is said and assumed about the availability of jobs.

That jobs are in short supply is reflected by the unemployment rate, which was 2.8% in 2001 for the Capital Area of which Lansing is a part, and 5.0% for Michigan. In 1992, the figures were 5.9% and 9% for the Capital Area/Lansing and the State, respectively (Michigan's Bureau of Labor Statistics, in Capital Area Fall 2002).

Rather than focusing on the discrepancy between jobs that are available and/or the lack of them, some scholars argue that attention should be directed at the available opportunities so poor single mothers could be gainfully employed, work and earn the means to survive rather than depend on social welfare. The debates on the availability and/or shortages rage without any satisfactory and concrete measures taken to create enough jobs. Blaming the victim predominates, which is consistent with the views held by the conservative category, in particular, in the U. S. (see Snow and Wagner, in Bender and Leone 1996:108; Snow and Anderson 1993) at both the national and local levels.

Liberals on the other hand, show compassion toward victims arguing that other factors including structural ones are the causes for the unhappy state of the poor/homeless Snow et al, 1996: 108). But other people do not agree with this assertion. As Snow et al (1996:108) argue, this tendency to look at the problem in a rather simplistic way is rooted in the "wide spread American tendency to view public issues as personal troubles, to trivialize and individualize social problems and to ignore economic causation."

Still, some of the scholarly and non-scholarly literature dismisses the plights of the SMPs as an outgrowth of the "culture of poverty" that translates into behaviors of not

readying oneself to work (Lewis 1959 and 1962, 1966-a and –b, 1998; Katz 1989; Seccombe 1999, Collins 1996). Some scholars, on the other hand, see the problem of the mothers as one that require intervention by others, particularly the state, but confine the support that the mothers need mainly to temporary relief assistance packages interspersed with some critical bridging resources like education and training. The less than soul-satisfying job of supporting those in need or poor single mothers appears to be a result of seeing less of the interconnection between the individual and the social at several levels. This in part emanates from the lack of meaningful discourse between the subjects and those who are in the decision-making camp throughout the system.

In the official discourse at the government level, the assumption is that weakness on the part of the mothers is the root cause of the deficit in behavior and hence the poverty problem. Some scholars and other observers often emphasize these explanatory factors so much so that many other significant issues are relegated to the back burner (see, for example, Gilder 1981, Murray 1984, Mead 1986). The structural aspects of the equation, in other words, are given less significance. In fact, there is a perspective embedded in the policy discourse that 'knowingly disregards' structural factors as having little if any relevance.

This dissertation, therefore, attempts to investigate the conditions of SMPs and their children in poverty, their dependence on public welfare and the persistent effort they make to put together a basic minimum resource package and/or secure economic bases to disengage themselves from suffering resulting from inadequate food and other daily necessity items they are unable to garner.

An assessment of the knowledge levels of SMPs about networking and mutual support systems and their practical applications in their everyday lives is another dimension the dissertation examines. In this context, the research focuses on the mothers' collaborating ventures and building attitudes and views on social capital as a means of escaping poverty.

Many SMPs in the United States depend on two sources of income to maintain their households — incomes from work in the (in)formal sectors support from various sources including the state. The SMPs at both the local and national levels work and struggle every day to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical and psychological care as well as emotional support to their families. But their needs are usually/seldom met because of the limited incomes they make from work. The incomes they earn and/or receive, despite their contradictory statuses of 'home-maker' and subjects of exploitation at work (Levine 1998: 3), fall far short of their basic needs satisfaction targets. SMPs thus fall in the category of those who are exploited and oppressed – the working class. When such mothers experience deficits, they resort to the use of available support systems — families, friends, charities as well as the state, which has been the most helpful in terms of the size of resource transfers. But even after securing public and private assistance from a number of sources (Bianchi, in Chafel 1993: 108; Katz 1989, Seccombe 1999) the transfers leave a wide gap between their needs and incomes. In other words, many of the mothers find themselves below the poverty line, a breaking point below which basic needs satisfaction is not ordinarily achieved (Marger 1999; Collins 1996).

A segment of the public and officials frequently put the blame for this state of affairs on single mother parents, suggesting that the mothers do not want to work and instead

like to depend on public and private sources of assistance for their survival. Others argue that severe shortages of resources explain the dominance and resurgence of poverty among single mother parents. The structural entanglements that many mothers find themselves in are, however, rarely acknowledged, let alone addressed.

The Horatio Alger ethos that is usually used as an indicator of effort to improve one's economic situation through hard work, is invoked as a means of judging the behaviors of the poor or single mothers in connection with their relations to work and welfare/workfare. The Horatio story, that every American is capable of making it if s/he works hard, epitomizes the belief that hard work is the means by which dependency on public resources is kept at bay. Consistent with this principle, single mothers as well as other poor people are both encouraged and/or required to work harder and earn their living by the sweat of their brows.

The myth does make sense in principle; but it triggers many issues that drive the debates that groups on both sides of the argument involved themselves in during the last two decades of the 20th Century in particular. The view that 'personal failures' of poor single mothers are the main source of poverty is thought of as exculpating the factors of structural and institutional arrangements that also underlay the perennial problem. These personal factors, nonetheless, are suspected of being responsible for the destitution of SMPs among the poor more than any others that receive public assistance (Seccombe.1999; Collins 1996; Edin and Lein 1997).

In spite of the strenuous efforts many single mothers continually make, consistent with the Horatio Alger story, a lot of them are unable to make ends meet without a flow of significant additional supplemental incomes including welfare checks (Kweit and

Kweit 1999, Collins 1996, Seccombe 1999, Edin and Lien 1997). Despite the fact that many of the beneficiaries in this category are criticized for enjoying the benefits of support from the former AFDC programs or TANF since 1996, they remain below the poverty line (Bianchi, in Chafel 1993:108). Single mother parent families' needs for survival far outstrip the resources they put together from multiple sources — from work and all support sources. This happens in spite of the fact that they put together food provided from distribution centers, borrow money from relatives and friends and then concoct something that pushes the month a bit forward for them until the next cycle of limited income and support arrive. The help that comes as a life saver each month from all sources and particularly from the state has not only been inadequate but also unreliable as the cuts and elimination of many categories of public assistance over the past decade indicate. The roots of the problem should be investigated in relation to the behavior of the American economy.

The problems single mother parents in Lansing face has its roots in the national economic downturn that has affected a number of communities in urban and rural areas across the nation during the early 21st Century. U.S. presidential candidate John Kerry, for instance, in his nomination acceptance speech at the Democratic Convention (refer to speech, July 29, 2004), revealed that the number of the poor in the country increased by three million between 2000 and 2004 as a result of the poor performance of the American economy. If the good performance of the American economy, as it is sometimes argued, cannot better the lives of the poor (MacGregor 1995, *The New York Times*, November 13, 1998), certainly spells such as the one that has led to suffering during the first three years of the 21st century certainly did not help the cause of single mother parents and other low-

income people of the country. Poverty's ascendancy, therefore, increases the number of single mothers whose lives are further complicated to a point where many are compelled to seek assistance from all conceivable sources, be they private or public. Nighttime shelter service usage increases in Lansing in 1999 is an instance where low-income people found themselves in trouble in their daily lives (interview with officials of the Lansing Rescue Mission and Volunteers of America). A memorandum/letter distributed by John Sanford, Relief Services head of the American Red Cross Branch in Lansing on November 8,1999, relating to the frequency of visits during the extended service hours of the agency was, for instance, an indication of the increased level of suffering of low income persons. Increased utilization of soup kitchens by single mothers and other low-income people was another indication of the economic squeeze that some residents of the city experienced like similar groups in Brooklyn (Di Fagio, quoted in MacGregor 1995).

A one-day survey, randomly conducted on the last day of the year, Friday, December 31, 1999, by Lansing's Human Services and voluntary agencies in the city, speaks to the problem of the overflow of clientele who sought services, but were referred to other agencies because of critical shortage of space in the first instance agencies they visited. These situations attest to the fact that the problem of poverty that unleashed itself in Lansing at different times has bee serious. Charities within the non-profit community, including those in Lansing, talk about deteriorating conditions and lament the fact that their services are under-funded and thus they cannot be of more assistance to the poor.

At the same time, the efforts at enabling public assistance recipients, single mother parents in particular, who left and are leaving the welfare rolls, subsequent to the stringent 'Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act' of 1996 that 'ended

welfare as it was known', is said to have produced mixed results. While some clients become self-sufficient and leave the rolls, others get back on it a few months later in a cyclical manner. According to Michigan's Family Independence Agency (FIA), 1999 and 2004) officials, no systematic reporting about those former recipients' whereabouts is kept. No reporting mechanisms about those single mothers with children who found employment on their own and those assisted to hook themselves to jobs has as yet been introduced (interview with Janet Strope, Director of Family Support Services, Family Independence Agency of Michigan, February 20, 2004.)

Why the levels of poverty and unemployment in the wealthiest nation in history, the U. S., is a puzzle that we explore in this dissertation. Growth in the national economy should result in the improvement of the lives of those left out. Or, to use the jargon of the individualist-market school of thought, the 'invisible hand' of the free market should distribute the gains through the trickle-down mechanism (Whalen, in Whalen, ed., 1996) or to say the same thing in other words, 'a rising tide lifts all boats' or 'growth lessens inequality' Tilly and Albelda, in Whalen 1996). In Lansing this has not happened.

Large numbers of clients have been departing the welfare rolls in Lansing, Michigan, following the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 that ended the safety net built up for the poor over the last six decades. In fact, according to Janet Strope (Interview Transcript, February 20, 2004), the population of SMPs receiving welfare in Michigan decreased substantially from 217, 949 cases in 1991 to 63, 400 in 2001 (see Table 1 for Appendix 2; Note 1, Table 10, p. 92). The highest number of cases hit the 221,349 mark in 1993 and declined progressively after that year. The cases did go down. But two interrelated questions arise as this process continues. The first question relates to

what form of support system or employment helps the single mothers taken off the rolls, or who drop off the rolls on their own when they find employment or for other reasons? The question, in other words, is whether or not the single mothers who were cut off welfare for any one reason were better off than they had been when they were on the system. The second question is linked to the measures taken by the state or government to lay down the necessary infrastructures that would facilitate the creation of jobs.

Reports from charities at the same time (HAW Report 1, November 8, 1991) as actions to reduce the welfare rolls were taken indicate that more and more poor people had been seeking NGO services after the elimination of the safety net in 1996. More and more single mothers also became shelter service users in Lansing, according to reports from charities, such as Lansing Rescue Mission, for instance. Their children accompanied some mothers when they signed up for temporary residence in the shelters run by voluntary agencies such as the Rescue Mission in Lansing.

Many also found employment or they were hooked to some kind of employment including 'workfare' in Lansing as in other cities in the U.S. through the agency of the 'job first' programs and also the initiatives of the recipients themselves. Yet, officials of Michigan's Family Independence Agency (FIA) seem to continue to have mixed feelings about the impacts of the new efforts to get single mothers off the welfare rolls.

My interview with FIA official, Janet Strope, February 20, 2004 and Maureen Sorbet, Office of Communications, MI State's Family Independence Agency (FIA), December 27, 1999 indicates the discrepancy in this regard and the less than satisfying outcome of the change. Still, many who are 'working' are, paradoxically enough, also seeking the assistance of shelters and soup kitchens as is reported by charities and those

helping the destitute in Lansing, Michigan, as in cities in other states. Children in households headed by single mothers do not fare well either. For instance, the state's children in poverty increased as well in the mid-1990s compared with the figures for the late 1980s (1999 Kids Count Book: 16). This had been taking place despite the state's "thriving economy and low unemployment rates" (Ibid.: 28) in the 1990s. Why is this less expected condition taking place? This is indeed a puzzle that needs investigation and clarification. This point is partially dealt with in Chapter 4 where the life histories of the mothers who participated in this dissertation project are treated in the context of the issues that are important for the single mothers.

The problems single mother parents confront are not limited to them individually. Their children, who are dependent on them and have been the main reasons for the initiation of the public assistance (Katz 1989, Kweit and Kweit 1999, Seccombe 1999), suffer even more. Michigan had one of the highest child poverty rates among all the states in the 1990s (Whitaker 1999: 56-57). The state was in the class of what the author called Quartile 3 (in the 1-4 Quartiles categories), the average of which was 20.4 percent (Michigan's was 21.4 percent). The average for Quartile 1 was 10.9 percent; that of the second was 16.2 percent and that of the fourth, 27.2 percent.

These grim statistics evoke worrying questions about what can be done to reduce the poverty of poor single mothers and their children. In other words, any positive measure that would lift the mothers and their children out of debilitating low-income status requires answers to the question of what should be done to make this particular population self-sufficient. Such an action is necessary in order to reduce the continuing conflicts that mar relations between those who care for child well being and those who,

for the most part, believe that individual efforts within the framework of the free market is the way to go.

The dissertation thus analyses the reasons for the establishment of the public welfare system in the U. S.; and its expansions to assist more of those in need or those who found themselves trapped in webs of resource shortages. The debates that raged as a consequence of the changes instituted to bring in the state as a major provider of support to those who are poor is also examined. The shock and dismay that the rapid rise in the number of the safety net seekers has sent across the system, that is, among those citizens who felt that their tax dollars should not finance those who do not want to work, is also evaluated. The major issues and the dimensions of the debates in the scholarly literature are highlighted and compared in terms of time, for instance, the 1930s, 1960s, 1980s and 1990s, and the particular measures taken to correct or modify programs of public assistance are reviewed and evaluated.

One major point needs to be highlighted here. This point relates to the effort made by state institutions, like the welfare office, in making recipient mothers capable of helping themselves. The state has only been able to mainly provide resources that capacitate the mothers to manage their short-term needs — food, clothing, some money to take care of their transportation needs to and from work as well as school and back home. These constitute(d) commodities and services supplied to the mothers as basic items of assistance. But the assistance items provided are mainly there to meet the daily needs of the single mothers. Unless these are viewed as factors contributing to the mothers' capabilities to increase their chances of becoming self-sufficient, albeit very indirectly, their outcomes for most mothers need further studies.

Whether or not individuals and families who are on welfare-related programs can achieve self-sufficiency without their active participation and involvement in the efforts that are put in place is more theorized than discussed conjointly by groups and individuals that dedicate their resources and labor for the purpose. The general solution that is advanced to help the single mothers and those in the category of the very poor to escape poverty is one of calling on them to make extraordinary or superhuman efforts to help themselves through hard work and through raising their educational levels. Kozol 2000: 97) intimates that most people that he was close to in the neighborhood, in the Bronx, where he did his research on poverty, "do what they can to steer a sane and life-affirming course." But the limited and very temporary support provided to single mother parents in the interim is mainly enmeshed in paternalism that gives little room for them to make efforts to take initiatives of their own. Under these circumstances they tend to retain their dependency on institutions of support. These structures of opportunities (see Note 2, p. 92, at the end of Chapter1) embody education, training, and means of transportation to look for jobs and to commute between home and work or school.

The perspectives of SMPs on issues relating to the range of opportunities (un)available to them and the discrepancies between these and the multiple problems that engulf them in their daily interactions with the social, economic and political world are central to the discussions and evaluations the dissertation embodies. To this end, the research uses the data collected from the single mothers with children through key informant interviewing and through an intensive use of the survey research data to get an insider's view about the dimensions of the problems that overwhelm the single mothers at present. The research also attempts to draw information from the mothers in order to

assess what resources are best suited for their immediate needs and which critical resources, in their views, would enable them to achieve some success in the future.

The study further investigates single mother parents' views on possibilities of networking with their peers and the extent to which they have been involved in such activities in the past at certain points of their relations with others. They are asked to express their views about what the concept of organization means to them and what their thinking is about how they may be able to organize themselves through networking. Moreover, they are asked to share their perspectives on, and their understandings of what sharing and pulling together resources and starting 'common venture' businesses such as childcare centers, mini-transportation services, hair-styling salons, food stores and the like, *a la* the 'social capital' mode of development.

This is what this research in a small way attempts to do. It uses data from published materials—books, articles, magazines, Internet resources and media reports as well as highlights of interviews of welfare recipients, voluntary agency and social welfare officials. Some publications and web sites of the Family Independence Agency of Michigan have also been consulted to bolster the case made for and against welfare by different ideological groups in society.

This research on poverty, welfare and workfare will join other works that would hopefully help fill the gap left by a weak discourse and deficient analytic models that belittle alternative explanations for the persistent existence of poverty and welfare dependency. Conservatives and indeed relief provision supporters drove the policy on and practice in the handling of poverty and social inequality in America. Those who at first succeeded in pushing for the birth of the safety net and supported its expansion later

on became weaker as the years went by. This gave a free run to the other side that, after a strenuous and persistent effort, was able to achieve a rescindment or annulment of public assistance for the disadvantaged. The period of economic hardship that was a result of the Great Depression took its toll even of those people with credible means of survival, that is, even those who saw little if any bad days before.

Those on and off welfare, that is, those semi-permanently associated with the welfare system are not very different from those touched upon by poverty from time to time, that is, during times of mild or severe national economic crises. Welfare recipient mothers constitute those who are already severely affected by a complex web of social structural roadblocks to easily catch up with the rest of the less semi-permanently affected population. The latter manage to get back on track with a minimum support as they have built up solid bases of cultural capital or education, among other factors. Chapter 2 below deals with issues of cultural, social, economic and political capital and their relationships and linkages and how their presence in some proportion(s) is important for checking and controlling poverty and dependency and hence the reduction of social inequality.

3. Research Questions

The research questions of this dissertation fall into three categories and relate to three actors: SMPs, the unit of analysis of this research, government representatives, and non-profit agency officials and specialists. This dissertation addresses three sets of questions.

First, given that the better part of the welfare or the safety net for poorer persons and particularly single mother parents was eliminated in 1996, how do the mothers make ends meet? How, in other words, are the mothers able to feed their families and cover the costs

of their basic needs? Do they find jobs as was widely assumed by those who strongly felt that welfare recipient mothers in particular had become so dependent on public assistance that they tended not to make any effort to find jobs and earn their living like other working Americans? This question has two dimensions. The first assumes that the public assistance that is provided to them is quite enough to enable them to pay their bills including their basic satisfaction needs. The second one postulates that the mothers do not make any effort to work when they are attached with public assistance system. But whether or not both of these postulates are supportable by empirical data will, to a degree, be assessed using the data collected by the survey done for this dissertation.

The second set of questions relate to the increase in public assistance and its growth over the decades. Here the dissertation examines what circumstances and problems led to the institutionalization of public assistance and the forerunner institutions that took care of the poor in general and single mothers in particular. The retrenchment of public assistance directs attention to the question of why the institutions were chipped away over time and what the trend is going to be in the foreseeable future.

The third set of questions the dissertation poses are connected with the search for durable solutions to the problem. Given that public assistance has mainly been a point of controversy, and indeed conflict, over the last quarter of the century, an examination of the possibilities the subjects, SMPs, visualize as a way out is imperative in order to improve their livelihood. Did/do institutions that provide(d) them with the partial support that they need(ed) see any way out of the survival struggles they (the mothers) make to feed, house and care for themselves and their children? Do the subjects and their benefactors visualize social capital, mutual help among the mothers, as a means of partial

remedy to the problem? What are the advantageous and disadvantages of social capital? Should it be used as a vehicle to enable single mothers to promote mutual help and extend this to the establishment of small businesses that may afford them employment and eventually earn them incomes as it, at the same time, help them exchange services like child care and support group resources in their bid to achieve a measure of self-sufficiency?

In sum, two critical questions evolve out of the above queries. Could charities and other supporting groups and/or institutions provide such critical resources that SMPs need? Do they have the organizational capacity and resources that they can channel to enable the poor, both as individuals and as groups, to have control over the means to bring change to their lives? Such an effort is, of course, one that goes beyond immediate or emergency assistance for those who are in precarious positions of living.

4. Conceptual and Analytical Framework

A good deal of literature on poverty, especially that of single mothers, deals with either the personal deficiency or structural problems associated with lack of job opportunities, low wage and education as the stumbling blocks, preventing beneficiaries from getting off welfare and achieving self-sufficiency. While these arguments have a lot of truth to them, the personal defect perspective often takes the dominant position in policy and cultural discourses. The policies that were constructed by the state over a few decades since the 1930s eventuated in the radical erosion of the social safety net beginning August 1996. The cultural domain is so full of socially constructed identity markers that marginalize the mothers in ways that do not accurately depict their behavior

and/or resource command levels that mothers are placed in positions that do not enable them to overcome the multi-layered problems. Topics of discourse like inadequacy of resources, be they earned or secured from public institutions, are not given the emphasis they deserve. Particularly, significant resources like networking, mutual trust, pooling of critical resources, under the rubric of social capital, to establish small businesses that could possibly help generate incomes for the mothers do not see the light of day in the list of policy priorities; nor are they brought into the lime light of public discourse. Such activities involving cooperation fall under the rubric of social capital. In other words, the nuances of the aforementioned complex problems and the identification of other options that present themselves for comparatively easily addressing the mothers' plights are not explored sufficiently.

In this dissertation my goal is to use several critical concepts like personal defects, culture of poverty, structural constraints, democracy, resources, power, accommodation, resistance, practice as expounded by several scholars in reaction to social inequality and its by-products — poverty and welfare dependency to explore the world with which SMPs must cope.

This dissertation uses the concepts of resources and social capital to gauge the place of single mothers in the class structure of the American society and Michigan. Bourdieu's understanding of social capital as a critical resource that enables the underprivileged to move toward self-support befits the explanation of the situation of poor single mothers. His views about the importance of economic, social, cultural and political capital and their roles in placing individuals in better economic standing (see article in Richardson 1986: 252) speak to the problems single mothers have to contend with in their everyday

lives. For Bourdieu, the existence of these 'capitals' under the command of individuals and groups is a means of fulfilling a decent life style. He considers economic capital as the primary means of doing the job of extricating people from poverty. It is, as it were, the thread that weaves together the other three forms of capital that place individuals aboard a platform of capability. Economic capital paves the way for the other hierarchies of capital. In other words, the forms of capital he enumerates reinforce each other. An assessment of where single mother's find themselves in relation to the availability of these capitals is necessary to recognize where they are in the effort to help themselves or how much more resources they need to disengage themselves from the firm grip of poverty.

The mothers are either jobless or they have jobs that will not help them gain or earn enough resources to lift them over the poverty line. Data gathered from the mothers recruited for the dissertation's survey, show that the incomes they earn from minimum wage jobs do not enable them to be self-reliant. Even after the welfare checks that the mothers often collect, are add to their disposable income, their situation does not get better. The bills that they have to take care of in their every day lives, emergency situations that, for instance, relate health care service bills, deplete their incomes considerably and in the end destabilize their economic situation.

Neither have the majority of the mothers interviewed, achieved the educational qualifications, one of the forms of cultural capital, that Bourdieu, sees as a tool for competing for positions that require higher levels of education. The complex responsibilities of caring for children limit the mothers' opportunities to learn and earn educational credentials that would enhance their upward movement.

In terms of social capital also, single mother parents do not perform very well. Except, in a few cases, the single mothers interviewed for this dissertation do not network with each other to help one another in childcare service, a factor that complicates their daily lives. Even though the gap between childcare demand and supply, 215,000 to 443,000, in Michigan, for example, is wide, businesses that could be started by social capital groups of single mothers to fill the gap are not there. This failure in getting engaged in the work of job creation and as a consequence the existence of a crisis of childcare service availability continues to pose enormous difficulties for many.

Single mother parents are also less able to capitalize on the political capital factor that Bourdieu sees as a significant factor for enhancing the other three 'capitals' — economic, social and cultural. Single mothers rarely participate in the political lives of their communities. They do not vote in the election of officials that turn out to be the decision-makers in the allocation of social resources aiming at supporting single mothers and their children. They rarely offer themselves as candidates for political or juridical posts.

Single mothers in poverty and welfare are frequently viewed as groups who fail to achieve self-reliance consistent with individual freedom and competition that the free market system offers. Gilder (1981), Murray (1984), Mead (1986), Nozic (1974) and others in their works relating to welfare, poverty and personal responsibility reflect this perspective.

The arguments put forth by these scholars and analysts are that the personal failure of individual single mothers is the root cause of their poverty and the resulting dependence on welfare. Does this assessment express the full story attached to the overall

problem of single mothers? The in-depth interviews and the survey research data put together by this research show that there is more to the problem than the characterizations some of the 'culture of poverty' theorists stick on single mothers tell us.

Another factor commonly invoked is the culture of poverty thesis advanced by Oscar Lewis (in Gmelch and Zenner 1996; 1988; 1962, 1966a and b, 1998; see also Goode and Ames, in Gmelch and Zenner 1996) and a generation of scholars and writers who have interpreted his work to argue their cases consistent with their beliefs and ideological leanings. These may be conservative or liberal. The culture of poverty, thesis expounded by Oscar Lewis (in Gmelch et al 1996: 395) argues that the poor who grow in environments of poverty would continue to experience the problem all their lives like the generation of their families before them. Once this culture sets in it tends to perpetuate itself from generation to generation because of its particular effect on children (Ibid.) of single mothers, for instance. This, according to Lewis, is a consequence of the tendency of the institutions and agencies of the dominant society that is individualistic and sees inability to fend for oneself as arising from personal inadequacy. But even though the poor find themselves in helpless positions in environments of developed economies, the use of many of the traits of culture of poverty also furnishes them the means to solve their problems (Ibid.).

Many scholars have subjected Lewis' concept of 'culture of poverty' to criticism. It is argued that the concept has done damage to the cause of marginalized or single mothers in the context of this dissertation by giving some leeway for interpretations that took policies and practices in unexpected directions. The theory, in other words, has given birth to a line of argument that strengthened the view that the poor are responsible

for their own problems in life. According to Valentine (in Leacock 1971: 204), the notion of the culture of poverty has become a "dogma, an orthodoxy which is simply purveyed and repeated, rather than, being subjected to critical examination." Scholars, Valentine contends, have used the concept in such a way that perspectives on "...personal identities, individual characters and world views" which results in "...weak, disorganized and restricted environment" are disproportionately elevated to singular truths. He does not subscribe to the argument that Lewis relays with respect to the existence of "feeling of marginality, of helplessness, of dependency and of inferiority ... weak ego structure, confusion of sexual identification and lack of impulse control," an outcome of such an environment. According to Valentine these attributions are "... no more than realistic perceptions and evaluations born not of personality disorder, but of lifelong and intergenerational experience imposed by the social order."

In spite of this criticism, Lewis saw some strength in poor people in less advantaged countries/environments and suggested that this attribute helps the poor to support one each other. He cited the ability of the poor to mobilize their own resources wherein they organize 'informal credit devices without interest' and go on with their lives.

Lewis' conceptions and arguments fit the points made by this dissertation on two counts. First, some single mother parents find themselves at the bottom of the economic ladder, and that the well off public sees them as hopeless cases that cannot easily achieve autonomy. Second, Lewis' insight about their ability to mobilize existing resources at their level and their efforts to develop themselves through informal credit systems parallel the social capital approach of development that this dissertation advocates as a means of escaping poverty. A flip of Lewis' argument about institutional and agency

support from the advanced sectors of an economy to the underprivileged who make their own efforts to overcome their problems points to the possibility of change that can make a lot of difference to the lives of a significant number of single mothers.

As Valentine persuasively argue above, the poor and/or single mother parents do not fit the 'ethnocentrically' coined concept of 'culture of poverty.' There is no one to one correspondence between the concept and the reality that it is supposed to purvey. As Valentine (1971: 220), quoting Galdwin (1967: 169) argues the 'essential deficiency of the anti-poverty policy has been a failure to generate sufficient power for poor people so that they might bring about significant social change in their own interests.'

Several policy inputs and programs have been designed and were made operational to address the problem of poverty among the poor/single mothers. But most of the measures implemented zeroed in on temporary support structures and a consistent call on willing mothers to go to school, raise themselves, and consequently find and hold on to these assumed jobs, good jobs that are out there and provide for their families.

The willingness-education/skills-jobs nexus linked to the support seekers and the reality on the ground were far apart as the public programs assistance experiences over the past decade indicate. Some extraordinary and lucky mothers have indeed made it through individual efforts. But many other have not succeeded. Another option that is open for further investigation is the group approach to address the problem. A possible alternative that casts itself in this regard is the social capital model of working together to bring about self-sufficiency by the single mothers whose interests are alike may be explored. A culture of working together may well replace the socially constructed

'culture of poverty' that has been pinning down hopes of the poor and frozen policies in time thus preventing possibilities of unleashing ways of resolving the perennial problem.

What are the implications of Bourdieu's conceptions about the availability of different resources ('capitals') and Lewis' mutual help principles for the struggles single mother parents make to push for a way out of the entrenched poverty condition they are in? The multi-faceted struggles single mothers are involved in to improve their educational qualifications and to take the social capital route to ease their unwholesome conditions make the theories developed by both scholars relevant. Some data from the in-depth interviews conducted and the survey done for this dissertation in Lansing highlight the aspirations and goals of the mothers to get out of poverty.

In this connection, the dissertation asks whether or not the culture of poverty thesis could be turned around and used as a tool for explaining the not so easily resolvable social problem. Hence, 'poverty of culture,' the term coined to express the idea that the problems lies in the practices put in place to deal with the control or resolution of the problem, rather than the personal inadequacies and the low income that single mothers in poverty make, needs to be the focus of attention of studies as in this dissertation.

The unchanging practice of looking at the poor as persons with behavioral defects linked to laziness, dependence on others for resources, and extravagance needs a thorough assessment. This dissertation attempts to investigate the extent to which each of the concepts enumerated earlier in this section apply to single mothers who continue to find themselves in usually helpless situations of poverty and dependency. The fact that many of the single mothers who participated in the survey and in-depth interviews do work and/or concoct some resources that help them pay their bills shows that they do not

deserve the stereotypical designation that paints them as 'lazy' beings. The mothers, in fact, use the dependency option as a last resort. The extravagance label that is freely attached to single mothers seems to be less in tune with the reality given that the same mothers are always in crises and make the extraordinary effort to piece resources from several sources to cover their basic necessity expenditures. Most of the mothers do not in general have the wherewithal to spend their money on luxurious pursuits and commodities.

In this, connection, what I like to call the concept of a 'frozen perspective' may be introduced to show that the practice of dealing with the problem of poverty is 'frozen in time.' The behavioral and/or personal defect thesis explaining the problem has been held dear by key sectors of the political establishment and opinion leader so much so that a new paradigm could not emerge to unleash some intellectual excitement that can prompt a wide array of discourses. Such an engagement may help review the problem in light of old and new field data. The data collected for this dissertation is, to some extent, an instance of new information gathered and one that can, in small ways, be used to inform public policy on welfare and the manner in which resources allocated for the purpose may be put into alternative ways of assisting single mothers in extricating themselves from of the hold of poverty.

This augurs well with ideas of the necessity of using multiple sets of resources for reducing inequality and overcoming poverty. Bourdieu's forms of capital and the necessity of building these inter-linked 'capitals' may be key to the resolution of the problems with which single mothers and their children are confronted. What the single

mothers interviewed and the survey research participants attempt to do and the limitations that usually stop them will be discussed in this light.

An effective use of such resources entails an exercise in democracy that should be extended to single mothers who, to put the matter in context, are receivers of decisions made on their behalf rather than decision-makers on their own problems. In other words, the question as to whether or not SMPs may be provided with resources that they can allocate for such ventures as social capital formation needs to be constantly asked. This dissertation undertakes to explore this option. Single mothers do recognize the great value of this approach to a degree. But they do not practicalize it effectively to change their situations.

Rousseau's theories about democracy, participation and his concept of the primacy of the 'general will' in the decision-making process is brought into the discussion in order to make an assessment of the hurdles encountered and the possibilities open for enabling single mothers achieve autonomy (see Good, in Wilson et al 2001). Given that single mothers are accorded little if any power to suggest ways by which resources could be efficiently allocated to reduce their poverty, a change in the exercise of possibilities of using their power as citizens becomes meaningful. Moves to prevent people's meetings that are meant to decide issues that affect their lives or any failure to facilitate such meetings would have disastrous impacts on any society. In other words, failure to enable the marginalized, single mothers in this dissertation's context, to decide their fate, would eventuate, as Rousseau (1947: 83) cogently argues, in the destruction of society or the dissipation of the authority of the sovereign, that is, the ultimate power of the people who, in the first place, delegate this same power to a government that rules on their

behalf. Each member of a society is equal to any other. But together, all members constitute the ultimate power and authority for each and all, as Rousseau underlines. They can use their collective power to decide issues that are consistent with their interests.

Foucault's theory that power is distributed across a wide spectrum of social structures and everyday life also indicates that single mothers may, if they come together, influence decisions that are relevant to their particular situations. This is pertinent to the discussion of empowerment of the poor. Foucault argues that the poor can make a difference if they act and take the initiative to improve their conditions of poverty (see Foucault in Etzioni-Halevy 1997; Chambon et al 1999: 277). This means that they act positively toward the resolution of their problems in distinct steps as well as cumulatively. Do the mothers engage themselves in such activities? Some of the dissertation's data will be employed to see if single mothers engage the system from an interest or pressure group position to achieve their goals through an exercise of their potential power.

In recent years, the concept of social capital has captured the attention of a range of scholars who have devoted their energies toward unpacking the meanings of poverty and contributing to its resolution. The concept of social capital, in other words, has become a catchword in the discussion of poverty and alternative routes of addressing it and ultimately controlling it (Robison, Siles and Schmid, in Atria, Siles, Arriada, Robison and Whiteford (compilers) 2004: 54, and Atria in Atria et al, 2004: 545-6; Hudock 1999: 16 and 40-41). The concepts of trust, networking and cooperation straddle the major term of social capital (Paldam and Svendsen, in Flap and Volker 2004: 232). A sense of some

understanding of the needs of the self and others; the existence of some shared needs and interests; and eventually networking are critical aspects of the social capital route to development.

These need to be followed by an action of pulling of all conceivable resources for the mutual benefit of the partners in social capital. Cooperating and acting on these needs and interests is the fabric that builds the social capital avenue of helping one another. Different scholars have defined social capital according to the experiences that they have witnessed and the insights that have lit their minds.

Bourdieu, for example, defines social capital as well as economic, cultural capital, and most importantly political capital, as necessary elements for devising ways of satisfying the needs of the disfranchised. He further defines economic capital as an income that people get due to their labor input and from their assets (in Richardson 1986: 252).

Social capital, for Bourdieu is critical as it brings people into a networked relationship of bonding through the mechanisms of what people do to pursue their interests. Fukuyama (2002: 23) defines the concept as a cooperative venture to achieve 'common ends on the basis of shared informal norms and values'. For Riedl and Winden (in Flap and Volker, eds., 2004: 77-78) it presupposes sacrifice by the individuals who associate with one another in situations of pooling resources. The outcomes are expected to bring a stream of benefits to the users of the system.

The shortage and/or absence of these capitals, social capital in particular, in the lives of many individuals and groups who find themselves in situations of dried up money resource environments, is a key factor causing the impoverishment of many single

mothers. Where it is available it becomes a means of overcoming poverty. Where it is lacking, individual mothers suffer dire straits.

5. Poverty, Social Capital, and Power

The persistence of poverty in the city of Lansing as well as in many pocket regions, urban and rural, of the U.S. is in a sense an indication of the existence of three major hurdles. The first is the presence of a limited understanding of the potentials of social capital. Second, lack of recognition of the requisite power to organize and build associations that cater for responding to the needs of poor single mothers. The third is the lack of commitment to continue to build on what exists and strengthen the cooperation.

Renshaw (1994), quoted by Hudock 1999: 16) goes even further than these steps when she stresses the necessity of zeroing in on the factors of organizational capacity at the group level. For Renshaw developing some capacity to deliver services to themselves (SMPs) and speaking on their behalf with others who extend or provide them with various forms of assistance that at times may not be in tune with their expressed and unexpressed needs is one major move that may help the mothers address their peculiar problems. Community organizing, as Michael Harrington (cited in Learner and Howe, 1968: 34) also saw, and this dissertation argues, may well set the environment for the generation of jobs that are planned, run and controlled by those who create them according to their needs. The leaders in the creation of such jobs emerge from among the poor or single mothers who would care and do all they can to keep them going and regenerating (Harrington, in Learner and Howe 1968: 34). The development of organization, capacity to deliver services and making decisions on their own behalf are

key to the processes of empowering SMP s. Alternatively, their active participation in situations where other institutions like the state or voluntary agencies play major supporting roles is essential. Following Rousseau, Arblaster (1987: 77-8) makes the point that participation leads to an elevation of the common good and ultimately to a democratic system of government. The absence of sharing in the context of the common good the result of which is the emergence of inequality, resources would be ill-distributed among social groups.

The lack of resources in adequate quantities at the single mother parent level as well as their gross shortage at government and private sector or other support levels, for instance, creates a higher degree of disfranchisement. This situation is created where power is limited or it is absent as far as the situation of single mothers is concerned. Adams, in Fogelson 1977, Foucault, Giddens and others see power as having dual functions (Adams, in Fogelson 1977), and Gaventa (1980). For one thing, these authors see that it plays key roles in maintaining the status quo. Second, it is a factor that is important in contesting the structures of poverty.

Both scholars argue that those in power always attempt to retain their favored positions in society. They further argue that those with resources mobilize certain preemptive beliefs that support their positions about those living in poverty.

For Foucault (in Gordon et al 1980) power is embedded in the socio-political arrangements of a society that dominate the poor. He posits that power is distributed over wide spectrums of society and some people can take advantage of their place in the social structure (Etzioni-Halevy 1997) to challenge the status quo on how individual mobility in a group context can achieve a certain level of distribution of resources and achieve

potential rights. At times social groups lobby or challenge authorities in order to change individual or group circumstances (Foucault in Gordon 1980: 81-92; Etzioni-Halevy 1997: 103-110). In like manner, poverty-stricken single mothers in society could change their situation if they get organized and act in unison in order to capture state support, but the structural situation is much more complicated than the argument suggests.

Rousseau's theoretical and philosophical position that anchors on democratic rights, participation and the presence of the 'general will' in decision-making processes in society befits the situation of poor single mothers in the context of this dissertation. These rights are reflected in the constitution of the United Sates that declares that every American will be entitled to the pursuit of happiness. The participation of citizens in all affairs that affect theirs and other fellow citizens' lives assumes respect for the democratic rights of all members of society. Participation is an important means of initiating and implementing changes that should naturally follow "community-run public meetings" the purpose of which is primarily " educative and redemptive," that is followed by action that leads to the "control of power and resources" and eventually benefit the group, SMP in this dissertation's case (Barber, in Ritter and Bondanella, eds.,1987: 296). These rights are mutually recognized and decisions affecting any one are made within a framework agreed upon by all participants, as Bourdieu states in his writings.

In this dissertation, as pointed out earlier, the democratic rights of single mothers as they pertain to their rights of getting employed and earning their living in the "free market" environment thinking that at this time dominates the policy domain is examined. My research will examine the role of government in addressing poverty and providing public welfare in a historical perspective and at this point in time.

As the dissertation's data shows, single mothers do not participate in policy-making; they are rather receivers of policy decisions and their implementation. These mothers seldom vote, let alone run for elective offices. The survey research conducted for this dissertation documents that single mothers rarely vote for politicians, congressional and judicial candidates. The mothers' assent to decisions that affect segments of people in the political process or the democratic rights of a good number of citizens is not sought. The stumbling block here for the mothers is that their potential power is little mobilized if any.

As Giddens (1990) and Hurst (1995) remind us, the possession of power is not consistent with the theoretically upheld democratic values to which Rousseau, in his book, "The Social Contract", (see trans. by Frankel, 1947), and other philosophers have made constant reference to. Giddens (1990), as does Hurst (1995), pinpoints the location of power in the social structures of societies at particular levels. For them the 'agencies of the privileged' hold the key to the resolution of the problems of the poor. These political and philosophical positions do indeed provide a basis for searching ways of resolving the myriad of problems SMPs face.

James Scott (1990: 219) argues that economic and political changes that add to the "indignities and appropriations to which subordinate groups are subjected" may well lead to defiance in both their symbolic and material senses. The decisions that one neighborhood in Lansing, Baker Donora, made to refuse getting assistance from a major food supplier to the needy rather than suffer indignities that was piggy-backed on the support advanced is a case in point (interview with Anita Mongpenny, the Baker Donora Neighborhood Center in Lansing, July 7, 2004). Measures that undermine the interests of

poor SMPs thus evoke negative responses. The resistance that ensues from such relations, aside from undermining their adversaries' valuations and actions, may, moreover, create instability that may compromise the existence of society itself in the ultimate sense.

Single mothers explain what their problems are to their fellow workers or those workers who are in the same predicament they are in and keep the ball of resistance rolling. The complex problems they encounter daily with arranging baby-sitter services or substitutes to care for their children, the obstacles that place them in situations where they cannot attend their Michigan Works (job search, gate-keeping for welfare check receipt) sessions and thus their inability to govern themselves by the rules that are linked to welfare recipiency are instances of resistance they show to the system. The system sees their peculiar problems less in tune with their expressed needs and more in relation to the rules and regulations that govern the provisions of public assistance. The resistance SMPs put up show that they are capable of explaining their problems rationally and making the decision to go against the rules and get involved in silent wrangles that eventually lead to the suspension or cancellation of the support they receive from the state.

But in private and appropriate moments, they talk about the less helpful social support system in the harshest manner possible. Rachel, a single mother in Lansing interviewed for this study, shows the bitterness she harbors against her social worker who cut her off from the child care support she was provided with by the welfare office. These kinds of complaints though remain at the individual level. If single mothers were able to discuss the issue in group contexts, argue their cases out and present them as demands to

the Family Independence Agency, Michigan, the problem would have a chance of being heard and at least being addressed if not resolved.

For resistance to materialize certain situations have to be fulfilled. First, a common cause needs to be expressed to rally the population together. For instance, if the population of SMPs gets organized in the way the social security recipients have brought themselves into a voting block that is feared and respected by politicians, they can achieve a lot by way of reducing their conditions of poverty. The groups can build up such organizational capacity, to a point where they can resist decisions like the elimination of the safety net and argue out their case for the extension, not incision or exclusion, of benefits that could be negotiated with relative ease, as the Social Security recipients' case of getting more benefits (prescription drug benefits, for instance) demonstrates. Open resistance and covert political maneuverings aimed at getting the group's rights respected can be set in motion in the process, as Scott's studies of peasant resistance and gains show (see Scott, J. C., 1986).

All this is a result of not being governed by the democratic principles that are enshrined in the constitution of the U. S. The cause for this state of affairs is the inequality in income and wealth that is one result of the lop-sided nature of social structural arrangements upheld by the country. Poorer mothers with children also do very little on their part to lay down the foundations for their empowerment. Many of them are, as the survey data indicates, little concerned with the way the political life of the country is organized and managed. Many do not vote. Neither do they offer themselves as candidates for political positions. These 'choices' of not wanting to participate in the political process by exercising their voting rights, at least, does affect the cases that they

themselves have to make in their own best interest. The issue of participation is also affected by the social structure that embodies differentiation of social groups. There are evidences that they make a difference in election outcomes (Piven et al 1988: 218-9).

Gender, race/ethnicity and class issues also play significant roles in the way the structures and the institutions of the country are (re)organized. Minority statuses do have implications for the unequal opportunities 'garnered' by the less fortunate groups of people including SMPs in the American society.

At the opposite end of the personal defect thesis that poverty emanates from character deficits as this relates to work involving the poor or single mothers, in this dissertation's case, is the structural impediment argument that is invoked as an explanation for the existence of poverty. In his book *The Other America* Michael Harrington (1962), a social scientist, uncovered that poverty existed in urban and rural areas in the U.S. because society did little to intervene with the aim of improving the livelihood of people affected. To what extent is society intervening to address these problems as they pertain to single mothers? The extent of the support extended to the poor and the type of resources used are determinant in controlling the further spread of the poverty conundrum that exposes more and more poorer people or single mothers to suffering.

This is a policy issue that reverts to the question of the responsibility of the state in providing support to those in need. The state as an institution is invested with the responsibility of the maintenance of security and resource or tax collection and the distribution of income in ways that are beneficial to all members of society's needs in order to help those who for one reason or another are left behind. What the role of the

state can and should be in the work of alleviating poverty will be examined by the dissertation. The views of recipients as well as voluntary agencies and government representatives interviewed in Lansing will be used in the discussion of the issues that are central to this study.

6. Methodologies Used for the Dissertation

This research uses the multi-methodology approach. In-depth interviews, and survey research are the main instruments employed for collecting the data for the dissertation. The two methodologies make a meaningful whole as they reinforce the research endeavor. The in-depth interview methodology has enabled the researcher to get a sense of what is going on with the population's members, SMPs in this case, as they relate with the institutions that provide them with the services that they need and how they evaluate the services and perceive the staff and authorities associated with them.

A number of scholars have written about the roles key informant interviews play in the collection of data for social research. Derman (in Finsterbusch 1990: 118), for instance, stresses the importance of informant interviewing in social science research. He points out that such an interview provides a:

> means to determine how individuals or social groups view themselves, their relationship to their environment, to others and to agents and forces of change. Informants provide access into others' worlds. Those worlds are typically distinct, and their perspectives different from those of planners, developers, engineers and others engaged in planned interventions.

This observation has an enormous relevance in the context of the topic of this dissertation. Since the labels attached to welfare recipients are assumed rather than

empirically verified the data collected through informant interviewing is critical. The data, when interpreted and analyzed properly, would eventually help minimize the entertainment of any wrong assumptions and help policy-makers attune to real world situations the poor and welfare recipients find themselves in.

The survey research methodology has also enabled the researcher to get a lot of information that was used to measure needs, evaluate perceptions about the staff of service agencies and get some ideas about future goals of participants. This researcher, in part, used the 'fixed survey interview' format that Rubin (1983: 56) identified as one of the major undertakings in focused interviews. Other than one participant who was not able to read and write, however, all participants in the survey research filled out the questionnaire schedule. In a few cases also the researcher has given answers to participants' questions relating to ambiguities and/or misunderstandings that surfaced themselves while responding to them.

Access to the population for both the in-depth interviews and the filling out of the survey was fraught with innumerable difficulties. The difficulties took two major dimensions — at the level of the service providers and the single mother parent participants themselves.

Some of the gatekeepers — voluntary organizations — were highly protective of their clientele when the researcher approached them for assistance and asked their cooperation for facilitating the work. Many initially showed total disinterest in the whole project. Others seemed to be cynical about it. These were indeed moments of frustration. It was after a GLHRN meeting in 2001 that a young lady came over and encouraged me to go ahead with the project. She said that it was this kind of resistance from the gate-

keepers that made her despair in her own research a few years back, "But I will help you in all ways I can" the young woman said. This tempered my own fears for carrying out the project to some successful conclusion.

Such encouraging words though scarce, were the kinds of words I expected to come from the voluntary agencies representatives. But the continuing cynicism expressed, the attitudes of some of the representatives, the 'writing on the wall,' and what appeared to be a 'who cares' look on their faces was cause for concern.

I wrote some questions relating to the concepts of poverty, welfare and workfare and distributed them to persons who represented charities/voluntary agencies in one of the GLHRN meetings. The sheet of paper distributed carried 12 questions and it was given to some 30-agency representatives in the meeting. Only two responded to the call after several weeks and after several promptings (see Tables 92a, b and c, in Appendix 1).

Following the concept questions mentioned above, I drew up a small data gathering instrument that sought information about, among other things, the year of establishment of the voluntary organizations, their individual service specialization, the type of persons, particularly single mother parents, they served. The questionnaire was completed in a matter of a few minutes right at the Greater Lansing Homeless Resolution Network (GLHRN) meeting. A representative of an organization described the response as a success. The questionnaire filled out by the agency representatives for gathering data about the organizations' history, activities and purposes was reviewed again and again for accuracy and at the end of November 2003 it became the basis upon which the initial choice for the distribution of the survey questionnaire for the SMPs was made.

Two of the major agencies, a health center and a neighborhood service organization notified the researcher that he was not allowed to recruit participants in person, but that he could only invite SMPs to participate in the project. One said that it would put the notice on its newsletter so that the mothers would be able to read it and then decide to participate or ignore the invitation. Another advised him to place a drop box and with it an 'invitation to participate sheet(s)' in the office where clients would have the opportunity to view them and then decide to choose to take part after weighing their options or ignore them.

The newsletter idea of letting people know about the project was disregarded by the researcher because it seemed to be time consuming and too few participants, or none, would be willing to come foreword and express their decisions to participate. This point proved to be right because a few of the participants who were asked to take part in the research were unwilling to come aboard even after personal appeals, followed by negotiations relating to the completion of the questionnaire, were made to convince them. The idea of the drop box option initially seemed to work well and that was why it was tried. We kept the box and the 'invitation to participate in a research' at the Ingham County's Family and Child Health Department. Each time the boxes were checked and or replaced, it was found out that they were not used at all. But after six weeks of lying on a corner table in the clients' sitting room, only one response was secured from the box that was checked every week. There was no way to invite this lone volunteer single mother parent for either the survey or the key informant interview drive. This particular lady did not complete the consent form satisfactorily. The only address she gave was an e-mail address that was not even legible and full.

Although complete denial of access to participants did not create a gulf between the agencies and the researcher, it hampered the progress of the data collection. But what Pole and Lampard (2002: 87) identified as a smooth relationship between the researcher and the gatekeepers, the agencies supporting the poor in this dissertation's case, was central and that the absence of such a gesture created an obstacle to the success of the study.

I persisted in my decision to get key informants and survey research participants in difficult circumstances. The researcher, therefore, had no other option but to continue to solicit volunteers even when access was restricted. Seven shelters and soup kitchens, three health centers and two churches (see list of these agencies at the end of this chapter) were used as initial distribution points for the survey questionnaire schedule and for locating key informants for the study.

The frustration with the low return rate of the questionnaire almost pushed the researcher to focus on key informant interviewing as a sole means of data gathering for this dissertation. Even then, the number of key informants who volunteered to speak about their experiences is still small. The interviews that the researcher had with these single mothers may reflect the experiences of many others. A portion of the material the interviewer was able to get from the mothers and consequently transcribed was drawn upon in the writing of the dissertation chapters.

The support provided by a number of charities, Michigan Works, health clinics and others made it possible for the researcher to use the survey methodology as well. Although about 250 questionnaires were initially distributed, only 80 were completed in more than six months of effort. The sample is a convenient sample that provides the data

for the research. As the sample's size is small, the power of the statistics is not evidently strong. But the outcome of the effort has enabled the researcher to make partial statements that support the assumptions made and are expected to help in drawing some conclusions that would serve as a basis for future studies on the subject of poverty as it relates to SMPs.

A focus group study was also planned as a means of collecting data. Difficulties relating to getting focus group interviews were abundant. Appointments given to the researcher were freely changed for material or insignificant reasons or even denied after several schedules. Failure to get some 10 to 12 participants to show up for the discussions on three occasions foiled the plan. Less than three people showed up in each of the attempts. Greater dollar amounts, that is, the payment of five dollars per hour was not incentive enough to attract potential participants. The researcher was thus compelled to disregard the focus group methodology as a means of getting more and useful data that could have strengthened the outcome of the study.

A modest use of the participant observation methodology was also made in shelters, soup kitchens, and food distribution centers and health clinic(s) connected with the Family Independence Agency. But problems relating to 'privacy rights' and the position on research taken by some of the agencies, convinced the researcher not to rely on the methodology that much.

Other difficulties also included outright denial of access to potential participants by some key charities/organizations. Two health and supportive centers, two shelters, and a food distribution center were uncooperative for reasons of protection of 'beneficiary rights' and bureaucratic reasons. The researcher was thus compelled to concentrate on

fewer access points that he saw were less restrictive. A church, Advent House Ministries, where the Greater Lansing Homeless Resolution Network (GLHRN) monthly meeting takes place, and one that serves as a food distribution center, was used as an entry point.

The single mother parents who participated in the key informant interviews were recruited at the Southwest Neighborhood Center and Summer Place (a public housing unit), Ingham County Community Health Center, Gateway Community Services, the Central Methodist Church and Advent House Ministries, Michigan Works branches, that is, the central unit of 'Work First' (South Lansing) and Work First (Lansing Community College), and Shared Pregnancy (a health and supportive service center).

Figure 1: Organizations where the survey research questionnaire schedule was distributed and filled out

Voluntary agencies, soup kitchens and shelters in Lansing
1. Advent House Ministries
2. Hanah's House
3. Volunteers of America
4. Central Methodist Church
5. Mount Hope Church in the City

Health centers and supportive services
1. Shared Pregnancy
2. Ingham County Community Health Clinic

Job search, training and counseling centers
1. Michigan Works (Central)
2. Michigan Works (Lansing Community College)

Neighborhood centers and a public housing unit in Lansing
1. Southwest West Neighborhood Center
2. Baker Donora Neighborhood Center
3. Summer Place (Public Housing Unit)

Seven mothers were interviewed and their stories were used in the chapters where appropriate. These interviews brought a lot of interesting personal data that puts some 'face' to the often doubted, feared and despised single mothers. The data has made the research stronger and more reliable.

The interview data from the SMPs is used in the discussion of issues in Chapters 4 and 5. The limitations imposed by the nature of the population covered for the study and difficulties encountered in terms of access to the population compelled the researcher to fall back on provisional samples several times. For instance, I had to abandon the idea of accessing single mothers attached to institutions of support using the list that agencies kept for their clientele. There were three problems encountered in this regard. First, many of the agencies did not have an updated list of the SMP population they served. Second they were never prepared to secure one, if at all they saw the need for it. In fact access to such a list by other people outside the agency including researchers was out of the question. One of the reasons for this is the protection of the privacy rights of beneficiaries (Dan Hicks, head, Rescue Mission of Lansing, November 24, 2003, a Department head in Ballentines Stepping Stones, November 2, 2000, Charles Steinberg, Lansing City Human Services Department, November 2002). Third, they did not have the human resources and the time to help researchers achieve their goals.

I had, therefore, to settle to the only option left for me. And that constituted going to the willing temporary need service agencies like food distribution centers food and supply centers; neighborhoods, soup kitchens, healthcare clinics, shelters, and the Michigan Works job search, training and counseling centers to meet single mothers, interview them and perhaps get the data I needed. The reader can go to the methodology

section, Chapter below 2, to take a note of the difficulties encountered in the process of the data collection for this study.

The responses to the survey questions and key informant interviews for this dissertation indicate that many participant single mothers like and appreciate the idea of working together to reduce their dependence on welfare. Helping the single mothers realize these goals is one way of addressing the problem that secondary sources of assistance have been struggling with for longer periods of time, with but little success.

Interview materials of six voluntary agency representatives, five government officials and/or specialists as well as three neighborhood centers and a programs' support and funding agency constitute part of the data sources for the dissertation. Six voluntary agencies, six government departments as well as four neighborhood centers a support agency constituted the units where the interviews were conducted* (see note below).

Note:

The voluntary agencies are Haven House, Christo Rey, the Salvation Army, Volunteers of America, Lansing Rescue Mission and Hanah's House.
The government agencies are City of Lansing's Human Resources Department, Michigan Works, North Lansing Area Community Health Department, Ingham County Family and Child Health Department, the Family Support Services of the Family Independence Agency. The Southwest and Baker Donora Neighborhood Centers, Summer Place –a town house complex -- and the Capital Area United Way are the fourth set of agencies where data was sought and collected.

Table 1: Different categories of interviews secured from SMPs, voluntary agency representatives, government officials and specialists and neighborhood and funding agency heads. (The first two letters in each of the words used in the names of the agencies are elected for identifying them in the tables below):

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW WITH SMP PARTICIPANTS		
First name	**Agency/ Institution**	**Date of Interview**
Furice	Soweneho Center	June 22, 2004
Rubie	Private Home	May 15, 2004
Shaq'uitta	Gacose (shelter)	December 31, 2003
Rachel	Private Home	January 6, 2004
Linda	Private Home	February 6, 2004
Kraft	Cemech	July 20, 2004
Fonda	Miwo	December 15, 2003
Desiree	Laremi	March 19, 2005
Heather	Laremi	March 19, 2005
Lisa	Laremi	March 19, 2005

NEIGHBORHOODS AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES			
First name	**Agency Name**	**Year of Establishment**	**Date of Interview**
Ann	Sowenehoce	1998	Jan. 8, 2004
Anita	Badenonhce	1991	July 7, 2004
Shawn Granger	Caarunwa	N/A	Dec. 22, 2003

VOLUNTARY AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES INTERVIEWED			
Name	**Agency Name**	**Year of Establishment**	**Date of Interview**
Virginia	Haho	July 1995	Dec. 11, 2003
John, Tracie and Linda	Chrecoce	1965	Dec. 29, 2003
Dawn	Saar	1978	Dec. 19, 2003
Sharon	Voam	1986	Dec. 19, 2003
Baverly	Haho	January 1983	Nov. 24, 2003
Dan	Laremi	1911 (Programs for SMPs Started in 1992)	Nov. 24, 2003

GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES AND AGENCIES ASSISTING SINGLE-MOTHER PARENTS			
Name of Interviewee	**Agency**	**Year of Establishment**	**Date of Interview**
Janet	Fainag		
Charles	Cilahurede	N/A	January 5, 2004
Leslie, Gary	Miwo		
Stacy	Incohedep North Lansing Area	1987 (Maternal Outreach)	February 5, 2004
Quess	Incofachhedep		Nov. 21, 2004

Source: Compiled from data collected for this dissertation. For abbreviations see Note 1and 2, p.266. The first two letters of each word in the agency names are used for the abbreviations used in Table 1.

Table 2: Survey Table Q2: Age distribution of SMPs who participated in the study

SURVEY RESPONDENT AGE GROUP CLASSIFICATION, FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE		
Age group	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
17-21	11	13.8
22-27	14	14.6
28-32	14	17.7
33-37	12	15.1
38-42	10	12.7
43-48	6	7.7
49-54	6	7.6
Total respondents	73	93.0
Missing	7	7.0
Overall total	100	100

Source: Survey data for this dissertation.

7. Research Site

The research for this dissertation was carried out in Lansing, Michigan. Established in 1848, Lansing, the state capital of Michigan, a city of about 119,000 (see Table 9, p. 77) inhabitants, started as a thriving urban center where first settler families bought land from the state and expanded. General Motors and other manufacturers rooted their business in the city later on, at the turn of the 20th Century.

Lansing is an industrial city. Auto manufacturers General Motors and Chrysler have some of their major plants or parts plants in the city. Lansing has been one geographic area where auto manufacturing took dominance in economic activity and led to the view that identified the city it as a GM corporate town. A Michigan State University Symposium Proceedings (Bryson, January 19, 1980: 94-95) describes Michigan as having the characteristic of a 'highly advanced' state in terms of industrialization with "respect to its population and the gross national product." It adds:

It is actually a one-industry state in spite of a wide diversity of products, so greatly does the automobile manufacture overarch all others as to make them almost

insignificant. In the Thirties approximately three-fifths of the workers in the industry were in Michigan.

GM and the other auto manufacturers, Ford and Chrysler, employed a substantial number of autoworkers for many decades beginning the turn of the 20th century. The state's (Michigan's) other economic sectors include agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, mining, construction, manufacturing, wholesale trade, retail trade, transportation and warehousing and utilities, information and others. Service industries abound and they constitute the largest employer in the city. But it is one that is distinguished by minimum wage jobs. It is one of the major sectors that employs single mothers with children.

Other industries like timber, furniture, etc., for instance, employ thousands of people. Some of these industries are also located in the city. Lansing takes a good share of the industrial activities of the state. The total number of workers in the city is 48,700 workers (www.michlmi.org).

Table 3: Primary government organizations and industries employing workers in Lansing

PRIMARY GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND INDUSTRIES EMPLOYING WORKERS IN LANSING		
Employer	**# of Employees**	**Type of Business**
State of Michigan	14,042	Government
MSU	13,636	Higher Education
General Motors Corporation	12,000	Automobile
Sparrow Hospital	6,000	Medicine
Dart Container System	5,000	Containers
Meijer	4,261	Ware housing groceries
Lansing School District	3,500	Education
Ingham Regional Medical Center	2,500	Medicine
Lansing Community College	2,000	Higher Education
U.S. Postal Service	1,300	Government
City of Lansing	1,200	Government
Auto Owners Insurance	1,100	Insurance
Ingham county	900	Government
Jackson National Life	850	Insurance
Total	68,139	

Source: Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce; http://ed-web3.msu.edu/programs/liveinlansing.htm

The population of the city grew larger over the decades. Lansing has the 6th largest population of the cities of the state After Detroit and Grand Rapids, amongst others.

Almost 13% of the families under poverty constitute the SMP population of the city (Michigan Manual: 2003-2004: 931, see also Table 10, p. 92, this dissertation). Nationally, the percentage of young children in households headed by single mothers with no spouse present showed an erratic growth over the last quarter of the 20th century.

Teen pregnancy rates, unlike the increase in the high school dropout rate went down between 1991 and 2000 for all the Capital Area Community (The Capital Area Community, Fall 2002: 16-17). That of Ingham County, where the city of Lansing is located, for instance decreased from 84 percent to 57 percent, according to the Michigan Department of Community Health (Ibid.).

This decrease in the teen pregnancy rate does have a positive impact on the public welfare regime. A lesser number of pregnant mothers may translate into fewer young mothers who may seek government assistance. The rise in the high school dropout rate, on the other hand, paves the way for frustration of young females who may not fulfill the "minimum requirement for entry into the labor force or access additional upper level education or training" (Capital Area Community Fall 2002: 12). Among the negative impacts of such a deficit is the likelihood of turning to public assistance for survival in case a child is born (Ibid.).

The poverty rate in Ingham, the county in which Lansing is located, has been growing at an increasing rate (Capital Area United Way 2000: 42). The county, which includes the City of Lansing, had the highest number of people in poverty in 1989, according to the 1990 statistics from the Bureau of Census (Capital Area United Way, Fall 2000: 42).

The city continues to receive migrants and refugees form across the world to add to the problems the local population faces. According to Mary Flores of St. Vincent Catholic Charities, 3,188 refugees were settled in Lansing between 2000 and 2005. These refugees came from 16 countries (see list of countries of origin at the end of this chapter).

Although most of the refugees find entry-level jobs, 85 percent get employed within 6 months, according to Ms. Flores. Whether or not the addition of these new settlers squeezes the labor market for entry-level jobs is hard to say. However, one thing is certain in this regard, some 67% of the refugees were able to get employment in 2004, reveals Flores. In 2005 this percentage rose to 85. However, the number of refugees who came to Lansing in 2004 was 658 while that of 2005 is 388. The refugee population joins low-income groups in the city and does compete for jobs that are at times scarce.

Single mothers with children made up some of the resettled families. Some 16 Somali families were single mothers with 96 family members, children, mainly individuals (Data from the Catholic Church). Thirty-one single mothers were from Liberia. Both countries were affected by civil wars.

The resettlement of the refugees and, more importantly migrants, in Lansing is helpful to these new community members on three counts. First, their safety is assured and their children and themselves find the doors to education open for them. Second, they get the opportunity to work and earn their living. Third, they are able to support their relatives back home by sending a lot of money. Expatriate Ethiopians, for instance, send around $400 million each year for this purpose (Addis Zemen, Oct 10, 2003). The figure for remittances to developing countries by expatriates was quite high. Migrants send $88

billion in the form of remittances to their own developing nations each year (Alazar K., *Business and Economy,* July 27, 2005).

The question of how low-income migrant workers are able to send money to their countries is a question that is asked frequently. This is a query that needs some research in order to get a satisfactory answer. But three reasons appear to shed some light on the answer in the view of some migrants. First, migrants live and cook and eat together when they can and save a lot of money by doing so. Second, they do not dine outside the home. Third, they save money through the kitty system, a system where a group of individuals/families contributes to a 'pool' of money that a member collects through a lottery draw. All winners of the kitty pay back the amount they draw from the kitty each month until everyone who paid into the kitty gets the full amount he paid into the system at the end. The kitty is interest free money that constitutes part of the money sent back home by migrants. Interest that is ordinarily paid to banks bolsters the money remitted.

Poverty is not peculiar to Ingham, one main destination for refugees, in the state. It also affected two other counties. The rate figures for Clinton and Eaton counties, which are part of the Tri-County Area Community, were 19.3 % and 20.3 %, in that order.

Lansing had 2,516 female householders with children less than 18 years who were below the established poverty line (Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3), Sample Data), U.S. Census Bureau, in American Fact Finder, http://factfinder.censu.gov/servelet/SAFFFacts?_event+ChangeGeoContext&geo_id=16000...

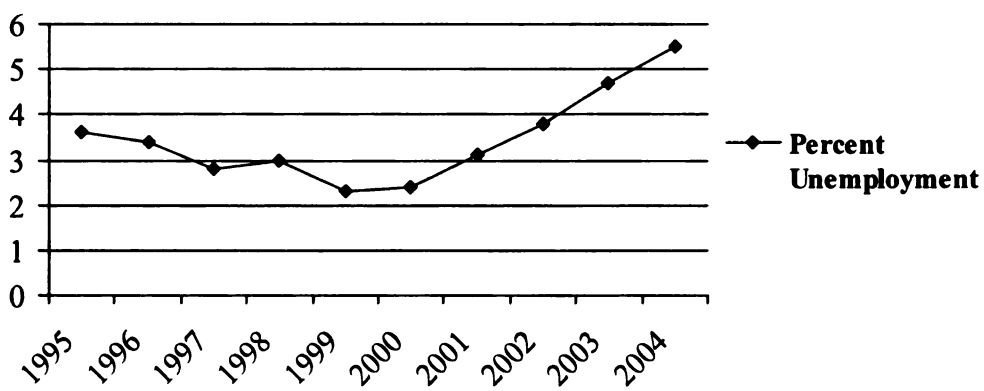
The total average unemployed for the June 2003 to June 2004 was close to 12,000 (Ibid.). The number of employed single mothers in Lansing far outnumbered those that

are unemployed. The Census 2000 Summary File 3 (FS 3) shows that 5,300 female householders were employed compared with about 400 who were not employed (see American Fact Finder, Census Bureau Data, Universe: Families, p. 44). However, another 2300 persons were not in the labor force (Ibid.).

Table 4: The unemployment rates in Michigan for the years 1995 to 2004

Year	Period	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
1995	**Annual**	234824(s)	226301(s)	8523(s)	3.6(s)
1996	**Annual**	237443(s)	229266(s)	8177(s)	3.4(s)
1997	**Annual**	241227(s)	234404(s)	6823(s)	2.8(s)
1998	**Annual**	241877(s)	234686(s)	7191(s)	3.0(s)
1999	**Annual**	243085(s)	237423(s)	5662(s)	2.3(s)
2000	**Annual**	249424(t)	243383(t)	6041(t)	2.4(t)
2001	**Annual**	254561(t)	246637(t)	7924(t)	3.1(t)
2002	**Annual**	251730(t)	242170(t)	9560(t)	3.8(t)
2003	**Annual**	253626(t)	241773(t)	11853(t)	4.7(t)
2004	**Annual**	254936(t)	240856(t)	14080(t)	5.5(t)
s : Reflects 2000 Census-based geography and new model-based controls at the state level. t : Reflects 2000-based geography and new model-based controls. Revision expected in 2005.					

Figure 2: Percent of Unemployment in Michigan for the years 1995 to 2004



Source: http://data.bls.gov/PDQ/servlet/SurveyOutputServlet

A *Lansing State Journal* news report, Sept. 9, 2003, quoting the U.S. Census Bureau reveals that Michigan was one of the hardest hit states by the economic slowdown of the

early 21st Century. The average median household income during 2001-02 was $44,239 - a decline of 5.2 percent from $46,645 in 2000-01 (Ibid). The rate of poverty rose to 10.5 percent from 9.6 percent in 2001-2002. It stood at 3.1 percent in the spring of 2000; but in August 2000 it again rose to 7.4 percent.

Michigan's economy has been led by manufacturing for scores of years. Factors attached to the costs of wages relating to a strongly-unionized work force and the offers of cost reductions in other regions/environments, has led to the closure of plants and their transfer to less regulated sites where the profit margin is obviously bolstered.

There are many reasons for closure of companies in an economy. Lower usage of products either due to their replacement with similar products and cheaper prices is among the reasons for shifts in product use. A case in point is a plunge in capacity utilization of the Michigan Seamless Tube Company, a specialty steel producer of hot-rolled and cold-finished steel bars, that suffered from decrease in the purchase of its products and was thus compelled to demand concessions from its labor union (Nissen 1995: 110) to offset losses in profit that occurred owing to 50% drop in capacity utilization.

Conflict between labor and management is the norm in such a situation. The inevitable end result of such a relationship is often the introduction of a series of measures for cost reductions that affect profit minimally or closure of shops and flight to other areas where the cost of labor is comparatively low and the so called industrial peace is expected and assured.

Poverty is an issue that is not peculiar to the city of Lansing, or viewed from a national angle, the United States, where it has been cause for conflict between many

groups in the society. It is even more serious in other less rich countries around the globe. Three billion people live with a dollar a day or less (Wolfensohn, April 2002).

Globalization or the spread of investment capital, among other things, despite its contributions to the growth of national economies in selected sectors in developing countries, has become a basis for ever widening gaps between smaller classes of people and a continually growing larger groups of citizens at both investment resources receiving and sending countries around the globe. Beneficiaries of the movement and investment of capital are small groups of mainly business elite and others associated with them both in the investment resources sending and receiving countries. Workers in the capital sending nations are the major losers as the elimination of their jobs may only bring replacement jobs that pay less than their previous earnings.

The capitalist logic of development is centered in relation to the use of cheap labor in the industrialized country context. According to Robbins (1999: 43), capitalist employers found cheap labor categories for the populations who "had been forced off their land" or those who found the "products they produced were no longer in demand." These laborers were quite mobile as they moved from one place of employment to another.

Initially workers were employed for meager wages that allowed 'enterprises to make their necessary profit' (Robins 1999: 61). But when they organized labor unions and began to fight for their rights and demanded higher wages, owners of capital co-opted them through what Hurst (1995: 315) calls the introduction of 'welfare capitalism.' This technique included the provision of 'special savings

plans and bonuses, home ownership aid programs, stock-purchasing options and group insurance plans (Ibid)' that together often softened the positions of labor.

Resistance to capitalist discipline and the sharing of the fruits of enterprises' products earned workers incomes that were better each time. This was, however, made possible after contracts were signed to raise wages. Over time, wages in industrialized country contexts rose and began to eat into the profit margin so much so that capital segmented the labor market into two sub-divisions. First, it created desirable categories of jobs that needed a highly trained, well-paid labor force. A second category of labor that was associated with an undesirable class and hence that required low-training and low-paying work (Robbins 1999: 63) also made its appearance into the scene.

Such a division had a dimension that eventuated in the construction of a women's paid work, which ended up placing the group in vertical as well as horizontal divisions (Kincheloe 1999: 276). The vertical division of labor placed women, as an economic grouping, in low-earning positions where they received lower wages compared to men, and the horizontal one placed them in concentrated, but specific types of work like, for instance, the apparel and service sector industries.

Most of the mothers interviewed for this dissertation fall into the horizontal category that is exemplified by restaurant, sanitation jobs and the like. Weekly numbers of work hours given to many workers are small as they put them in the category of part-time employees paid mainly around the minimum wage. The well-paying jobs are getting

scarcer because corporations send them to overseas labor markets where cost of labor is much lower thus making the profit margin bigger.

8. Loss of Manufacturing Jobs in the City of Lansing, Michigan

In the case of the U.S., good-paying manufacturing jobs have been continually migrating to low cost labor markets like China and India, for example, in the spreading globalization processes, and cities like Lansing have been stripped off their traditionally well-paying manufacturing jobs. The jobs that many laid-off workers find themselves are in the growing service sector that does not provide full benefits packages that they (the workers) earlier enjoyed.

This kind of situation has had a direct and an indirect impact on cities like Lansing. Lansing was one city whose workers joined the 172,000 laid-off workers in Michigan who lost their jobs in the manufacturing sector in the State of Michigan in 2003 alone. Single mother parents, the unit of analysis of this dissertation, are directly affected by this loss because there are a fewer number of jobs available for them as a consequence. The indirect impact is experienced as work opportunities for single mothers and low-wage workers are taken over by the laid-off workers from the manufacturing and other sectors.

At this juncture it is only appropriate to address the central question of who makes the decision to relocate jobs. This question takes us to the realm of ideology, the principle upon which the ideology of capitalism is built upon. The sole investment decision makers are capital owners. The owners find themselves unrestricted in the decisions they make to close and reestablish their plants where ever they see fit and where the margins of profit happen to go with their liking or turn out to be bigger.

Two actors — the state and workers — have little, if any, say in such decisions by corporations. This happens because of three reasons. First, the state/government has no power to stop this, as it is not the owner of the capital that migrates. Second, government, in most cases, works hard to allay business' fears that state intervention in the economy would stifle the growth of the economy. Government, as a protector of rights of all citizens, the economic rights of single mothers and others within the category of the poor, is conventionally expected to take measures that benefit the welfare of all citizens/groups. But it is discouraged from making helpful moves that would be in the best interest of workers and do justice to all as actions that remedy the problem would somehow unfortunately affect the interests of the business community. While the decisions of corporations are enwrapped in conceptual terms as in the 'invisible hand' or impersonal forces of the market that in and of themselves can correct any maladjustment, any government intervention is viewed as an action that messes with the 'fair' and 'free' play of the market and hence inimical to the economy.

Third, the state, beyond the inhibitions that are imposed on it in this tacit agreement between it and business is, in fact, compelled to offer incentives to keep jobs in its locality through tax breaks (property and income) and in other cases, through subsidies paid to employers to hire job seekers such as those from minority groups. These come under incentive packages that are offered to investors or plant owners in order to attract them to start work or retain what they already own, respectively.

Even though laid off workers are directly affected by the elimination of their jobs and their labor input that brings in profit to capital, they do not have a say in the decisions made in relation to the migration of jobs. They are affected in this regard in two ways.

Their participation at the plant/manufactory level and their participation in making decisions at the macro level, meaning in the design of national policies such as migration of capital, is severely limited. Capital wields a tremendous power to decide to close and/or continue to operate or establish new ones.

In the process, workers who are laid off have to apply for unemployment benefits or other government support in order to survive. This distribution of income through support programs, however, is characterized by, among other things, as subsidizing laziness (for example, the situation of single mothers who it is thought like to depend on state assistance and are dubbed as making it a way of life) and transfers of unemployment compensation to unemployed workers whose status is assumed to be likely to be fixed by the free play of market forces.

The migration of jobs has thus transformed Lansing's economic base. Although auto parts companies are established anew or they return to the city with transformed structures, the service sector has assumed a commanding lead in the overall economic activity of the city and has turned out to be the major employer of the residents of the city.

Some 172,000 manufacturing jobs were lost in 2002 and 2003, according to Liz Boyd, spokesperson for Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm. The manufacturing sector, and especially the auto industry, does have a strong influence in the economic well being of the city and the state, but the export of manufacturing jobs overseas has had depressing effects on employee incomes. Many such employees have been compelled to take low-wage paying service industry jobs as a consequence of the migration of the

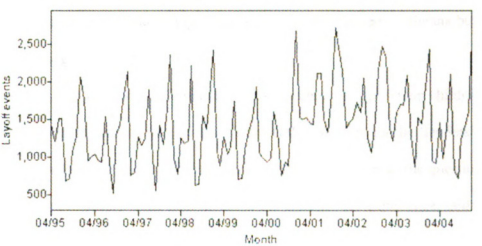
rewarding jobs to regions, inside and outside the country, where the cost of labor is found to be much lower.

Table 5: Layoffs of workers for the years of 1995 — 2004 in Michigan

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
1995				1431	1194	1512	1502	680	706	1070	1282	2058	
1996	1763	947	994	1030	942	924	1534	918	513	1289	1433	1824	14111
1997	2139	755	783	1269	1152	1238	1899	973	548	1414	1156	1634	14960
1998	2360	970	762	1253	1180	1208	2220	617	637	1553	1368	1776	15904
1999	2421	1067	880	1270	1032	1140	1741	698	717	1098	1336	1509	14909
2000	1934	1045	986	924	984	1597	1333	751	936	874	1697	2677	15738
2001	1522	1501	1527	1450	1434	2107	2117	1490	1327	1831	2721	2440	21467
2002	2146	1382	1460	1506	1723	1584	2042	1248	1062	1497	2153	2474	20277
2003	2315	1363	1207	1581	1703	1691	2087	1258	868	1523	1438	1929	18963
2004	2428	941	920	1458	988	1379	2094	809	708	1242	1399	1614*	15980*
2005	2564*												

1: Data for all states and the District of Columbia.
*: preliminary.

Figure 3: Number of workers laid-off in Michigan shown in months and years totals



Source: http://data.bls.gov/PDQ/servlet/SurveyOutputServlet

Those workers who were previously employed by the migratory industries have become involved in the competition for the service sector jobs to survive. Low-income workers, among whom are single mother parents are thus compelled to compete with more qualified employees for the jobs that pay the standard minimum wage rate.

As much as it has been a city that was the home of a well-paid work force attached to the manufacturing industries, the city of Lansing contained a segment of residents that relied on public assistance and support from the private sector as a consequence of job losses or inability to connect with the job market for a host of reasons. One of the reasons for this has been the lack of adequately paying employment due to the lack of higher educational qualifications. Single mother parents that remained attached to the public provisioning sector in order to supplement their low income and make ends meet have been among the groups of poor people who were caught in this maze. The increasing cost of supporting the welfare dependent population eventuated in a decision to lower the number of the beneficiaries and save public resources as well as reduce the tax burden that befell working citizens.

The burden, as a rule, is transferred to relatives, parents and grown up children as well as friends. But the survey data does not support the assertion for the 'lenders' cited. Only 11 compared with 18 out of 29 respondents who gave answers to the question: 'where do they go to secure some loan' to cover the deficits they experience, said they went to their parents to borrow money to close the gap between their incomes and their expenditures (see Table 6 below).

Table 6: Cross tabulation Table 1-I: Borrowing by SMPs from parents compared with wage rates received

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BORROWING FROM PARENTS AND EARNINGS				
	Under $7	$7 - $11	Above $11	Total
No	8 (44%)	6 (33%)	4 (22%)	18
Yes	4 (36%)	6 (55%)	1 (11%)	11
Total	12	12	5	29

Source: Computed from this dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

The survey data, however, indicate that friends are the major sources of money. Close to 84 percent of the loans obtained came from friends (see Table 7 below). Children finished last in the list of categories of sources of borrowing. Only two out of the 29 respondent single mothers said they borrowed from their children to make payments when their own resources become thinner (see Table 8 below).

Table 7: Cross tabulation Table 1-K: Borrowing from friends compared with wage rate levels

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BORROWING FROM FRIENDS AND EARNINGS				
	Under $7	$7 - $11	Above $11	Total
No	3 (75%)	0	1 (25%)	4
Yes	9 (36%)	12 (44%)	4 (16%)	25
Total	12	12	5	29

Source: Computed from this dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

Table 8: Cross tabulation Table 1-L: Borrowing by SMPs from working children compared with wage rate levels

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BORROWING FROM WORKING CHILDREN AND EARNINGS				
	Under $7	$7 - $11	Above $11	Total
No	11 (41%)	11 (41%)	5 (19%)	27
Yes	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	0	2
Total	12	12	5	29

Source: Computed from this dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

There are a number of reasons for the failure to get loans from relatives including children and parents particularly if they earn very little. The friendship pool, however, is wider and that may be the factor for a resort toward that kind of source of loan.

9. Limitations of the Study

This study is confined to Lansing, Mid-Michigan, mainly. This geographic area could be considered a dot within the geographic areas of the U.S. Although focus group studies had been planned to be among the major pillars of data gathering techniques, key informant interviewing and survey research were chosen as the two most important sources of data for the dissertation.

Another important limitation for the study includes the gender difference between the researcher and the population studied. Obviously, the researcher's gender had some implications for establishing a smoother rapport between him and the SMPs. But the focus of the issues on general and every day life situations, less much of the 'woman

only' talk, eased the problem that may have arisen in the exchange and thus could have compromised the results.

But in spite of this, some of the mothers shared information that may ordinarily be imparted to other female researchers. Some of the key informants were open enough to share with the researcher their intimate experiences of 'reckless' behaviors/romances, in some cases, in ordering their lives. Gender in this context did not matter to two of the women (for instance, single mother parents Sahq'uitta and Rachel who volunteered to participate in the research as key informants).

10. Rationale for the Choice of Single Mothers as the Subject of the Research

In this dissertation, I chose to focus on SMPs because of two major reasons. First, as Madden (2000: 51, 50-56) argued so well, gender and poverty intersect each other and that the poverty of this group of people is caused by this very factor. Second, SMPs constitute the largest population of the poor and because two groups of the poor — single mothers and children -- suffer as a consequence of an unfair collapsing of two categories of citizens that need to be looked at differently and helped as such. Children, who are helpless victims of circumstances, are lumped with single mothers. The mothers and their needs and plights are skirted behind the powerful concept that sees them as individuals and/or groups who have complete control over what they do in order to be self- reliant. In this perspective, single mothers are viewed as individuals who seek the support of the social assistance system when, in fact, they need to be working and taking care of themselves and their children.

Single mothers are in many ways society's biggest challenges. They face triple or quadruple discrimination involving their class position, their gender, and their role as mothers and members of minority groups; yet SMPs must raise a new generation, an all too important contribution to society. They produce a segment of society, that is, children, who later become the society's significant fabric and become its source of continuity.

SMPs belong to the category of the poor in the social structure of the U.S. They have constituted the largest population among public assistance recipients (Haveman, in Perry and Tobin 2000: 254; Marger 1999: 54) in the United States for a few decades now.

Women are not only victims of poverty; they are subjected to unequal treatment. They take the brunt of gender inequality expressed in cultural as well as in economic and political terms. Economically, they are given jobs that are of low status. They are paid much less than their male counterparts in their employed life. They are the poorest of the poor, or, in the words of Whitaker (1999: 15), they are "disproportionately represented among the poor." They are denied freer access to educational development resources.

SMPs are not only poor and less educated, but they also suffer because of their minority status. They belong to the disfranchised groups of people along with racial and ethnic minorities. Their participation in the political processes, though they were allowed the right to vote was enacted in the early 19th Century, is still limited because they lack access, time and information to engage in activities that raise their awareness and level of action to improve their livelihood and their status.

Culturally, they are expected to accept their subordination to the male in the family, the husband, in authority terms. They are, therefore, victims of the age-old system of patriarchy.

They are by tradition made responsible for caring and nurturing their children, but the means of carrying out these responsibilities are not strategically put in place for them. In other words, critical resources for nurturing, caring and housing their children are not made available for them or the opportunities to access such resources through work are slim.

A study of issues connected with single mother parenthood is also important for the production of information that institutions require to take action when problems of survival of groups becomes an issue that society has to deal with at any one time. The data collected and the analysis made about problems of insufficiency of basic necessities informs policy that needs to take action and rectify the maladjusted situation. This study pinpoints alternative ways of dealing with problems that single mothers encounter and the series of actions they employ to overcome the myriad of difficulties that engulf them in trying to provide for their households.

Given that they experienced a great deal of shortage of resources and immense responsibilities for their children and other family members, single mothers had no option other than to seek assistance from multiple sources, the major one of which has been social assistance. This particular public aid has been able to do two things that have made a difference in the lives of people in times of hardship in the U.S. In times of crisis such as the period following the 1929 market crash and the severe conditions of poverty in the 1950s and 1960s, public assistance and mutual support mechanisms have been used a

great deal by the poor and others who were well off. In fact, social assistance programs have distinguished themselves as means of delivering aid to many citizens hit by the loss of capacity to feed and care for themselves and have often times contributed to the restoration of their normal lives. These measures have thus helped the temporarily affected and some of those in longer-term poverty to come out of pits of destitution.

The suffering the single mothers' experience(d) under poverty prompted me to engage in the production of this dissertation. I am hoping that this project would, in a small way contribute to the understanding of the hardship single mothers with children undergo and help further the discourse on how lasting solutions to the problem of poverty and inequality would be designed.

11. An Outline of the Chapters of the Dissertation

The dissertation is composed of seven chapters. Summaries of each chapter's contents are given below. Chapter one has, so far, introduced the problem briefly. It examined the background to the study of the problem, laid out the purposes of the study, presented the research questions and provided an explanation of the limitations of the research as well as the methodologies used for the collection of data.

The detailed portion of the methodology that includes the unit of analysis, the methods used to collect data and how the single mothers were identified for the interview was discussed in this introduction, Chapter 1, pp. 43-53. The research, as noted earlier, was challenging for a variety of reasons. These included difficulties connected with open access to the single mothers, a population that is very much scattered among the general population, connection with those who were expected to volunteer and participate but

were prevented to do so because the institutions and shelters they were attached to reneged on their promises to support the research. These points were the focus of the methodology section. The definitions of poverty, welfare and workfare come at the end of this chapter.

The second Chapter gives an overview of the macro or broader picture of the complex, yet less explored issues of social inequality, poverty and welfare and the debates on them as they are linked to the urban phenomena. Structural changes in economic sectors and their impact on job losses and wage rate decreases; the 'living'/ 'minimum' wage issues and the expansion of the service sector and discrepancies in pay rates along gender lines enriches the Chapter's discussions. An outgrowth of the condition of destitution of single mothers was the feminization of poverty that affected women and especially SMPs and their children. Policy choices that may be entertained to address the problem are also highlighted. The effect of globalization on the loss of jobs and its direct and indirect impact on job prospects for women and/or SMPs is discussed. Micro level issues like shortage of jobs, low minimum wage, and difficulties faced in terms of transportation, high school dropout rate problem, teenage pregnancy, absence of adequate childcare and lack of social capital are examined.

The debates on poverty, welfare and workfare in the context of entrenched beliefs and changing perspectives are highlighted as the links between poverty, welfare and workfare are also examined. The engaging debates and public discourses on these issues are reviewed. It is pointed out that critical social science theories, like those of anthropology, for instance, the theories and studies of which could have made a difference in the outcomes connected with policy choices on welfare, are conspicuously

lacking. What and how social science, and particularly anthropology, does to gauge public perceptions and evaluate policies is examined.

Chapter three narrates the evolution of welfare provision in the United States as it relates to single mothers. The circumstances that led to the initiation of 'social provisioning', described as an achievement of Western democracy in the 20th century (Hirschmann and Liebert 2001) are discussed. This discussion includes points on how the program was forced to take 'refuge' under barrages of attacks during the last two decades of the same century. How successive administrations attempted to bring change to mend it or expunge it, is also discussed.

The chapter also includes a discussion of the evolution of community and social assistance in Michigan and Lansing. It will touch upon periods of economic crises in the state and how these crises were confronted at various levels and how these played out in the efforts poor/SMPs made to come out of their conditions of poverty.

The chapter helps us to understand why and how welfare programs were initiated and the roles they played in mitigating or exacerbating the conditions of the poor and single mothers and their children. How those who saw it as 'spoon-feeding' came to view the market as a route that can help those who work achieve autonomy looked at the safety net.

Chapter 4 has two main sections. The first section deals with the conditions of poverty in Lansing in relation to economic crises that engulfed the city in different times and the welfare response to the situation. Section 2 brings out the voices of single mothers as well as the perspectives of voluntary agencies and state officials on the kernel issues that confront the mothers every day while they receive or provide services,

respectively. These issues are discussed in the first sub-section that attempts to bring in the perspectives of the mothers and their benefactors to the issue of the living wage-minimum wage continuum, the scarcity of well-paying jobs for single mothers, education, childcare, transportation and housing that constitute every day problems and keep them in vicious circles of want.

The third section is devoted to the discussion of issues that further complicate the lives of single mothers. These include stigmas that are stuck on them at grocery stores in particular, lying about what they earn and thus going against the eligibility rules set by the state as a provider resources, single mothers' evaluations of workers and officials they meet in the process of piecing incomes that would enable them to stand on their feet.

The fourth section deals with the ability and/or the desire of the single mothers to extend their horizon and means of resolving their every day problems. These issues are cast in terms of the mothers' desires to participate in the political life of their locality and the nation and voice their concerns and wishes on what should be done to control poverty.

The last section deals with the efforts the single mothers make to interact with each other and evaluates their perspectives on the issues of social capital and the formation of possibly powerful groups of single mothers who can deal with their problems using their own resources and efforts in addition to that of their benefactors.

Chapter five constitutes the analysis portion of the dissertation. It emphasizes the point that the survival issues single mothers are confronted with boil down to the scarcity and/or unavailability of basic necessity resources. It makes a note of the fact that when the economy of the country is throttled by deficits, the actions successive administrations

take is one of reducing or eliminating the budgets earmarked for public support programs. The chapter also embodies discussions and evaluations of human resource development and welfare, the benefits that accrue to society when poverty is held in check, the impact of poverty on the better off in society, organization of the poor and the benefits that accrue from organization. The chapter again briefly discusses issue connected with the distribution of power and the relevance of discourse in initiating changes in addressing the hurdles in the fight against poverty and the relevance of social movements and coalitions toward checking the problem society and the multiple set of problems the mothers face and what options are open for them to remedy the situation.

Chapter six draws on the arguments made about the scarcity of jobs, the unlivable wage that single mothers are paid and the case they made on the prospects of getting better jobs. It also examines the relevance of neighborhoods for organizing and creating service centers and cooperatives that can help the efforts single mothers make to escape poverty. The redefinition of the term AFDC that submerges the focus on children and the need for initiating the social capital path of development is highlighted.

Chapter seven provides the conclusion of the dissertation. It reviews the impact of sending manufacturing jobs to low wage areas by manufacturers with the express purpose of profiting more from cheap labor under an increasingly sped up globalization process which has become a source of change touching the lives of people both negatively and positively. Labor in advanced countries like the U.S. is losing the good-paying jobs, while that of some fast-developing countries like China and India are benefiting from the migration of jobs.

It touches upon policy and implementation changes as they relate to transfer of public resources to the poor. It briefly discusses what is new in the dissertation and makes suggestions about some lines of research the topic of the dissertation should take to make some further contribution to the subject of poverty, dependence and self-sufficiency.

Discussions of what anthropology contributed to the study of social inequalities and differentiation and poverty in the U.S. are dealt with in chapters 2 and 7. The study of poverty and social inequality has been out of range of anthropologists' research interests. Other than micro level studies on urban poverty and some research on migration in urban contexts, the vertical link between social groups and their implications to the micro level problems, was not given the attention it deserved in these studies by anthropologists. This happened despite the fact that the discipline's wealth of theories and models for resolving problems of poverty has been there to be effectively applied. The contributions of this dissertation to anthropology via the study of poverty and welfare will also be briefly discussed in Chapter 7.

Table 9: Population Table 1: Demographic, social and economic characteristics, education and housing data for the city of Lansing

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS	Number	Percent	U.S.
Total population	119,128	100.0	100%
Male	57,186	48.0	49.1%
Female	61,942	52.0	50.9%
Median age (years)	31.4	(X)	35.3
Under 5 years	9,725	8.2	6.8%
18 years and over	87,234	73.2	74.3%
65 years and over	11,605	9.7	12.4%
One race	113,653	95.4	97.6%

White	77,766	65.3	75.1%
Black or African American	26,095	21.9	12.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native	953	0.8	0.9%
Asian	3,367	2.8	3.6%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	62	0.1	0.1%
Some other race	5,410	4.5	5.5%
Two or more races	5,475	4.6	2.4%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	11,886	10.0	12.5%
Average household size	2.39	(X)	2.59
Average family size	3.08	(X)	3.14
Total housing units	53,159	100.0	100.0%
Occupied housing units	49,505	93.1	91.0%
Owner-occupied housing units	28,488	57.5	66.2%
Renter-occupied housing units	21,017	42.5	33.8%
Vacant housing units	3,654	6.9	9.0%
SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS	**Number**	**Percent**	**U.S.**
Population 25 years and over	73,763	100.0	
High school graduate or higher	60,805	82.4	80.4%
Bachelor's degree or higher	15,604	21.2	24.4%
Civilian veterans (civilian population 18 years and over)	9,810	11.3	12.7%
Disability status (population 21 to 64 years)	14,710	20.9	19.2%
Foreign born	7,071	5.9	11.1%
Now married (population 15 years and over)	38,311	41.8	54.4%
Speak a language other than English at home (5 years and over)	12,896	11.8	17.9%
ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS	**Number**	**Percent**	**U.S.**
In labor force (population 16 years and over)	61,812	68.6	63.9%

Mean travel time to work in minutes (population 16 years and over)	19.7	(X)	25.5
Median household income (dollars)	34,833	(X)	41,994
Median family income (dollars)	41,283	(X)	50,046
Per capita income (dollars)	17,924	(X)	21,587
Families below poverty level	3,757	13.2	9.2%
Individuals below poverty level	19,866	16.9	12.4%
HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS	**Number**	**Percent**	**U.S.**
Single-family owner-occupied homes	26,162	100.0	
Median value (dollars)	73,500	(X)	119,600
Median of selected monthly owner costs	(X)	(X)	
With a mortgage	755	(X)	1,088
Not mortgaged	269	(X)	295

Source: Census Bureau, Summary File 1 (SF 1) and Summary File 3 (SF 3); taken from www.factfinder.census.gov

12. Definitions of Poverty: Official and Those of Other Groups

Various groups in society, be they public officials, academicians, practitioners or members of the public, as well as those who experience the pangs of poverty define the concept differently. While definitions of those 'others' are usually based on assumptions and anecdotes (Katz 1995), those coming from the subjects emanate from lived in experiences and are closer to what is actually happening to the poor. According to Katz (1989: 115) official definitions of poverty are based on assumptions. For instance, Katz reminds us that the War on Poverty began without an official definition of poverty.

The Office of Economic Opportunity, as Katz puts it cogently, "needed a defensible bureaucratic standard to be used as a yardstick for diagnosing poverty and measuring

progress against it..." (Ibid.). Orshansky, a member of the Office of Research and Statistics, constructed this standard to be used as a measure of some cut-off point below which some people would be considered poor. Orshansky's index thus pegged the poverty line or family income needs to a standard that assumed adequacy in terms food needs for a family. This level was set at three times the cost of the Department of Agriculture's low cost for food adjusted to family composition and rural-urban dimensions (Katz, ibid.) which were based on the cost of a nutritionally-adequate food level (the Department of Agriculture's food plan). The multiplier was derived from a 1955 survey showing the expenditure structures of families in poverty (Sawhill, 1988: 1075). Basically, the judgment of experts on how nutritional needs vary with family size is relied on as a means of determining the poverty line (Sawhill 1988, 1073-1075).

By poverty here is meant inability of the poor to get enough food to meet their everyday needs or they are unable to get 'enough for basic subsistence needs' (Dean and Melrose 1999:36) or adequate dietary intake to survive (Townsend quoted in MacGregor 1995: 11; Alcock 1997). Poverty is viewed as a situation where one is unable to 'feed oneself' adequately or is incapable of affording 'basic things like food, warmth and/or shelter' (Dehavenon 1996: 2). It also means that the destitute and the near destitute category of the population of the U.S. earn income less or even much less than the poverty line. As such, they are unable to fulfill their daily activities and satisfy their needs adequately. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities. Hurst (1995:19), quoting credible statistical sources, informs us that some 16.2% (1970) of the American population has been below the

$10,000 annual income mark. The percentage rose to 15.4% in 1990. In 1999, the percentage went up to 17.0% in 1998 (see Figure 2, in Appendix 2).

These universal definitions may or may not apply to the needs of family members with varying nutritional needs, as Sen (1995) and Dean and Melrose (1999) remind us. But leaving these obvious differences aside one may focus on the question of whether or not the basic needs of family members in a household are satisfied to a degree or that single mother parents are able to survive. As much as individual needs differ these need levels defy any standard measurement of the name. Food intake of different individuals, for instance, varies across society (see Sen 1987: 14-17; Dean and Melrose 1999: 37-40). Poverty thus defies accurate explanations. A case-by-case definition and measurement is necessary.

13. Definitions of Poverty by Recipients

Recipients also define poverty in ways that they understand them and experience them. These definitions differ from one case to another. Some single mothers like to see themselves as low-income earners rather than poor persons. Interviewees Shaq'uitta and Rachel, (this dissertation) for instance, define their status in terms of temporary destitution. They say that when they earn enough after raising their educational qualifications, they would not find themselves in the category of the poor. At the same time, they attach misfortunes like imprisonment of their husbands or abnormal behaviors, like drinking and involvement with drugs, as the sources of their misfortunes (Interview Transcripts, Shequi'tta, December 31, 2003 and Rachel, January 6, 2004). Their temporary slide into poverty compels them to seek assistance from all conceivable

sources including public assistance sources. A segment of poor single mother parents in Lansing have perforce to rely on public welfare resources to make ends meet.

14. Definitions of Welfare and 'Workfare' As They Apply To This Dissertation

Public welfare is the transfer of public resources to those in need for reasons of inability to feed, cloth and care for themselves on a temporary basis. According to Lester C. Thurow (1981: 155), this support is based on the idea of what he called the "good" society that does not let families go hungry in the street, a practice upheld for centuries. "With this commitment," Thurow goes on, "comes the responsibility of providing a minimum family income if the family is, for what ever reason, unable to take care of itself (bid.)." The support is, however, provided with the proviso that it may well be reduced and/or withdrawn any time when the condition of the recipient improves(d).

Public welfare was initially designed by the state to protect two kinds of beneficiaries. It started with the program of assisting war veterans and/or their families during the 1880s and at the beginning of the 19th Century for mothers (with children) whose husbands died, abandoned or deserted them leaving the family without any credible form of support. The welfare benefit was extended to people without work in the aftermath of the October 1929 market crash (Berrick 1995: 6, Fieldstein 1976: 956, quoted in Atkinson 1999: 4). Katz (1995: 56) equates welfare to the "alleviation of distress: the prevention of death from starvation, homelessness, the lack of clothing and disease." He reminds us that assistance to the poor has been persistent through the modern American history (1995: 19). What was earlier on identified as 'outdoor relief', according to Katz, is now discussed in a new and updated vocabulary of 'welfare'.

Even though public assistance was put in place to protect those citizens who fail(ed) to provide for themselves in emergency situations or those who are or were unable to work and support themselves due to problems linked to physical disabilities that limited them, single mothers' work/welfare programs, run by the state, were subjected to incessant and increased opposition. Hostility against the programs was mounted because of the large financial commitments they entailed to the tax-paying and working public.

The challenge of and opposition to these relief programs is rooted in the fact that they constitute a reward to those who do not want to work, but instead like to sit back and receive public assistance at the expense of tax-payers. These programs are financed out of budgetary resources that are put together from taxes paid by working Americans. Even though small, working single mothers and other poor citizens pay taxes that go toward financing public assistance programs that support them, these particular citizens contribute is discounted. The credit due is commonly disregarded.

Subsequent to the relief support provided to people in distress, 'make work', a New Deal concept created during the 1930s or later on redefined as 'workfare' were initiated so that the temporarily affected would feel that they earned their relief support rather than receiving it as a hand out (Kweit et al1999; Hirschmann et al 2001). Workfare is also a concept used in relation to welfare reform. It is a mechanism of imposing work requirements on recipients of public assistance. Despite several problems workfare encountered in the past, a number of states use it now as a means of shifting public resource-dependent persons into the formal wage work with the proviso that sometime in the future those who, it is claimed, did not have work experiences, would be acquainted

with the world of work, and would some how hook themselves to jobs and eventually become self-sufficient.

Single mother parents, the recipients of public and other institutional assistance, are people, who for various reasons, including the death of or abandonment, separation or unmarried status, become household heads and take care of their children and other members of the family in place of the traditional breadwinner — the husband.

The number of single mother household heads on welfare nationally rose from some two million in the 1950s and 1960s to five million in the 1990s (Seccombe 1999). The number of children cared for by their single mothers nationally stood at about eight million in the 1990s (Ibid). This represents about one-third of the total population of those in poverty across the nation. Ingham County's population, of which Lansing's is a part, under poverty is much like that of the nation. (Refer to Table 3 for Appendix 2).

Although, single mothers were provided with welfare checks and other basic need supplies from the state on a relief basis, many were not able to achieve self-sufficiency. Alternative approaches that would capacitate single mothers need to be explored. This research joins other studies on the issue of poverty and welfare that attempt to make a difference in this regard.

In this dissertation, an attempt is made to frame the problem of poverty and welfare recipiency in terms of a diagram and analyze the multiple problems that SMPs experience in their day-to-day lives. Figure 4, on p. 87 below, outlines the relationship between the problems of poverty and the federal, and local policies designed to alleviate the suffering of the poor. This dissertation traces the programs that evolved from policies asking whether the programs are transient or long-term solutions.

Transient solutions are outcomes of inputs like temporary or relief interventions that only usually take care of immediate needs of single mother or welfare beneficiaries. The resources provided to the single mothers are limited to solving every day food, housing, utility, medical insurance, transportation and childcare needs of the single mother parent.

Enduring or lasting solutions to the SMPs persisting hurdles constitute the provision of adequate social resources over and above relief supplies that help the mothers fetch higher levels of education and enable them to access investment funds for engaging themselves in some profitable activities, or serve as a spring-board for starting businesses both individually and in groups. The temporary support packages supplement the long-term inputs and as such they constitute essential sets of packages that are employed in the overall fight against the poverty of single mothers with children.

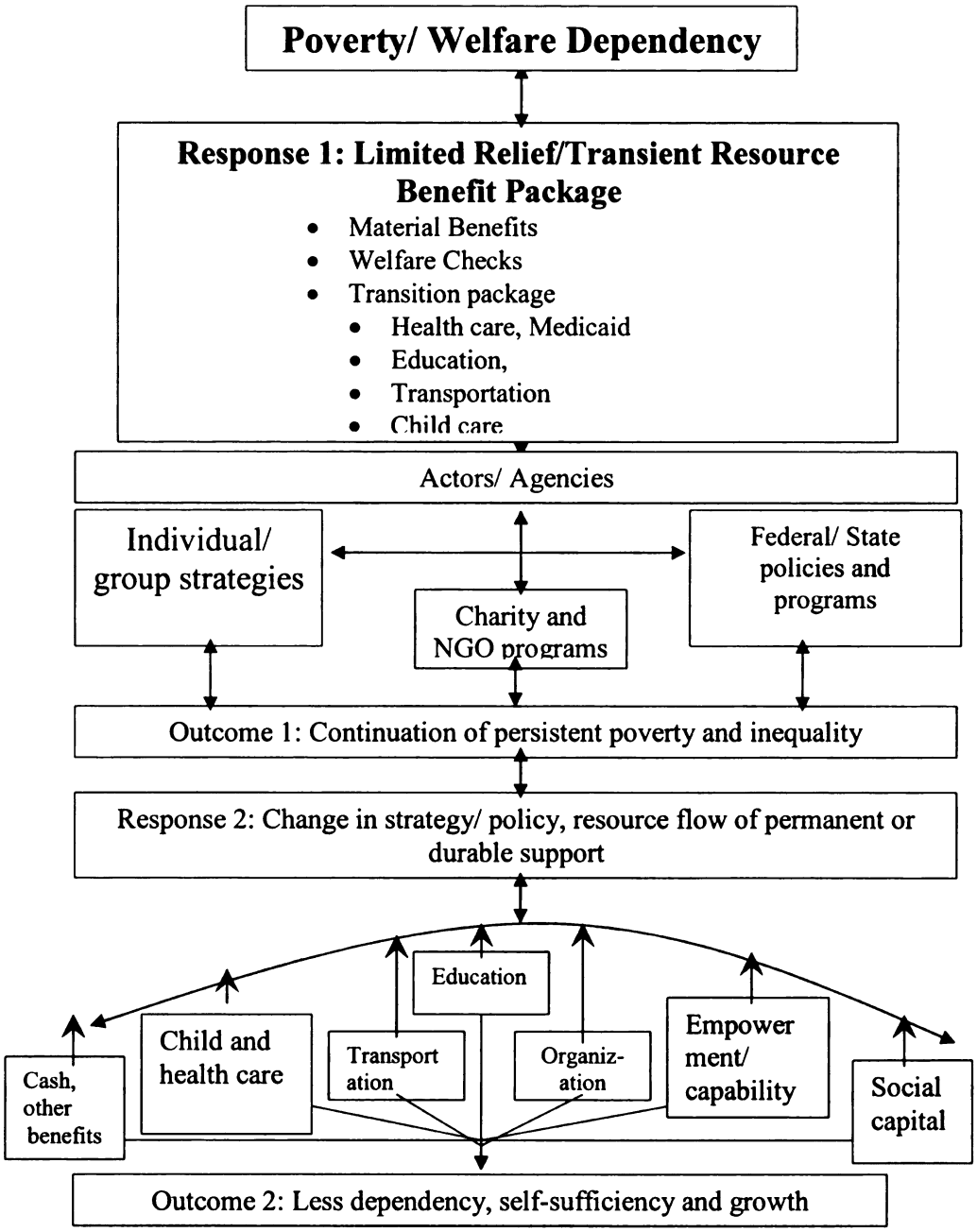
Given the data on poverty, both nationally and in Michigan (see Figure 4, p.87) demonstrates that much too much effort is put on transient solutions while the inputs for the durable solutions are sidetracked. This, in the majority of cases, is simply an outcome of a lack of understanding of the experiences and complexities poverty and single-motherhood entails to families. The alleviation of immediate needs, in other words, is made a priority and the durable solutions are relegated to the back burner. Solutions that empower SMPs and provide them with investment resources, aside from satisfying their routine needs, are thus hard to come by. Figure 4 below lays out the options that are available and the probable outcome of the choices to be made by all actors — the poor SMPs, the state and communities in which these mothers find themselves.

The Figure illustrates the relationship between poverty, resources and outcomes under different conditions as they relate to poor welfare recipients and other dependent

single mothers and their children, is constructed mainly from ideas drawn from Bourdieu (1986); Seccombe (1999), Stack (1974). It shows that the kind of responses and resources deployed in the fight against poverty determines the successes or failures of the programs that are established to reduce poverty and help single mother parents achieve a degree of autonomy. The various responses to poverty as they relate to such mothers (and their children) and their impacts and/or implications are shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4 shows the relationships between transient solutions and enduring problems relating to poverty and the supplementation and/or integration of these to long-term solutions that go beyond the provision of temporary assistance provided mainly in the form of welfare.

Figure 4: Relationships between poverty, welfare dependency: Responses and outcomes under different policy and program domains.



Source: Adapted from works of Seccombe 1999, Edin et al 1997 and Stack 1974.

The main point the dissertation raises relates to the research question of whether or not the programs catering for the poor, particularly single mother parents, provide a transient or permanent means of escaping poverty. The increasing and/or varying number of public support recipients prompts a much deeper examination of the problem from several angles. Relevant questions of interest here point toward issues of education, the availability of livable wages, encouragement of the social capital approach for mutual support and the extension of the right to make decisions and/or make a difference in their (SMPs') life styles and economic gains for themselves and their children. (See Note 2, p. 92).

This study thus starts off with the idea that meaningful solutions to the problem of poverty and welfare can only be found if the short-term assistance provided is enhanced by resource flows that also address the long-term aspect of the problem. The study argues that given the usual temporary or relief assistance the mothers were supplied with for long periods of time and the persistence of the poverty conundrum, alternative ways of addressing the problem need to be explored. It is the suggestion of this study that single mothers be given enduring support to help them escape poverty without being locked into temporary packages of public assistance that has mainly played a fire-fighting role and has shunned the rebuilding of what the fire has partly destroyed.

Hypotheses: The thrust of the main argument of the dissertation thus runs:

Single mothers who are on welfare are more likely to end up self-sufficient if they manage to secure financial resources to establish small businesses that they would themselves own and manage rather than try to go the self-sufficiency road individually.

More specifically, they would be more successful if they, for instance, start childcare and transportation businesses that are intimately linked to their own major everyday needs.

While the above assertions reflect the themes of the dissertation, many specific themes are also pursued in order to examine issues that are relevant to the recipients who participated in the survey research in Lansing, in particular, the geographic location of this study. The relationships between the independent variables of education, age, number of children, hours worked each week, perceptions about and participation in networking, child care, transportation, health care and others are examined in relation to the dependent variables relating to welfare check benefit receipt and educational achievement. For instance, the hypothesis that "those public assistance recipients who are above high school in education terms are likely to stay on welfare for fewer years than those who have completed high school and under" will be subjected to a regression test to examine the relationship between education and the extent of stay on welfare and the significance of the relationships between the variables — dependent (stay on welfare) and independent (education). To get a more precise relationship between the variables, an attempt is made to use the logistic regression model of analysis where control for covariates is brought into the equation and the results are compared. The survey data is used to examine three important issues connected with single mothers and welfare recipiency. First it is to evaluate assertions like 'among the poor, single mothers are lazy, extravagant and don't want to work.' Such assertions are replete in the literature dealing with welfare and single mothers (see, for example, Seccombe 1999; Katz 1989; Edin an Lein 1997). Primarily, the survey data will help answer some of the questions as to whether or not SMPs are lazy. They work as much if not more hours than others in the

general population; they manage the little resources they earn or piece them together and do what others, the better off, do to improve themselves through attaining higher education and skills and thus set some goals that they hope they would realize at some future date.

Second, the mothers evaluate services and staff as well as authorities that they interact with in order to make ends meet. For instance, they evaluate resources and services that they get. They evaluate the officials that serve them—how they treat them and on the flip side how they can be better served. They let others see their take on the definition of poverty and what society can do to change the situation for those who are poor.

Third, those who participated in the survey research and in the in-depth interviews are also asked to share their perceptions about cooperation with other like mothers with the eventual view of working together in small business contexts to overcome their common problems. They are asked whether or not they had some experience of the social capital approach to connect, develop trust and pool resources to start small businesses, e.g., childcare and transportation services, that they themselves have critical need for on a daily basis.

This practice is not foreign to the American economy. Mulberg (1995: 165) reveals that 'mutual investment,' wherein a group of people "pool resources" and become "exclusive owners of the ... assets" and use the same resource to establish businesses or/or firms that they can operate. Single mother parents may also benefit from such a system the arms of which need to be extended to the class of poor people who do not have an easy access to such capital. Rather than providing public assistance for longer

periods, the state might well supply investment resources so that welfare recipients, and particularly SMPs, could achieve self-reliance with a relative ease.

These businesses/services, particularly childcare, are in high demand in Michigan. It is said that the demand for this service childcare, far outstripped the supply by more than twofold during the last two decades of the 20th century. Could single mothers fill this demand for service if they work together? Many of the mothers see that cooperation amongst them helps. At this stage, this research can only say that the possibility is there and it can only speculate that given the right attention it can help many mothers achieve self-sufficiency in the context of a group approach to a common problem. But whether or not this will succeed hinges on the willingness of the single mother parents to take the initiative and seek the assistance, in a changed modality of provisioning coming from the current supporting structures.

All the secondary sources of support, voluntary agencies/charities and the state, may help their clientele if they apportion resources that would initiate and foster cooperation between mothers to higher self-supporting level. Will they be willing to do this? The survey and interview data will give us a sense of how they view the question.

Using the survey data also, an attempt is made to test several hypotheses like:

- The relationship between education and stay on welfare
- Number of children and stay on welfare
- Number of hours worked and attachment to the welfare system
- Age and welfare dependency
- Childcare exchange and weekly work hour level
- Higher weekly work hour and getting off welfare

NOTES:

(1) **Table 10:** Population Table 2; Population for whom poverty status is determined and single parent families in Lansing and East Lansing: A comparison:

Family Poverty Status in Lansing and East Lansing in 1999/ 2000				
	Lansing		East Lansing	
	Population	%	Population	%
Total Population	112,964	100	32,460	100
Population below poverty level	19,148	17.0	11,317	34.9
Females with income below the poverty level in 1999	3,605	13.2	569	11.0
SMPs with no husband present	2,244	38	151	26.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Summary, Social. Economic and Housing Characteristics, 344, Michigan; American Fact Finder, http://factfinder.census.gov.servlet/SAFFFacts?_event=ChangeGeo...

(2) If these structures of opportunities are not opened up enough, poor persons' self-motivations and incentives to extricate themselves from poverty will not bear any fruit and would not be pinned down effectively. The efforts made and the resources expended on single mothers' (with children) behalf under these circumstances would not be worth their while (see p. 20, paragraph 1).

CHAPTER 2

URBAN POVERTY, SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND WELFARE, AND THE DEBATES SURROUNDING THE ISSUES, AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

1. Issues Surrounding the Economic Decline of Cities

This chapter will examine the opposing points against the welfare programs initiated in the U.S., particularly after the 1929 market crash. The debates that ensued after the programs provide an important context and the basis upon which future policies were crafted, modified or revised. Inherent in this debate is the concept of the welfare system as a safety net and the opposition to the concept and ultimately its elimination as an entitlement.

In section 1, I discuss the issues surrounding the economic decline of cities, how this situation evolved since the Industrial Revolution and how this change has affected the lives of single mothers' and other people in the low-income category. In section 2, I discuss issues connected with social inequality and differentiation and their links with poverty. The macro and micro level issues relating to poverty are discussed in order to highlight the link between the macro and micro level analyses limiting structures of agency as single mothers struggle to escape from poverty.

In section 3, I examine the controversial issues of poverty, welfare and workfare that constituted the transient responses to the plight of single mothers. Based on the literature on the subject, I make an assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of public welfare in improving and/or exacerbating single mothers' and their children's economic conditions. I review the fundamental reasons for the initiation of the welfare programs,

their unintended consequences and, welfare' subsequent shift, partial though, to the workfare program with, what may be called, embodied biases. These biases tainted the behaviors of those who happened to receive welfare and engaged recipients and welfare officials and workers in hide-and-seek games that ate into the time that could have been invested in developing constructive solutions to the poverty and welfare conundrum.

The section further reviews the state of poverty, welfare and 'workfare' (or 'job first' in Michigan) and the implications of the last two on poverty reduction. In this connection, the chapter reviews the general successes, problems and prospects of the welfare-to-work program with a brief case study of the scheme as put in place in Michigan.

2. Urban Poverty: Causes and Consequences

Single mothers, the unit of analysis of this dissertation, are residents of Lansing. They are, in part, victims of declining economic activity and opportunities just as much as individuals and groups at the beginning of the processes of industrialization found themselves in towns and cities that developed around the factory.

Two major processes affected the abilities of the poor to support themselves in urban life contexts. First, the entry of individuals and groups into the sometimes 'impersonal' world of the urban environment with reduced social support. Consequently, labor unions, formed by the 'stranger workers' in the cities, gave their undivided attention to fight for the legal rights of their members, and were, according to Anderson et al (1965: 130), unable to give much thought to the welfare aspect of the problem of the work force.

Second, the urban transformation of space was the rise of suburbs. Suburbs excluded the poor by imposing cost barriers and limiting public transportation services and thus leaving them stuck and/or behind in the central city.

Although cities during early industrialization provided jobs to many, the mutual help systems that constituted support to one another in traditional rural life contexts were slowly disappearing leaving the individual or the stranger in the new environment or the city (Anderson and Ishwaran 1965: 129) to fend for her/himself. In the words of these authors, the city became:

> ... a habitat of strangers and the stranger made a difference.
> But he was the essential element for the new urban life.
> Family responsibility weakened, often to ineffectiveness.
> Collective and primary welfare responsibility could not
> function in a community of strangers that urban
> environments produce (Ibid.)

Historically, beginning the early 19th century, cities "provided entry level manufacturing jobs through which workers, especially immigrants, ... began to climb the American economic ladder" (Bourdreau and Newman 1993: 328). Initially, the city certainly constituted the place of work (Ibid.). Over time, however, it experienced a loss of its wealthy populations that constituted the bulwark of its economic activities. This population loss led to metropolitanization (Ibid.) that facilitated manufacturing job migration and service sector activities on which the economy of the city thrived.

This trend, aside from divesting the city's traditional role of being a solid economic base for the production of services and goods, led to the development of environments where the tax-base is eroded or depleted to a point where it could not sustain its upkeep. With the transfer of urban resources toward developing sub-urban areas, employment

opportunities that were the distinctive marks of the urban world were lost as a consequence. The net result of all this change was the loss of jobs for many dwellers and the attendant entrapment of single mothers and other segments of the poor whose economic circumstances today is an exact replica of what was happening during the initial stages of industrialization. Those who were unable to find jobs had, of necessity, to interact more with the private charity and public assistance systems in order to survive.

A number of scholars have written about the decline of the city and its serious effects on individuals and groups with minority status. Wilson (1987) and Auletta (1982) write about the city in which people of color (Wilson 1987) and the underclass Auletta (1982) find themselves stranded. Wilson speaks to the issue of the decentralization of businesses with segmented labor markets most of which are not accessible to workers from inferior ghetto schools and remain locked in the low wage sector.

Auletta (1982) suggests that Wilson's perspective implies that a single factor like racism is not the root cause of the poverty of those citizens at the bottom of the economic ladder. Turning around the argument, Auletta says that segments of people like whites as opposed to blacks, also suffer from what he called the "vagaries of the American economy" (Auletta 1982: 32). This process is played itself out in Lansing, but to a much lesser degree than in major metropolitan areas such as Detroit.

3. Feminization of Poverty

Single mothers and their children in part fall in this category of the poor. Many scholars have examined feminization of poverty. These scholars wrote about the "role of gender in determining income, wealth and socioeconomic and political status" (Collins

1996: 79-80). Mushaben notes that the concept of feminization of poverty refers to the 'shift in the quality of poverty,' which led to the process of sinking into destitution more rapidly 'due to the cumulative impact of lower pay, shorter work lives, and longer life spans' (in Hirschmann and Liebert 2001: 197). This depiction is also true for younger single mothers with children who are affected by an'un-livable' wage and are, therefore, compelled to survive through handout as well (Mimi Abramvitz 1996).

In this connection, Pearce (in Gordon 1990) makes the point that what women, particularly mothers, do both outside and at home should be recognized (see also Skocpol 2000:127; Christensen in Eitzen and Zinn 1989: 73-80). By this what they mean is that value must be imputed to the continuum of work, home-based as well as out of home, and that this should be reason enough to give them credit support them in ways that benefit their families and society (see Chapter 4 below for a further discussion of the issues).

The concept of feminization of poverty has a direct implication for our study of single mother parents. Women's caring and nurturing role in U.S society seems to be submerged in what may be identified as 'work paranoia' that assiduously attaches social value only to wage labor outside the home. This tenacious sticking to the assumption that work and earned income is the only way that people can contribute to society and via it the continuous stigmatizing campaigns sustained have marginalized single women with children. In other words, this valuation has destabilized the mothers' focus so much so that they are unable to satisfy both responsibilities some credible help from internal (spousal and/or significant other) and external (charities or voluntary agencies and the state). As Collins (1996:79) put this line of argument succinctly "Workers," single mothers in this dissertation's sense, "are thus forced to choose between family

responsibilities or career advancement, and women have been the losers in this forced choice."

The feminization of poverty thesis also challenges the assumption that the solution to the poverty of women is marriage and full employment that which in turn helps improve their status significantly. The experiences of the mothers interviewed for this dissertation indicates that neither the marriage or work option is in themselves are sufficient to free women from poverty.

4. Policy Issues and Poverty

Urban poverty as it relates to single mothers has been a serious problem that had defied meaningful solution in the U.S. The problem had its roots in the changing circumstances of the poor as the economy changed in structural terms. The deficits experienced from time to time and the consequences of these to policy-making and implementation was equally responsible for exacerbating the poverty and inequality problems in American cities.

In her case studies of psychological consequences of growing poor in the U.S. (living in small towns and isolated rural communities as well as large cities in Midwestern and Southeastern United States), Musick (in Chafel 1990) puts the problem in context. She says that too much responsibility is placed on disadvantaged mothers with fewer resources and that the mothers are required to play humongous roles in producing palatable environments for the growth of their children (Musick in Chafel 1990: 10).

Disadvantaged mothers, in her own words (1990: 10):

> Are called on to do and be far more than their middle class counterparts, with fewer resources to support them in this

> role (parenting) and many more burdens to contend with... The present circumstances of poverty force disadvantaged parents to take an almost superhuman roles as mediators of their children's environments...

Families, single mother parent-based households in particular, have to fend for themselves in the context of their communities and localities and individually, formally at least. The state comes in with its public support programs during times of economic crisis like the 1929 market crash that affected all strata of populations. In times of normal economic activity this extension of support is minimized to a greater degree.

Poverty thus continues in many city and rural communities placing the poor and single mothers' lives in jeopardy. The policy regime in the discourse of poverty takes a lukewarm attitude toward getting into the nitty-gritty of the overall problem. U.S. policy makers, as Collins (1996: 84) correctly observes:

> Over and over, when confronted with realities of poverty, unemployment and other kinds of economic suffering, have left it (poverty) to the market to distribute benefits of economic growth.

In this view, the problem of poverty, in the majority of cases, is attributed to individual behaviors and efforts. The 1996 bill on welfare reform in the U.S. placed emergence out of poverty a function of individual responsibility. In fact, as Dodson (in Hirschmann and Liebert 2001: 199-200) notes, the bill placed more emphasis on 'personal responsibility than on work opportunity.

The larger structural issues leading to poverty — unemployment, demand for higher educational qualifications and the specific issues of low wage, cost of living expense increases, childcare, healthcare and transportation costs to the families -- are overlooked. As Katz (1989: 8) also puts the problem in context, the factors that determined the uplift

of the poor or single mother parents from under the poverty veil 'slipped easily, unreflectively, in the language of family, race, and culture rather than in equality, poverty and exploitation.'

There was thus a weakness in crafting the policy regime in ways that would give single mothers a shot in the arm and enable them to be self-supportive. The net result of this approach has led to the sustenance of poverty in the U.S. — particularly poverty of single mothers and their children. The frozen policy regime which ignores the underlying causes of the poverty problem may need alternative sources of support (Herrick and Midgley (in Dixon and Scheurell 2002: 212).

5. An Alternative Policy Choice To Address the Poverty of Single Mothers

Although government will sometimes be there to protect vulnerable citizens in catastrophic and crises situations, the trend toward making arrangements for self-support by individuals and groups is important (Ibid.). Herrick and Midgley emphatically argue that the pessimistic view of the impossibility of controlling poverty aside, the way out may be the promotion of greater self-reliance at both the individual and community levels and the encouragement of greater local control.

The use of alternative models of development such as the social capital route as a means of getting around the problem of poverty among single mothers may, at this juncture, be explored. This route helps create the ground work for networking, developing trust among cooperating members and eventually leads to an action to pool material and psychological resources that constitute a solid base for launching small businesses that would not only assist the members, but also those who would need

services in the areas of childcare and transportation, for example, among the consumer public. The social capital strategy of responding to the poverty of single mothers is in the U.S. is discussed in chapters 1, 2, 5 and the conclusion in various contexts.

SECTION 2: SOCIAL INEQUALITY, POVERTY AND WELFARE

1. Macro Level Issues: Inequality in Income and Poverty

This dissertation, as stated above, looks at the poverty of single mother parents within the framework of social inequalities and differentiation. Social inequality pertains to the categorization of people according to the share of resources they have a command over. It is, according to Marger (1991: 16) "the uneven distribution of social resources...in things material and nonmaterial that are valued and scarce."

Social differentiation is also the division of people into broader units that identify them with an occupational or some social categories (Marger 1991: 12; Hurst 1995: 11, 32). Hurst sees the idea of social differentiation as one depicting some differences between individuals and/or groups varying from one another on some recognizable but important characteristics of people. These groups may fall under a certain occupational category that shows what they do in their everyday lives in society. Marger (1999: 12) notes that although the categorization differentiates what tasks they perform in society, it does not put them in a rank order. Marger (Ibid.) further elucidates the point that such a categorization may "'not necessarily imply a rank order, only an order of differentiation". Rather, it places them in a horizontal division indicating their different inclinations and lines of interest in what they do. He is quick to qualify the statement when he points out that such a situation also 'establishes the basis for inequality and differentiation' (Ibid.).

Simple categories of differentiation of occupational groups like laborers, farmers, toolmakers, soldiers, teachers, doctors, and so on, could be set in a rank order format showing the prevalent inequality (income wise, for instance) among the socially different groups in the list given above.

In terms of conceptual categories, social inequality and differentiation give us the broader framework with which we can see actual problems relating to the command over social resources by various groups of people in the American society. SMPs' command over the social resources is much too much lower than what better-off categories of the population earn. Yet, their responsibility of feeding, housing, clothing and caring for their children involves a Herculean task given the low incomes they are able to bring home each month or pay period. Each task in the family has to be performed by them, unlike those mothers with good-paying jobs who have the option of paying for some of the multiple services a family needs. The number of mothers who experience this problem is very big both at the level of Lansing and nationally.

Social inequality and differentiation is a product of the capitalistic system itself. In its rudimentary sense of capital, according to Heilbroner (in Whalen 1996: 267), consists of the artifacts representing physical capital that humans use to 'ease or enable social reproduction' that is necessary for social existence. But as a concept describing relations between producers and consumers, Heilbroner argues (Ibid.) it carries a new meaning that describes a "link in a chain of transactions, a chain from money into commodities, back into a larger sum of money—whose purpose is the enlargement of exchange value...that underlies the social milieu of the system."

The need for capital, Heilbroner further argues, arises for two reasons. First, the quest for capital is rooted in human nature though the argument, emphasizes Heilbroner, that capitalism as a concept and practice emerged late in human history. The drive for capital in this sense emerges, according to Heilbroner, from the needs of the individual to respond to what he calls, "infantile fantasies and frustrations" for which remedies are sought by the adult. This natural quest for capital can be reviewed and be limited through the imposition of cultural valuations that limit the unrestrained drives that, if left to their devices, may bring havoc to relations and processes in the capitalist system of production and distribution. Heilbroner makes the point that this fundamental source of quest for capital is less recognized and its importance is swallowed up by conventional explanations connected with scarcity, cost, preferences and opportunities (Hirshleifer, cited by Heilbroner, in Whalen 1996: 267) that represent the economists' position on the emergence of capital.

What capital does for people in terms of bestowing a social standing in society is a point that merits some discussion at this juncture. Again, according the Heilbroner (in Whalen 1996: 267) many societies pave the way for the accumulation of wealth in order to "confer virtue or power on their owners." He notes that although there are some confined points where wealth gets concentrated in pre-capitalist stages of development, it is only at a stage where production and transaction at a wider scale inundates the social body that capitalism thrives and grows. Such a social body, Heilbroner (Ibid) contends, requires "a horizontal and vertical order" that tends to become the basis for the existence of intra-class and inter-class distinctions.

Social inequality and poverty is thus an outgrowth of these established relations and distinctions that society creates to reward different actors in society on the basis of the so-called merit and/or contribution system that gears efforts toward overall production.

Humans, under any system, must find some mechanism to satisfy their physical, emotional, and social needs. These needs, according to Tilly and Albelda (in Whalen 1996: 201) are satisfied through making, sharing, or buying. Under capitalism buying become a predominant way of satisfying ones needs and the availability of income becomes a determinant factor that enables the individual to satisfy his needs.

The nature of the capitalist system is such that uneven development is an ingrained feature and affects individuals' and/or groups' positions. The profit motive is central to the system and businesses control economic growth and because of this power that they weld, they assure their survival (see Karger and Stoesz 1997: 297). As these businesses are creators and movers of jobs, the fate of individuals/groups is determined by their decisions to generate employment or close shop at any time and go to areas inside and outside a country where they can secure the labor force they need cheaply (see p. 268).

The fate of some 13.5 million mothers and their children who are below the poverty line in the U.S is determined in part by these processes. In percentage terms, about 31.6 percent of all single mother parents' families are in poverty (Marger 1999: 54, quoted from the U.S. Census Bureau 1997). Whereas SMPs' poverty has increased that of the elderly who were equally poor before social security was declared in 1935 has decreased. In recent years, SMPs and their children have been associated with deteriorating circumstances in life — for instance, belonging to the marginal group of the homeless. The growing shelter population of theirs demonstrates this reality. The low earnings of

these mothers are a consequence of their inability to get good jobs. It is also due to the lack of enough work hours that they are given during a particular week or month (cases abound of women who work less than 10 hours a week after they were promised 40 hours when they started and were actually compelled to work those hours initially). This makes any family's life unstable (interview transcript, Taylor, Hannah's House Administrator, Lansing, November 5, 2003). The spaces for the creation of the base to realize

To summarize, social inequality and differentiation leads to a situation where concrete categories of what Marger (1991:12) calls inequalities of condition, meaning a 'variation of living standards or life conditions.' A major factor in this variation is the extent to which inequality of opportunity or "life chances" as per Max Weber, (cited by Marger 1999:16; or what Waltman (2000:143) calls social 'spaces' for the growth of bases for the realization of these opportunities. Bianchi, in Chafel (ed.), 1993: 108); Bianchi also cites Wilson, (1987) to show that lack of economic opportunity is one of the root causes of low earnings. The disappearances of well-paying manufacturing jobs and the flight of middle class institutions and services with the members of the same class to sub-urban areas constituted the major culprits in the increase in poverty in inner city/urban settings. These are interesting issues that anthropology can study profitably.

2. Anthropology and the Poverty Issue

Anthropology, also a discipline that deals with human problems, has addressed the issue of poverty and inequality to some degree. In fact, anthropologists have dealt with inequality and poverty since the issues were raised in the works of Oscar Lewis as discussed above. Lewis took a political economy approach and tried to develop a theory

of culture of poverty to explain the reasons why people were or became poor and how they attempted to disengage themselves from the condition by summoning the resources that they found at their disposal even as the better off in society looked down upon them and showed the tendency of ignoring their plight.

This takes the discussion of poverty to the realms of political economy and urban anthropology that deal with issues of institutional arrangements and the social lives of the poor in urban contexts, respectively. The organization of economic activities, that is, the way they are run, meaning, whether or not the state is out there to help all groups and sectors of the economy, belongs to the realm of political economy. According to Marger 1999: 164), political economy relates to the state's role in the stimulation of "economic development in one area or another thereby creating or abolishing jobs and revenues thus affecting the general level of prosperity." He defines the concept as the "study of how government relates and affects the economy" (Marger 1999:167). Robert Chambers (1983: 185) sees political economy more as a 'set of questions rather than a discipline' and as a tool for investigating the question relating to "who gains and who loses" in the processes of production and distribution of resources in any country. He adds that increases in the number of people who support values and actions of 'putting the last first,' (Chambers 1983: 189) is primary in the reduction of poverty.

The questions posed by political economy and the relentless support that the poor need from larger segments of people in key positions at all levels of state structures and among society is critical in combating poverty among SMPs. This research tries to seek answers to these questions from the SMPs' interviews and the participants in this study,

as well as service provider government agency officials and staff within the non-profit sector.

SMPs are also defined by the poor locations of where they live — urban environments. They constitute populations of families with low-incomes, received from work and other sources, and a life that is full of everyday struggles to survive in some of the harshest of conditions. Any study that focuses on female-headed families in the urban context should be able to bring out the struggle women make to define their place in the city and help themselves and their families, their children in particular. In other words, the study "should be evaluated in terms of its ability to shed light on poor women's daily lives in the city, and the ways in which poor women contribute to the production of urban spaces and urban politics" (Gilbert in Jonas and Wilson 1999: 95). Urban anthropology's methodologies and perspectives are well suited for such investigations.

Kaplan and Manner's views and characterizations of anthropology as a discipline that is generally concerned with questions of "how different cultural systems work" and how "they have come to be as they are" give us some clues about the lives of SMPs and how they relate with their environments. As discussed earlier, single mother parents are more usually defined as individuals who do not want to work and instead like to depend on other persons and institutions to carry on their lives. In fact, a segment of officials and the general public continue to be persuaded more by theories that emphasize 'personal weakness' characteristics as causal factors explaining poverty (see Berrick 1995, Chapter 2; Marger 1997: 282-83, Hurst 1995: 88-92, Dean and Melrose 1999: 34-37, Bluestone in Whelan 1996: 174-176). An attempt is made here to put the problem in proper contexts based on some of the concrete hurdles poor SMPs face on a day-to-day basis and the

stories that emerge out of these complex experiences. The dead-end perspectives, constructed to pigeonhole the problem in terms pathological behavior, seems to be the unfortunate outcome of the discourse, that is left to those actively pursuing it. However, the salient problems that are commonly relegated to the background need to be given the light of day by anthropologists and other social scientists who have the tools to view and measure the problems in order to deal with them comparatively objectively. At this juncture, Ensminger's (2002: x-xi) declaration that economic anthropology is savvy in shedding "light on the underlying causes in the disparity of economic performance' of various groups in society, is worth mentioning

The personal defect theories advanced by those who follow the conservative line of thinking fall into the behavioral analysis category. They have at least three common features that may describe them. First, they are simplistic because of their disregard the factor of heterogeneity in the population of the poor. Secondly, the theories tend to generalize from insufficient and selective data. Lastly, their approaches, in a sense, offer them shortcuts to quickly establish their position on the reforms that they seek.

Such arguments of conservatism have resulted in controversies that eventually led to the elimination of the safety net for poor single mothers and their children after 1996. But no sooner was the safety–net 'partially' eliminated than transfer of resources through a third party (charities and voluntary agencies) was thought about and advocated by the state itself. What all this indicates is the rush with which measures are taken and fence mending is resorted to perhaps at costs that have had wider, overt and covert, dimensions.

As Bourdieu (in Wacquant 1992: 27-35) puts it cogently, observations that fail to see the hidden and/or changing realities, invite hasty conclusions that can have detrimental

effects on beneficiaries. Wilk (in Ensminger 2002: 245-49) sees the problem in terms of what he calls 'high theories' that are too 'abstract and too pure' such that they will not:

> produce directly testable statements about the world.
> Instead they provoke reductionism and consistency at the
> expense of reality....

As Katz (1995: 8-9) also curtly observed, grand theories, the personal deficiency thesis in the case of this research, "simplify and distort (realities, my emphasis) by imposing a false consistency..." based on experiences understood in particular ways.

Anthropology, as the study of the individual in group contexts, social relations and structure, culture and change at the grassroots level, can contribute toward the correction of the flaws in the explanations that are tilted toward behavioral dimensions. These kinds of explanations have built up biases against the system that served as a temporary social insurance to those who are commonly hit by hardships in times of semi-permanent economic busts in particular.

Anthropologists made credible contributions to the understanding of persistent poverty in the U. S. in the 1970s and 1980s (Curtis 1995). But their micro-level studies on poverty and ethnicity and their neglect of the vertical links of these to the macro processes grossly limited their contributions (Curtis 1995: 105) to provide any meaningful resolution to the problem. According to Ensminger (2002: x) also despite anthropology's pertinent theories that provide credible explanations to such issues as poverty, the fact that it lacks the "bottom-up" understanding of the fundamental causes of poverty and dependency of single mother parents (this research), makes its uses less effective. In the late 1980s and 1990s, however, Curtis explains, broader issues of change in the realm of political economy have engaged the attention of many

anthropologists. One of the main points that has emerged out of some of anthropology's studies is the recognition of the value of the discipline's "concepts, methods and analytical styles in explaining the ways in which changes in the political economy reshape community and family life," (Curtis 1995: 106-107). The enviable characterization of political economists: that they should seek to 'understand and should contribute to the real world concerns' (Whalen in Whalen 1996: 18) should also apply to the work of anthropologists.

Anthropological perspectives and concepts and an increased attention to the plight of the poor thus may serve as a corrective to the conservative position that declares that the poor are responsible for what may be described as their 'self-inflicted' problems. The liberal camp could strengthen its case for the support for education and training -- critical factors that it advocated belong to the assistance packages, relief and long-term -- that would eventually enable SMPs become self-sufficient. Such studies would also serve as a counterpoise to the partially biased outlooks of opponents of social programs.

Michael Harrington's (1962) work on poverty stirred the thinking of those in power (Kennedy and other national leaders, for instance), and this, among other studies, eventually led to the measure of waging a war on poverty in America. Frank Riessman's (1962) piece on the plights of the deprived child supplemented Harrington's thesis that those who could not help themselves for reasons beyond their capacities deserve to be helped. Reissman made a note of the fact that any culture had positive characteristics of enabling people to devise ways of coping with their everyday problems and that, given some support, any people are capable of changing their circumstances for the better. These perspectives did help in laying the fundamental thesis of the war on poverty

programs. A continuation of such discourses was lacking after the War on Poverty programs were initiated and implemented in the decades following the 1960s. Anthropology could have contributed a lot toward easing the conservative backlash against the social programs set up to help the poor. Similarly, today anthropologists can go aboard the discussion forum on questions that lie hidden in the complex web of poverty and help change the views of those who defiantly look at the other side of the problem. They can at the same time refurbish the debate.

Additionally, studies based on anthropological concepts and perspectives and knowledge drawn from the lived in experiences of SMPs may serve to pave the way for interactions with different sets of institutions. Such interaction within specific urban environments is an essential first step to address the problem of poverty. These kinds of studies are critical for evaluating the mothers' capabilities and for creating a framework on how their lives could improve. Such a data is important for two reasons.

First, it can shed some light on where the mothers are in economic and social standing terms and how they can associate with one another and ease their common problems. Second, it provides some relevant information for policy evaluation and construction in order to (re)visit the fundamental problems of poverty as well as its amelioration through single mothers' efforts, public intervention and other supplementing services.

3. Structural Changes in Economic Sectors and Their Impact On Job Loss and Incomes

As was earlier alluded to, the structure of the American economy has undergone substantial changes during the past few decades. The well-paying manufacturing jobs

have been vanishing from the traditional industrial heartland in search of less regulated and/or un-unionized areas, first locally and then internationally. Allied to this problem is, of course, the rate at which the rising service sector is displacing manufacturing nation-wide. This is one major factor that is responsible for the diminishing wage rate in the U. S. as William Julius Wilson describes this situation succinctly.

Diminishing wages are in part caused by not only by the increase in service sector jobs, but also by immigration, entry of illegal immigrates with low skills. Schuck (in American Bar Association, 1999) contends that these immigrants are part of the illegal and unskilled or low- skilled guest workers who enter the U. S. at the rate of 250,000 to 300,000 each year. He argues that there is "little national interest justification for admitting them into the country" and in the process straining the economy. This category of immigrants that seek low wages, according to Calavita (in American Bar Association, 1999), however, possess substantial skills that places them in better stead in the hierarchy of laborers in the U. S. The high rate of employment of low-skilled immigrant workers in the U. S. is an evidence of the upscale demand of this category of alien workers according to Schuck, who observes that the "effect of this on low-skill Americans, of course, is harder to pinpoint," (Ibid.).

Whatever the case may be, immigrants do depress wages. But there is no option for employers other than reverting to this source when work is left undone as a result of the absence of low wage workers in some enterprises, particularly agricultural ones. Migrants, nonetheless, serve as "a source of reservoir of cheap labor, according to Calavita (1984:10-13). They are, therefore, "crucial to American industrial expansion," and "industrialists promoted and supported legislative regulation to maintain and increase

this reservoir while the American Labor movement, fearful of falling wage rates and power dilution sought to limit immigration (Calavita 1984:10-13)."

The debate and regulation in connection with immigration was two-dimensional. It took contradictory dimensions, however. While recognition as to the "usefulness of cheap labor supply to an emerging capitalist democracy" (Calavita 1992: 5-6) was hailed, the fact that it became a typical cause for an increase in poverty by pushing down wages and exacerbating "poor working conditions which required state health, welfare, and criminal maintenance expenditure," made the choice for one or the other a difficult proposition.

Lansing had to contend with this same problem. The city has been facing the problem of a shying younger population intent on not entering the labor force as well as the loss of 'newly-minted' professionals to other states' hot labor markets and retirees to warmer climates (*Greater Lansing Business Monthly,* Michigan, see also www.lansingbusinessmonthly.com)

It is against this background that the problem of shortage of jobs in Lansing and its impact on SMPs should be examined. Immigrants do take away jobs that may be filled by single mothers and other poor people. But the high turn over observed and the invitation 'help wanted,' writ large on walls of business establishments, does show that there are a multiplicity of positions in particularly service businesses waiting for new workers of varying backgrounds to fill.

That this is true can also be ascertained by the fact that some 25,000 immigrants moved to MI in 1990 to fill in for 10,000 people who migrated out of the state (Lansing

Business Monthly, MI). Also, from 1980-1990, Michigan's net loss of residents hit the 300,000 mark (Ibid). In the 1990s alone, between 50,000-100,000 residents left the state.

A constant flow of immigrants should be encouraged, according to the *G. L. Business Monthly.* With the net loss of residents each year, the arrival of more migrants form abroad is the only way out of the dwindling labor force, in order to make Michigan's economy viable, according to the Business Monthly. This situation is already observable in the health care industry where professional (nurses, pharmacists and technicians) and less-skilled direct care workers (nurse assistants, home care workers and even house keeping staff) are in short supply.

American SMPs can benefit from these types of jobs. But training or skill building and, more importantly, time commitment required for the preparation (education and skills) and actual fielding of the citizens to take up the actual work may raise several difficulties. It is such a situation that opens more opportunities for women and other immigrants to commit themselves to work. The cooperative values that immigrants bring with them also helps low-income persons among them to work more hours and establish a sense of loyalty for their employers.

Wilson (1987) saw shifts in the structure of job availability in the city, that is the shutting down of higher wage manufacturing industries and their replacement with low-paying service sector jobs as having a deleterious impact on the poor and single mother parents in the context of this dissertation. For him, this change reduced the continuing flow of a living wage to segments of previously unskilled and semi-skilled workers (African Americans, for instance), and resulted in the rise of single mothers who were faced by unattractive wages that provided less of a steady living wage.

The combined effects of de-industrialization and the service sector takeover of most of the economic activity had the impact of contracting a good deal of job pools and squeezing the wage rate. These factors have invariably led to a great deal of loss of income and competition for jobs that pay less. This situation, in turn, has resulted in a loss in the standard weekly hours worked by many and thus a further declines in income. The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1937 did establish a minimum wage and a maximum workweek (Collins 1996: 95) in order to strike some balance between the interests of capital owners and workers. Owners of capital then made the weekly work hours longer to increase productivity and consequently to swell their profit margins, among other reasons. Today, they reduce the weekly work hours to decrease the cost of production a good deal of which should also go to labor. In both cases, the profit motive is the guiding principle behind the actions of capital owners.

4. The Living/Minimum Wage Issue

The minimum wage jobs that SMPs hook themselves, or are hooked to, provide a theoretical basis for the credence to the assumption that they would be able to earn enough and support their families. But the minimum wage is so low that it is less capable of leading to liberation from dependence on public welfare. The minimum wage rate is as old as any thing can be. In fact it is almost one-third of the level it should be at now. A CNN news item (2001) carried the commentary that the minimum wage should have been $14.00 an hour in 2001. The Chicago Homeless Coalition more or less concurred with CNN's news item when it revealed that in the year 2000, rent and cost of living expenses should have raised the minimum wage level to $15.00 per hour. This is also

corroborated by Salvation Army Social Services Director Dawn Sweeny in an interview with this researcher December 19, 2004) and Lansing City's Human Services Head Steinberg, January 5, 2004). The lowness of the minimum wage rate is not the only concern here; its erosion in real value terms (Chafel 1993: 97) is yet another problem that needs further reflection and action. Its value has shown a tendency to drop even after being adjusted for inflation in the 1960s, 1970s and after (Seccombe 1999:198).

The low rate has led to a change of attitude to work by the poor, among others. Those at the margins are thus compelled to work more hours if they can help it or work on two or more jobs. Many SMPs are thus among the poor who have to take this route in order to earn more. According to Kweit and Kweit (1999: 416), poor/SMPs have to work close to 51 to 57 hours a week, if they happen to get unemployed 10 percent of the time, to lessen the financial burdens they so frequently face. Data from the Chicago Homeless Coalition indicates that an inordinate number of extra-hours are needed to obtain enough money to cover rent and meet expenses for other basic needs — that is, low income persons in Chicago have to work 98 hours to satisfy their basic needs. This figure was arrived at after itemizing the critical basic needs categories — food, utilities as well as rent — and attaching the respective costs to them (Chicago Homeless Coalition Director John Donahue, Guest Lecture Series for Integrative Studies, College of Social Science, MSU, 2000).

5. Women, the Expansion of the Service Sector and Discrepancies in Pay Rates

Structural changes in workforce distribution and patterns of women's work have undergone changes during the last three decades of the 20th Century. But the principle of

equal pay for equal work has still been limping behind. At the same time, the wages workers received in the service sector had been getting lower and lower during the same period.

Historically, women's place was conventionally considered to be at home. Mothers, including single parents, were expected to stay at home and care for the family. The husband was the breadwinner par excellence. But despite the celebration of motherhood, women without husbands, were required to work and feed their families so they would keep away from public assistance the source of which has been tax dollars that the well off, inter alia, had to contribute toward.

Women's limitation to home-making rather than working outside was also motivated by a good deal of fear of a loss of position by men consistent with the tradition that confined women's roles to home responsibilities. Women would obviously cut into the traditionally categorized job world that was made the preserve of the male gender if they went out and worked in the labor market.

But beginning the 19th Century, women, single mothers parents included, began to join the labor force in greater numbers (Zinn and Eitzen 1999: 176-177). Their entry to the world of work was primarily motivated by the need to support their broken homes, homes made poorer by the loss of the husband due to death. Additionally, abandonment, physical limitations sustained by the male breadwinner and incarceration of the husband (Interviews with Rachel, January 6, 2004 and Shaq'uitta, December 31, 2004) in recent decades also became factors explaining the entry of women into the labor market.

Beginning the 1940s, the number of women in the labor force increased substantially. From a mere 20 percent in the 1940s, the percentage of females in the work

force rose to 59 percent in 1995 (Zinn and Eitzen 1999: 176). It is expected to rise to 65 percent in 2005 (Ibid.).

Zinn and Eitzen (1999: 177-178) show that more women with children participate in the labor market. Astoundingly, enough the number of black women attached to the labor market was bigger than that of the white population of the same gender, 49% as against 43% in 1970 and 60% as against 59% for 1995, respectively.

But in spite of this encouraging trend, their earnings have been far lower than that of the male worker and the patterns of work females did, as they do now also, differ a great deal. In terms of income they have been able to earn only two-thirds of what the male makes. The work they do also is more often 'part-time, part year, or both and is more often interrupted when the necessity of caring for the ill, the aged, or for younger family members' arises (Zinn and Eitzen 1999: 178).

The temporary nature of the work women do and the lower incomes they make, in a sense, explains the reason why they seek assistance and end up concocting resources from various sources to satisfy their everyday needs. A look at women's strong relationship with the service sector of the economy bolsters the argument that the yawning gap that embodies low-wage and dead-end jobs again explains why women, single mothers in particular, seek external help to make ends meet.

Another book written by Eitzen and Zinn (1989) under the title: *The Reshaping of America: The Social Consequences of the Changing Economy*, details some of the characteristics of the service sector that absorbed 86 percent of all private employment, in the 1970s and 1980s. The rate of return to the service sector's investment has generally

been higher compared to those of the goods-producing or manufactory sectors during the same period.

But unfortunately the pay that service sector workers get is much lower than in the traditional industries. For each dollar a manufacturing worker was paid, the service sector employee received only 62 cents (Eitzen and Zinn 1989: 184-185). This pay further declined to 57 cents later on (Ibid).

This decrease in earnings does affect the welfare of low wage earners. Single mothers who, for the most, part find employment in the service sector rather than others, have to contend with this problem. Their part-time and/or temporary work worsens the prospects for improving their incomes.

6. Globalization

Globalization has both advantages and disadvantages. Mclintock (in Whalen 1996: 225) describes international trade, an aspect of globalization as a 'spice of life'. He sees its advantages in the fact that people can buy and enjoy goods that they cannot produce and sell their own on wider markets across the world. While this benefits participants in trade, it can also have disruptive effects on their lives. Again, according to McClintock (Ibid.), the quick in-road imports make into the domestic market or a decline in the competitiveness of exports into the domestic markets may lead to a loss of employment, declines in real income, plant shut down and a deterioration in the lives of affected communities (Ibid.).

Where do things go wrong for these disruptions to take place? For Stiglitz (in Weinstein 2005: 228), the failures emerge out of missteps connected with the

'governance of globalization'. He observes that rules of the trade game in globalization are constructed by industrial nations, primarily for "their interests, or more precisely for the interest of special interests, often to the market disadvantage of the developing world" (in Weinstein 2005: 228-229). Under globalization, national economies have become more interdependent. Multinationals are more at the center of substantial portions of trade between countries, and governments, in developing nations in particular, assumedly, central institutions that care for their peoples' interests, become powerless at times to do much to benefit their own citizens. But even then, some East Asian countries have been able to successfully push their growth ahead by adopting technologies and knowledge(s) from items in the global markets.

As Stiglitz warns globalization provide a climate for the generation of employment and optimum growth of the economy in order to assure social stability that is one primary concern of change. He sees significant problems with what he calls fundamentalist policies of worrying about "rapid privatization and liberalization that focus on handling risks of inflation to the exclusion of the end result of economic activities that pertain to the improvement of the human condition, particularly of those in the margins.

Single mother parents' abilities to earn more are affected by globalization. The migration of jobs to low-wage regions within the U.S. and overseas does make the already scarce job opportunities much thinner than they would otherwise be. Globalization is a phenomenon that crosses borders through the agencies of finance, media and transportation (Swatos in Kivisto 1998: 293). It is claimed that globalization improves the livelihood of workers across the world, but given the fact that it is depressing wages for workers in industrialized countries, it would be surprising that it

would not lead to an immiseration in the job importing countries. This can only happen if capital, rather than hoarding huge portions of the profits it makes through labor's participation, shares a fair portion of it with workers.

Globalization does afford industrialized countries in particular to reap the benefits of expanded markets for their products (see Collins 1996: 123) and enables owners of capital to profit more from labor costs that are reduced as a consequence. But the relatively free exodus of jobs to low-wage areas internationally can have a deleterious effect on prospects for domestic employment. The outcry of 'exporting American jobs' that has become a household concept and has hit a crescendo in media discussions, and through them has made inroads into academic and popular discourse, is a by-product of this concern. Michigan, as cited above, did lose 170,000 manufacturing jobs in 2002-2003 (Boyd, *Lansing State Journal,* September 27, 2003) to job migration. But the least concerned about this depressing situation is capital for which the main objective is profit. In a sense, wherever it goes, capital is out to assure its returns above all else, even if it means worsening life conditions for more people.

But as "capitalism naturally results in inequality" and causes "chronic, (absolute) poverty for some" (Collins 1996: 122-123 and 125) and relative poverty (Chambers 1984; 1996: 125) following periods of economic crisis, a way of responding to this situation by those affected is in order. Collins (1996: 122) reminds us that in the U.S. two major attempts to put this trend in check was made when mass protests disrupting "business-as-usual" was put up and organized citizens compelled their leaders to take action to curb capital's power. Intervention on the part of the state in this regard resulted in limiting corporate power through 'price controls, anti-trust legislation, and prohibition

of anti-labor practices like hiring scabs or starting company unions' (Ibid., 122-123). The state, consistent with these major measures, can also not only ask owners of capital to stop exporting entry level jobs, but can also be made responsible for the creation of jobs domestically and help reduce unemployment. Single mothers can benefit from this overture and nationalist(ic) responsibility.

7. Micro Level Issues: Shortage of Jobs

The unemployment figures recorded from year to year indicate that a shortage of jobs is a common feature of capitalist economies. True, unemployment is more serious in developing country contexts. But as Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb (1972: 261) and others point out the fact that the United States and other industrialized countries that have achieved higher production levels are capable of creating more decent jobs that can absorb more workers and control poverty and by the way eliminate the need for dependence on public welfare for many SMPs who happen to be caught up in cyclical recessions, depressions, de-industrialization, social maginalization and exclusion of the poor to jobs constituted the triggering factors that lead to continuing shortages (Berrick 1995, Kweit and Kweit 1999, Timmer et al 1994, McGregor et al 1995, Wilson 1987). But in spite of all these realities welfare theorists are not convinced that the labor market faces a great deal of shortcomings affecting job availability.

The lack of good jobs that can pay the bills for families to survive or simply jobs that can help those at the lower end of the scale to make ends meet somehow is the issue here.

8. Low Minimum Wage

The minimum wage issue is central to the discussion of poverty and inequality in the context of the U.S. Many municipalities across the U.S. have passed living wage ordinances that require businesses/enterprises contracting work with them to pay their workers either the federal or their state's minimum wages (Levin-Waldman 2005: 3).

But despite the fact that such ordinances exist, their application is not strict. Local governments and cities, that such an implementation would cause migration of jobs to cheap labor areas, fail to take action to do justice to employees who work for less than a living wage that is expected to help them cover their basic needs.

De-industrialization and economic recession affect possibilities of raising the living wage rate. Changing economic circumstances of cities determine the extent to which the issue of the minimum wage is raised and addressed. Levin-Waldman (2005: 197) notes that the "changing economic base of cities from manufacturing to post-industrial has no doubt resulted in the loss of higher-paying manufacturing and in many cases unionized jobs, which have been replaced by lower-paying service and mostly non-unionized-jobs." The closure of auto plants in Lansing is a case in point. According to Boyd, of the State of Michigan, 172,000 (September 27, 2003) such jobs were lost at the state level during the 2002-2003 year. Loss in profit margins and slack in sales have become the primary reasons for the auto companies to lay-off a lot of workers. The State has directed its attention to diversification of production to offset the impacts of deindustrialization measures

that companies resort to when caught up with loss of revenue. SMPs and other poor people are affected directly or indirectly when job availability is affected by such losses.

9. Transportation Problems

Lack of means of transportation by single mothers to go to their jobs and/or school and return home is a critical problem that they are faced with in their day-to-day life (McGregor et al 1995, Wilson 1987, Curtis and McLellan 1995). The poor, in particular, are usually incapable of commuting between the work they find outside their geographic or residential area (McGregor et al 1995:5). For Wilson (1987) also lack of transportation limits job opportunities for the destitute/single mothers. As the poor have lower rates of car ownership or face difficulties in using the limited range of public transport service, their chances of helping themselves to be self-sufficient is very small.

10. Housing Shortages

Affordable housing is another problem that single mothers face all the time. Kozol's (1988: 1, 14-15) study shows that some 300,000 hidden homeless people existed in New York alone in the late 1980s. This explains the seriousness of the situation in the U.S. More than 10 million people in the U.S. paid over half of their Incomes for rent. The Affordable Housing Institute at Rutgers Institute raises the number to 14 million people (quoted in Mercer and Cited in Timmer et al 1994: 12).

The housing situation in Lansing and many other Metropolitan areas is also serious for the poor/ SMPs. Some of the single mothers who were involved in the in-depth interview focused a lot of their energies to securing roofs over their heads. Shortage of housing compels many single mothers with children to associate with the shelter system devoted to the homeless, a category, that today encapsulates families unlike in the past. Anabelle, Desiree and Heather that this researcher interviewed last month (March 19, 2005) have made the search for housing a daily routine duty. If they are not lucky enough to obtain rental places, then their only option is to move from one shelter to another every fortnight and get caught in a vicious circle of dependence on charities. Some lucky ones may be placed in a transitional housing system that gives them the chance to live some where on a semi-permanent basis until they find an apartment or their own private home.

11. High School Dropout Rate

Dropping out of high school does affect the well being of young women. Such women are more likely to be unemployed than those who complete secondary education (CAC Fall 2000: 12). They are likely to earn less than those who graduate and are more likely to be single mothers and dependent on public assistance (Ibid.). Ingham County's high school dropout rate shot up in the 1999/2000 year (data secured from the Center for Educational performance and Information, in Capital Area Community, Fall 2002: 12). The figure is close to three times that of the 1998/1999 year.

12. Social Capital and Poverty Reduction

Social capital is a way of getting people together within and across groups to establish a common ground in order to solve different problems conjointly in an organized fashion. Such a measure of pulling of a group(s) together is essential for a proper functioning and/or promoting of a collective/community or societal interest. It brings together communities who choose to cooperate with one another in order to remove an insurmountable problem in a bid to share in the good outcome and absorb the loss. Groups within primitive communities and during the initial stages of industrialization in urban areas used mutual aid systems to support one another in times of loss of capacity to help themselves (Anderson et al 1965: 127-130).

In like manner, single mother parents who depend for most of their support on charity and public welfare sources can associate with one another and work together on small businesses that can eventually end up being their own and employ them at the same time. There are two kinds of social capital bonding—connectivity and bridging. The first squeezes out isolation; bridging facilitates cross border connectivity. In-group exclusivity is conquered with this modality of association. Good and amicable relations are foundations for psychological satisfaction and for the realization of a sense of self viewed and strengthened by those who seek sociality which is in a sense embedded in humanness. Out of such sociality, single mothers can build mutually helpful social capital groups. The alternative is to rely on public and other assistance sources. But rather than this kind of dependence, social capital groups can benefit more if the resources that are made available for relief and transitory intervention are diverted to a

system of support that eventuates in the creation of an enabling environment, as Paldam and Svendsen, in Flap and Volker (2001: 249) argue.

SECTION 3: ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE POVERTY THROUGH WELFARE AND WORKFARE PROGRAMS

1. Size of the Population Affected by Poverty

Single mother parents are a constituent part of the population that is frequently affected by poverty in particularly major cities and towns of the U. S. According to Democratic Presidential candidate John Kerry (acceptance speech at the party's convention, July 29, 2004), the number of the poor in the U. S has increased by three million between 2000 and 2004 alone. The vibrant growth in the U.S. economy between the early 1990s and the beginnings of the 21st century would not check the incidence of soaring poverty began to unfold nationwide. (Mills 1999: 41-43; MacGregor 1995, The New York Times, November 13, 1998). Soup kitchens service demand increased in Brooklyn (Di Fagio in MacGregor 1995) and the rise in the demand for food and night-time shelter bed consumption demonstrates a hike in the number of people who suffer from want (interviews with officials of the Lansing Rescue Mission, Volunteers of America, 1999 and 2004). The situation is getting serious for more Americans with low income, according to a letter the American Red Cross issued in connection with the more frequent visits of the organization's extended service hours (interview with John Sanders, relief services head, January 1999.

2. A Brief Historical Background to the Initiation of Welfare

Welfare programs in the U.S. were initially and formally designed by the state to protect those people without work in the aftermath of the October 1929 market crash (Berrick 1995: 6, Fieldstein 1976: 956, quoted in Atkinson 1999: 4, Anderson and Ishwaran 1965: 132). In actual fact, government assistance, not in the form of welfare, but in aid of war veterans and participants, was set up after the civil war in the 19th century (1812-1815) (Skocpol 2000 and Katz 1989 and Katz 1995: 56) equate welfare to the "alleviation of distress: the prevention of death from starvation, homelessness, the lack of clothing and disease." He reminds us that assistance to the poor has been persistent through modern American history (1995: 19). What was earlier on identified as 'outdoor relief', according to Katz, is discussed in a new and updated vocabulary of 'welfare.'

3. The Rationale for Starting Workfare

Workfare is a concept used in relation to welfare reform. It is a mechanism of imposing work requirements on recipients of public assistance. Despite several problems including finding jobs that befit the skill levels of clients and budgetary constraints, 'workfare' encountered in the past, a number of states been using it as a means of shifting public resource-dependent persons into the regular work world. The idea behind the program has been to create a springboard for those who are not employed to find jobs that would enable them to be self-sufficient and disengage them from dependency on public sources of support.

The barrages of attacks leveled against welfare programs and the support lent to them were largely not based on empirical data. Rather, they emanated from assumptions that seemed appropriate to the political climate of the day as viewed by conservatives and liberals. Distortions and selective data usage are part of this practice (refer to, for example, Moynihan's (1965) work and Murray's analysis below). The solutions, offered from largely armchair contemplation, need to be reviewed in order to help the mothers stand on their feet. Such measures, for one thing, would help save scarce resources. For another, it would avoid social conflicts that may lead to extreme positions that play out each at a time. In other words, these 'oxymoronic' institutional supports for the poor at one time, and retrenchment of the same programs at another, are evidenced by what has been going for the poor during the last one half century and more. Dominant paradigm shifts that replay themselves are antithetic both to the material and relational wellbeing of society. The solutions ordinarily offered to ameliorate the suffering of the mothers and children need to be based on data associated with the lived in experiences of the subjects themselves.

4. The Debate on the Problem of Poverty in the U.S.: The Ideological and Practical Dimensions

Given the current response approaches and levels, poverty in the U.S. and other industrialized countries is going to live with society for a long time to come. This need not be a black box, however, particularly in the U.S., where there is a bonanza of wealth and a healthy economy where the growth rate in the 1990s was at one of the highest points, though this healthy growth did not replicate itself in the early 2000s.

The literature on poverty in the U.S. talks about a binary response in the welfare regime. It is usually filled with oxymoronic and time-bound compassion for and outright abhorrence for those in sorry states of living. But notwithstanding this support cum abomination stance, the negative attitude to poverty tilts toward the long-term dependency variety. The heated discourse which was tantamount to a "war on social welfare," to borrow Katz's (1989) term, took root in the early 1980s. The discourse was an out and out injurious project to dismantle the safety net established for a good number of people in America about 60 years ago. Its aim was to reverse the 'war on poverty' programs started in the 1960s.

The elimination of the safety net in the U. S. was preceded by state actions that started in the early 1980s with the accession of Reagan to the Presidency. In spite of the evidence to the contrary, the Republican Party mainly persisted in its call for the clipping off the long arms of the welfare state. It also called for the retrenchment of the 'generous' welfare payments, which in actual fact did, at times, not even pay the rent for many recipients (see, for example, Berrick 1994: 12-13). The reason for this was that too many people or the 'undeserving poor', who appended themselves to welfare system from the state, constituted the cause for the 'loss of efficiency' (Atkinson 1999: 8) of the free market model of development.

The debate raged between those who claimed that the poor have been responsible for their conditions of suffering and those who advocated that the victims have been impoverished owing to no fault of theirs. The measures advocated to resolve the welfare problem came out of a mere "collective perception of poor women," that informed the debates (Asen, in http://www.msue.edu, see bibliography for the full URL). The demand

during the last few decades of the 20th century consisted of a call on poor mothers, single mothers in particular, to hook themselves into a "paid employment to support their families financially (Ibid)." Poor mothers who were especially able-bodied were to get employed or lose their benefits.

In fact the current trend is to slowly cut back on all assistance for single mothers by taking critical measures that reduce cash assistance and compel recipient mothers to work more than 30 hours a week. According to Waller (November 14, 2004) such a requirement would fail many of the long-term single mothers recipients who are "struggling with care of young children in the face of inadequate transportation...and other barriers." In addition to the childcare that needs a huge financial commitment on the part of the state, transportation, education, housing, and income support would need more transfer of budgetary resources.

Little supportive data was supplied for both debating positions, especially to that which claimed that the poor are the creators of their own problems. In some cases data were used selectively or, for example, African American incarceration as a cause for family disorganization. The arguments were full of assumptions that were far removed from direct/relevant empirical data.

The general explanations supplied by conservatives about poverty are that it is self-inflicted by the individual him/herself (Lewis 1966a and b, 1998, and in George Gmelch and Walter P. Zenner 1996; Banfield 1958, Murray 1984). The condition, in other words, is one that the individual imposed on him/herself. Gilder (1981) attributed poverty to lack of hard work in a system (capitalism) that provides endless opportunities. These scholars viewed the problem of poverty at two levels—the individual and group levels. The poor

are described as indolent, feckless, ones without moral fiber, spendthrifts and more (Lewis 1998, 1966a and b, and in Gmlech and Zenner 1996, Banfield 1958, Murray 1984). Murray, in particular, believed that people were lazy and amoral that they would not work on their own unless forced to do so. Mead (1986), another conservative scholar, also advocated that low-wage must be mandatory and the poor, particularly those on assistance, should work even if it meant that they would earn low wages. The low-wage, for him, need not be good paying let alone rewarding. These scholars figuratively threw mud at the poor/victims. But their beliefs were mainly based on assumptions or distorted readings of data relating to the poor. Their central thesis, under girded by popular assumptions, fed their consistent blame on the poor. They proposed solutions also. The solutions, straddled with the theorists' discussions on welfare and poverty, simply recommend changes in the behavior or patterns of living of the poor.

A second category or source of poverty, it is claimed, is the family and/or community, an explanation that is group focused. Theorists here again blame the victim(s) as a member of a group(s) for the poverty they experience. The major argument here is that the 'culture of poverty', embedded in the family/community of which the individual is a member, shapes the attitudes and behaviors of members (Lewis 1966a and b and 1998; Banfield 1958).

These values, it was argued, do not only fetter the subjects, but they are also transmitted inter-generationally. Children among these communities form their values from significant and generalized others who affect their (non)achievement drives. The children's expectations as a consequence are lowered so much so that they fail to make efforts to improve their conditions later in life. Family disorganization was blamed for the

misery in the family and for some of the intergenerational problems. The African American male, for instance, was depicted as one who failed to uphold his family responsibility. As Moynihan put it, the role model for the household has, as a consequence, been missing and this blocked improvement in the life conditions of communities over time.

Some scholars have supported such an approach to the study of the problem of poverty in the debates on the subject. Conservatives who turned the meaning around to frame their perspectives on welfare used Lewis' concept of the culture of poverty. These perspectives saw public support interventions as hopeless ventures. In fact, the arguments contained in these viewpoints were considered to be the basis upon which conservatives crafted their agenda to end the welfare programs in toto (Collins 1996: 64).

To those opposed to the conservative position a set of complex factors, beyond those articulated by conservatives, have been considered to be responsible for the poverty conditions in the family/community. The liberal position that represents this view is reflected in this broader perspective on poverty. It suggests that structural problems are mainly responsible for the rise in poverty. Scholars in this group pointedly say that poverty is not a condition that is willed by the victims involved. Harrington (1962) and Reissman (1962) for instance, made this argument. Generations of scholars after the last two are agreed on this theory (structural problems) (see, for instance, Wilson 1987; MacGregor et al 1995; Alcock 1997: 96).

Harrington and Reissman further specify the problem in terms of education, skill development and access to jobs. Lack of opportunity (Kelland 1998: 360) on the part of the poor to prepare for jobs, coupled with poor people's inability to have easy access to

the labor market (Francis-Okongwu 1996: 122-23), constitutes some of the partial explanations for the problem, according to the two authors. The two authors advance solutions to the problem as well. The poor should be enabled to develop skills that can help them obtain jobs befitting their abilities and capacities.

5. A Critique of the Arguments For and Against Welfare

The arguments put forth by both schools of thought have major flaws that inhibit an examination of other fundamental causes that also explain poverty. The personal defect and/or culture of poverty explanations are too general and cannot apply to all individuals and communities that have heterogeneous characteristics. Also, the argument that jobs on the labor market are plentiful for those who care to work does not assure that the jobs are actually available or are consistent with the needs of all the unemployed poor. According to Sheahen (1983), for example, the 'help wanted' advertisements that appear on the printed media or put up o notice boards at the work place may not be ones that are well suited to individual needs. Moreover, the argument that jobs are plentiful contradicts the capitalist logic of development that supports the necessity of unemployment for purposes of withstanding militancy in the labor force. The existence of unemployed persons on the market assures employers that many workers are not indispensable and that they can readily be replaced from the pool of the unemployed.

The liberal view that anchors on the lack of education and skills to secure jobs is also too narrowly focused. It does not take into account the fact that the shift from manufacturing to the service industry as part of the structural changes of production make the skills, according to Kearny (1995) irrelevant to the changing needs of the increasingly

technologized (post) industrial world of work. A good number of higher institution produced persons have ended up holding dead-end jobs that are less rewarding. Many of the professionals, laid-off because of establishment closures and downsizing, also find themselves working at lower or even at minimum wage levels (Collins 1996 and Riessman 1989: 418).

These situations contradict the argument that special skills are always needed to qualify for jobs and hold on to them (Moore 1996: 18-22). The point that under girds the liberal position that the accumulation of skills or their upgrading is a determinant factor for securing jobs thus does not fully explain the problem. The availability of jobs is, however, one factor that is used by conservatives as ammunition to attack welfare programs for the poor. Kweit and Kweit (1999: 416) document that only 1409 out of 15,562 people on welfare were able to find jobs over a set two year period in Kansas City, Missouri, under a program to hook recipients to work is an instance that may go toward falsifying this claim.

The problem with the conservative approach in particular is that it starts with selective data that support an assumption made. For instance, the assumptions that some individuals are lazy and that they do not want to work or that welfare is the cause for the decision of some individuals who are not cut out to work and support themselves, do not stand up to empirical tests. People do work. As Sheahen (1983) has put it so well, 'people by nature want to work.' They want to work always even if it means that they do not have to. They may stay without work for a month or so, but not any more.

Conservatives' arguments are thus made solely on the basis of assumptions that are little supportable by concrete data. The individual- and/or group-based explanations as

sources and maintainers of the pathological explanations too fall in this category. Moynihan's thesis on the African American male was, for example, based on statistical data readings of two decades on unemployment rates, arrest records, AFDC caseloads, intelligence indicators and narcotic use (Collins 1996: 62). Following James Farmer, Collins (1996: 64) criticizes the pathology-laden construction of African American males by Moynihan. Farmer, according to Collins, saw this characterization as a pacesetter for a 'new racism' (Ibid.). Although the particular data on the black male does give an indication of why the male here had been missing from home, it does not, however, fully and directly explain why the family in the black community was generally exposed to hardships/poverty in the first place. The arguments put forth also fail to explain how, for instance, individuals, families and communities are situated at one particular moment and also how they become 'poor in the first place' (Moore 1996). How some individuals 'escape poverty' are not also examined and explained adequately (Ibid.).

On top of these flaws in arguments, there is one major factor that conservatives and their allies seem to have not given a degree of weight. This relates to the daily struggles the poor and their families make to survive. Several studies (see Edin and Jenks 1997; Stack 1974; Francis-Okongwu 1996; Philippe 1997; Kozol 1995:100, 1988:1-2; Edelman, 2002: 1) indicate that the poor work hard despite all odds to obtain more resources in order to survive. According to Edelman (2002: 1), many working people in the U. S. "do their best and still can't make it – not through any fault of their own but because the jobs they have don't pay enough to get by."

Kozol (1995:161-2) describes some of these women as ones possessing 'unbreakable and proud' spirit even though they are reduced to wistful entities along with others when

they confront the difficult environment they find themselves in. This unflinching struggle is corroborated by Kozol's interview with a certain Gwen, a mother who lived in the Martinique Hotel for homeless families in New York. She had to live in this hotel after she lost her home for foreclosure following a loss of her job. She was determined to continue to struggle and survive. She relates her forlorn situation and her determination to hang on to her interviewer. She says: " you know that you are in a struggle and you know you cannot yield. This is what you have to (continue, my emphasis) tell yourself" (Kozol 1988: 32).

Kozol extends the concept of 'little miracles' (an attribution by Reverend Overall and his discipleship) that is associated with the lives of children from poor families in the Bronx to the many mothers he met during his research. Such women, he writes, "win hundreds of small victories each day." If only genuine and caring people from all walks of life helped these categories of strong-willed mothers, Kozol argues, their conditions would improve significantly. Compared to the difficulties they encounter, however, the assistance they get is very small indeed.

As Blaug (quoted in Kidd 1999: 23) also rightly contends, "allowances (for the needy) were too meager to constitute a viable alternative to gainful employment" even in Britain of the 19th century. Welfare allowances paid to recipients in the U.S. did only a little to cover basic needs. Members of such families have to work because they are not able to maintain themselves on public assistance alone (Francis-Okongwu 1996, Kozol 1995). They are compelled to take this option even if it meant that they went against the rules of welfare agencies, which threatened or actually severed them from welfare rolls when they were found working when they were above a certain income levels (see Edin

and Jencks 1997). The poor engage in a number of income-generating activities that are both legal and illegal in order to survive.

Narco-trafficking is, for instance, an illegal practice; but it is a validated practice to those involved in the underground economy. It brings 'riches' to those that are 'smart' in their own ways. Kozol's (1995: 119-122) interviews provide insights on how the 'underworld of drugs' works. His informers come out with markedly detailed descriptions of the environment. Narco-traffickers use elaborate organizational procedures to guide their business operations. For instance, their organization calls conferences where disciplines in the sales were points of discussion. Kozol (1995) dwells on such issues. Kozol (1995:119) informs us that the traffickers' rules stress that 'dealing' should not take place in front of children and in front of certain stores. According to Kozol, such issues were discussed in meetings the traffickers held.

They describe the drug-lords (a certain Calderon is one of them) as intelligent and ones who can be successful in 'honest' occupations (p. 119). These 'lords' carved out street corners and let them out to drug dealers. Dues had to be paid every Sunday. Failure to pay (it was referred to as debt to the drug-lord) led to questioning and torture sessions in special rooms, basements of stores. Certain individuals were given corners that they managed and worked for a rental of $4,000 a week (Kozol, p. 121).

The rentals of 'business corners' by powerful drug-lords who earn up to $200,000 a year suggests that that serious businesses are undertaken in the under world of drugs. The drug lords earned an estimated total of 2 million dollars a year even with cuts on or losses in business corner sales.

The compartmentalization of the blocks into discrete sales segments and/or areas bring to mind the regionalization that takes place among food dealers, bookseller representatives and others who supply the retail business of the American society. The retailers in this instance also were the dealers the drug-lord assigned to stand out in the corner (p. 21). Kozol's informers only speculated about the reasons why some citizens took the underground economic route to make money.

The Puerto Rican organization, modeled on the Black Panthers, was splintered in the 1970s or 1980s by authorities in the government, they say. According to the interviewee, the cause for the reversion to drug dealing took place following the break-up of this organization. Some among the poor thus work in legal and illegal sectors of work.

Such empirical data, discussed above, thus erode the validity of the arguments conservative groups hoist to show that public assistance recipients in particular are lazy. In fact, a number of studies show that these individuals at times are compelled to work on two jobs to survive and put in 50% more time to work than average Americans working on regular jobs (Kweit and Kweit 1999, Edin and Jenks 1992). Social science and, specifically anthropology can study these kinds of experiences to connect conservative politicians, some academic theorists and the general public with the real world of work and welfare. The point that Gans (in Marger1997: 72) makes with regard to the positive functions of poverty is helpful to appreciate the point more fully here. The better off in society, Gans reminds us, inadvertently turn around the negatives of poverty to their advantage. For instance, the poor buy bread and other food items that is about to expire in the stores. The poor also are living examples by which the rich measure their wellbeing against. He also contends that the poor finance the rich and provide them with invaluable

services all the time. A reflection on these points can make a difference for a clearer understanding of the stereotypical concepts relating to poverty and welfare and problems associated with them.

6. The Continuing Debate on the Effects of Welfare and Its Reform

Welfare programs were initially designed to protect those people without enough survival resources in industrialized countries (Fieldstein quoted in Atkinson 1999: 5), Anderson and Ishwaran 1965: 132). Katz (1995: 56) equates welfare as the alleviation of distress: the prevention of death from starvation, homelessness, the lack of clothing and disease. Katz (1995: 14) reminds us that assistance to the unfortunate poor has persisted through modern American history. What was then identified as 'outdoor relief' is now given a new and updated vocabulary of welfare? Distortions resulting from economic growth and cyclical economic crises conditions have traditionally called on society to reach out and assist those affected in the process. Katz questions why welfare should be defined separate from social security, which he says, is a legitimate institution in spite of the fact that the two are not fundamentally different. He blames the New Deal distinctions between social insurance and public welfare the results of which havocked the lives of the poor. This distinction between the two sub-programs "blocked the creation of a comprehensive program of economic security to protect all citizens" (p. 56).

There was a legitimate reason for the creation of the welfare programs at first. After the stock market crash of 1929, many people were without work. Families were in dire straits. There was no credible institution to foot the bills for reducing the suffering. It was not only private individuals and families that were hit by the crash, but also people

who belonged to the middle class and business owners (Kweit and Kweit 1999: 404; Anderson and Ishwaran 1965: 132). This, in a sense, demonstrated two points. First that the Great Depression as a consequence of its effect on the middle class changed attitudes and led to the redefinition of why people were poor and who in society was responsible for aiding the poor (Ibid.). Second, businesses, on whose behalf today's privatization drives are sanctified and hence vigorously advocated as to the solution to the poverty problem have increasingly been susceptible to the shocks crises conditions brought with them.

Social welfare was thus a system under which the state apportioned resources for those members of society who led a precarious life of some temporary or semi-permanent nature. The resulting hardship is usually a consequence of loss of employment, for example, or a permanent impairment due to some accident/occurrence in their lives. Any measure that blocked this deserved benefit for those who really need it was considered by many as tantamount to affecting the welfare of society or the common good. The legitimacy of the intervention can be construed from two angles. First, narrowly viewed, it is concerned with the most dependent citizens who may be physically and mentally incapacitated (Epstein 1997: 12-13). Second, and broadly defined, it may encapsulate a wider number of people who lead a precarious social existence and hence are at risk of poverty and dependency. Its broader meaning reflects the notion of public good encompassing the relationships among citizens and between them and their government (Epstein 1997).

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity reconciliation Act of 1996 ended the welfare system, as it was known in the U.S. for over half a century. It was indeed a drastic measure that has affected many individuals and families.

The poor were not only blamed for their poverty, but attempts to relieve them were also subjected to harsh criticisms. The state's attempts to help this segment of the American population were continually opposed by conservative groups. President Reagan, other government officials and many scholars, inter alia, spoke about the damaging effects of welfare programs at every opportunity they got. Reagan even went as far as instilling an image of 'welfare queens' driving Cadillacs (Kweit and Kweit 1999: 409, see also Becker, in Lipset 1990: 135-136, and Farmer quoted in Collins 1996: 64). The usual explanations advanced were, of course, that the programs have made people lazy and dependent (Gilder 1981; Murray 1984; Mead 1986). Gilder staunchly argued that the welfare state, as a source of dependency, should be trimmed down and welfare as a system should be made unattractive; it should be hard on the 'undeserving poor' who tend to overstay the welfare rolls' (1981: 111, 126). Murray simply compares the poverty rate in the 1950s to those after the initiation of the war on poverty programs to attack the welfare system. His major point here was that the number of the poor was rising even as the gross national product was increasing after these programs were initiated. This, for him, was simply an indication that the antipoverty programs were not working and/or that they were causing poverty, and as such they should be dismantled.

Mead (1986), in an effort to nip welfare in the bud, even went to the extent of assigning a limited role for the government—one of creation and maintenance of order. It is not for government, he declares, to "protect civil rights and liberties, raise the standard

of living or enhance democratic participation." Though, this was an uncalled role for the state, he argues, the nation has established a system of welfare that has unduly given many people the right to collect resources without working. He maintains that the system has led to voluntary unemployment when job seekers do not usually meet a situation where an extended lack of jobs is a reality.

The main thrust of these groups' arguments related to the burdens welfare programs entailed to the economy. Atkinson (1999) and Kweit and Kweit (1999) summarize this view, which underlines the point that any redistribution of resources from those who work to those who do not negatively affects the overall economy. In other words, distribution of resources collected from those who work through progressive taxation limits the ability of those who like to invest and create jobs, so goes the argument. A reduction of taxes for the rich will create jobs, according to Gilder (1981). For Gilder, this approach is the most effective way of reducing poverty. Atkinson (1999: 5) finds this argument to be one sided as it focuses only on the "impact of the welfare state on economic performance to the virtual neglect of the functions of the welfare (of society) it is intended to perform". The debate needs further pursuit. What could anthropology contribute in this debate? Below, an attempt will be made to set the argument in its proper perspective and tie this in with what anthropology may contribute to throw more light at the complex issue.

7. What Could Anthropology's Contributions Have Been in the Debate in the Discourse on Poverty and Welfare?

The conservative-liberal debates mainly provided the framework for the policies that removed the safety net for the poor in the U.S. in 1996. Besides becoming the Reagan

'Administration's Bible', Murray's book (1986: 70), *Losing Ground,* was read widely, internationally as well. Murray's perspectives were so important that he was invited to a congressional hearing on welfare. After the riots of 1991, he also appeared on British TV screens and hammered the point that single-mothers were the causes of most of the welfare dependency he observed (MacGregor 1995: 18). The cost of financing the programs was the underlying reason for the attack as Murray (1995: 20, in 'Gaining Ground') reveals. As Ferguson and Dickens (1999) and Kweit and Kweit (1999) also suggest, the cost of financing the programs was the main reason for attacking the safety net programs. The favorable attitude shown toward the program for widowed and abandoned women whose number was initially small and whose cost was negligible is a case in point. The stern measures that were taken to the point of dismantling the AFDC program which benefited close to five million single mothers at a great deal of cost later changed the favorable attitude into a hostile one (Murray in Gaining Ground 1995). But the argument is couched in characterological terms blaming the single mothers instead of the financial burden the program entailed.

A combination of several factors, however, may be given as the immediate factors that helped expedite the cancellation of the welfare programs. Selective learning of social facts by conservatives (Collins 1996; MacGregor 1995); retreat of the liberal camp from the intervention programs (Berrick 1995) are given as some of the reasons for the retrenchment of the welfare state. Shifting of industrial production and competition practices, both internally and internationally (Kearney 1995), is another significant factor that paved the way for the rollback of the welfare state. Anthropologists, for sure, did not have enough participation in this public policy debate that terminated the program. One

of the reasons given was that the welfare program did not lend itself to their established methodology and analysis specifically used to study the traditional simple society to which Kaplan and Manners (1986: 129-130) make a reference to.

How the social welfare system worked or what set of problems gave rise to the service and why it continued are questions that are basic and anthropological; that is, these questions are ones that can be entertained by anthropologists. The discipline has the conceptual and methodological tools to do wide-ranging researches in the area. What Kaplan and Manners identify as a self-imposed limitation of anthropology's studies to the traditional methods of fieldwork and small-scale societies constricted the discipline's ventures into other areas of investigations (1986: 201) like poverty and welfare. This is a pertinent observation. Social welfare, though, linked to broader social processes, is also a specific problem, that may be profitably studied in its own right using the participant observation methodology.

As Susser (1996: 411) also observes correctly, anthropology, nonetheless, has done very little to study, theorize and explain the growing immiseration of the poor and the American worker in the 'midst of corporate wealth'. While recognizing challenging issues like 'identities, perceptions, tourism, shifting worlds, and cyberspace' appropriate for theorizing about advanced capitalism, anthropologists did not find the incidence of poverty deserving of much of their attention (Ibid.: 212). Susser makes though the point that urban problems were not totally neglected by anthropologists (Ibid., 422-4). But she intimates that anthropologists (Ibid.), inter alia, have written specific issues of identity, hostilities in poor neighborhoods, racial discrimination, and poverty among women and men. These remained though at case study levels and no theorizing was attempted in

order to have a broader perspective on such problems. Curtis puts this issue in context (1999: 105). He points out that failure by anthropologists to establish the "vertical links that connect the social groups they (anthropologists) study" with the macro-processes created gaps in our understanding of the issues involved.

If anthropologists were a party to the heated welfare discourses during the past two decades, they would have spoken to important poverty and welfare issues. This means that they could have used the power of their comparative and interpretive perspectives that encapsulate the discipline's major preoccupation of 'human concern' (Spiro in Marcus 1992: 143) a great deal to make a difference. They could also have used their useful methodology of ethnography to challenge the assumption-based 'personal habit' stereotypical concepts stuck to the poor and welfare recipients. These character labels, impressed upon victims, could have been redefined in everyday life, cultural and social structural terms.

Entry into the debate could also have prompted discussions of issues relating to the factor(s) paving the way to poverty in the family. Carol Stack's (1974) work about a Midwestern neighborhood on welfare; Bourgeois's (1989) discussion of a community in East Harlem, some of whose members used the underground economic route, though illegal, to gain 'superior wages' rather than wallow in poverty are worth mentioning in this regard. Kozol's (1995, see chapters 4 and 5 or pp. 141-230 in particular) graphic description of life of families and their children, in the Bronx, New York, against all odds, is another work that may whet the appetites of anthropologists toward the engaging in research related to poverty. These consisted of families in which resilient mothers and grandmothers "in whom one finds spiritual strength unknown to most other Americans"

(Cornel West quoted in Kozol 1995: 160). Such ethnographies could have provided empirical data to challenge the non-empirical works of Murray (1984) and Mead (1986), among others. Journalists, one group that holds the key to discourse, Kozol 's (1995: 188) book reveals, following his interviewees' talks, do not deny the pulverizing effects of poverty. But instead these journalists' articles make references to poverty in passing, in a way that makes it sound too obvious to warrant indignation. The conservative scholars, however, argue that the poor must be forced to work even if the work does not pay much in order to stop them from claiming welfare support. Their worry is clearly the financial rather than the human side of the problem.

Carol Stack (1974), an anthropologist, lived among a black community (in what was fictitiously known as Jackson Harbor, a Midwestern city between Chicago and the Southern states) in the mid-1960s. Her work informs us that welfare benefits "barely provide(d) the necessities of life—a bed, rent and food"—for recipient families. These benefits, writes Stack, allocated to households of women and children, were further channeled into domestic networks of men, women and children. Whatever the source of the incomes—welfare checks or wages form labor, the community in The Flats, the site of Stack's study, were turned into loan funds or traded or swapped with others in order to obtain daily necessities.

This is an indication of how small welfare benefits were made use of not only by the recipients, but also by kin and friends who were joined together in a network of relations to survive. But for those who did not get the chance to see this play out in concrete life situations, welfare benefits seem to constitute big incomes for the recipients and drains to the national economy.

These opportunities of redirecting the debate were missed by anthropologists and many other social scientists too. The impact of the withdrawal of the welfare programs has now led to sufferance of millions of people across America as the statistics cited earlier indicate. Their problem affects all Americans irrespective of their social backgrounds. As new realities kick in, views also change. Moynihan, who wrote of the family among blacks in 1965, was later reported to have revised his thesis in the 1990s. His new conclusion is that the breakdown of families that he attributed to blacks applies to all families in all segments of the American society (cited in Cross 2003: 71).

What can anthropologists do now to reengage society that has already made up its mind on the basis of the biased and selective discussions of the social issues of poverty, welfare and workfare? It seems that anthropologists can conduct studies on the current conditions of, say, for instance, families and children in poverty, and attempt to provide empirical data and help (re)inform and (re)construct policy anew. Perhaps they can make a strenuous effort to convince funding agencies and foundations to apportion some research money allocated to studies which, Kozol (1995: 150) says, are unjustly apportioned for studies of "IQ deficits of certain children and their racial origins." He notes that when there are more important grinding problems of poverty, such as in the Bronx, where the existence of lead poison in the homes of school children is a clear priority (Ibid.), grants made for IQ studies are a luxury.

Anthropologists can pursue studies like those of the women (both African American and European American) with children in Worcester, whose unique survival effort to fight their economic and political marginalization in their daily lives, paid off considerably (Savage 1996 quoted by Gilbert, in Jonas and Wilson 1999: 101-102). Here

women (AFDC recipients) in a second to none activism and insight ever seen, met regularly in homes of some of their own and started a baby-sitting coop, food coop and clothing and transportation exchange (Gilbert, Jonas and Wilson 1999: 100) to help each other. The neighborhood organization later gave them a place to hold their meetings from where they applied for a grant and run the services of the independently founded organization on their own (Ibid.) Anthropologists can also curve out some advocacy/activist roles within the new social movements that are attempting to forge coalitions in order to combat poverty.

The 'personal defect' explanations supplied by the poverty-welfare theorists harped the point that the victims were feckless, worthless, and without moral fiber. Writers in this area did not attempt to go back and inquire into the circumstances that led to these stereotypical definitions stuck on them. In so doing, these scholars have disregarded the past and have thus failed to fully explain why recipients behave the way they do. Kaplan and Manner's understandings that the past cannot be ignored when one attempts to figure out present conditions (1986: 70) of behavior or event substantiates the argument here. Why welfare resources began to be distributed in the first place seemed not to matter to the conservative theorists and their allies regardless of the fact that the 1929 market crash did affect millions of working people including businesspersons. The major point that conservatives repeatedly made with respect to the problem, however, was that welfare recipients were deficient in character terms and that punitive measures should be taken against them so they would be prepared to go off the welfare rolls. Such a circumscribed and deterministic look at the conditions of recipients in temporal terms constitutes a snapshot, or to use an anthropological jargon, 'synchronic', look at the current problem of

the poor ? welfare recipients. This approach, to use, di Leonardo's (1999: 408) interpretation, describes the current problems of the subjects with no reference to their conditions in the past. In contrast, an examination of the life histories of the recipients, or the changes they undergo, might have taken the conservative theorists to totally different conclusions. This is what is known as, to use another anthropological terminology, a diachronic or an 'across time' analysis of change (Ibid.).

The 'character theory' proponents' explanations also become even more tenuous when other variables are brought into the model explaining the hyphenated poverty-welfare problem. Critical variables such as social and economic inequality, (Hurst 1995, Berrick 1994), lack of means of transportation (MacGregor et al 1995, 1987; Curtis and McLellan 1995), are some of the factors that explain poverty. Also racial discrimination (Ferguson and Dickens 1999), economic crisis (Timmer et all 1994; Kearney 1995); lack of organization and/or empowerment (Bourgois 1989, MacGregor 1995) and other factors are responsible for the existence of poverty and these factors show why many poor people stay poor and seek public assistance.

As mentioned in Section 2 (9) of Chapter 2, in terms of transportation, for instance the poor are usually incapable of commuting to work if they find employment outside their residential or geographic area (MacGregor et al 1995: 5). For Wilson (1987) also lack of transportation limits job opportunities for the destitute. As the poor have lower rates of car ownership or face difficulties in using the limited range of public, transport service (Curtis and MacLellan 1995), their chances of helping themselves to be self-sufficient is minimal.

Cyclical recessions, depressions, deindustrialization, social marginalization and exclusion of the poor from socioeconomic and political life constituted other factors that inhibited access possibilities of the poor to jobs (Berrick 1995, Kweit and Kweit 1999, Timmer et al 1994, MacGregor 1995, Wilson 1987). But in spite of these realities the welfare theorists were not convinced that the labor market faces a great deal of shortcomings affecting job availability.

Poverty in the U.S. has been a difficult problem to deal with. Several attempts by the state, as evidenced by the 'Great Society'/'War on Poverty' programs were, for instance, declared in order to eradicate it. But intervening variables such as financial outlay considerations and the fear that such public sector programs would negatively affect economic growth were in the way of a smooth running of the programs. These factors plus the view that the poor are expendable and that they have no resources of their own to make campaign contributions to political parties compels a relegation of their cases to the background.

The option left for the poor is thus to organize themselves and struggle for their rights. Their number makes them a potential political force. But their inability to organize themselves with relative ease makes it easy for the 'governing coalition' to ignore their (the poor persons') concerns and their quiet appeals (Kweit and Kweit 1999: 403). By becoming part of an appreciably conscious working class, the disadvantaged/poor can achieve a measure of rights that, among other things, enable them to obtain employment. For this to happen, the support of the middle class, inter alia, (my emphasis) which works usually hard for the realization of democracy is essential (Huber, in Etzioni-Halevy 1997: 147). Those groups, which are at the mercy of the wealthy

segments of the society, can benefit a lot by organizing themselves as a block. The need for social movements thus becomes a necessity.

8. A Critique of the Conservative Argument

Powerful voices in the political machinery and outside made the point that welfare made people dependent. Additionally, their arguments went, it (welfare) eroded resources that others worked for and needed to keep them for themselves (Collins 1996, Katz 1989). Mostly those who have been fortunate enough to be awash in resources have been the ones who questioned welfare's logic. This questioning is not prompted without good reason. As Burch (1999: 243) cogently argues, social welfare, as a "discretionary spending choice...providing basic necessities for the poor" turns out to be a factor that "reduces the net income of those more fortunate tax payers can spend on themselves."

The welfare system seems to have been criticized mostly by those who have been little affected by poverty, that is, those who did not have the opportunity to closely observe dependent families and how they live from day to day. Judgments about such households and their members were untoward.

These scholars, Mead and Gilder, for instance, were among the hard-core supporters for the rollback of the welfare state and/or limitation of the state to its bare bones. Astoundingly enough, these were political scientists (Murray and Mead) and Gilder (a moralist). Other social scientists did not make much of an impact on the debate. Anthropologists, for instance, were not involved much in this raging debate.

Katz (1995) has expressed his reservations about the shrinkage of welfare rolls that he says do not set people, single mothers, "on the road to independence." He argues that

"education, a living wage and good job prospects" are typical measures that help in removing the problem. He adds that the strategy of "bumping people off welfare rolls" is an act of sending the poor into "low wage, dead-end, temporary jobs or on to the streets."

The whole conservative project of ending assistance to the poor was critiqued by authors like Atkinson (1999) who alerted us to the fact that the welfare problem should be viewed from two angles. He concedes that the economic costs tied to welfare may be hurting some groups, those who take the brunt of the share of tax transfers. But, he adds, the benefits in terms of 'social objectives' are gorgeous. He contends that welfare state programs were instituted to meet social goals whose purposes would be jeopardized if they were cut or eliminated altogether. As Fieldstein (quoted in Atkinson 1999:5) has also put it in context, such reform seeks to protect those who "do not work for any good reason, is justifiable". Any just welfare state not only redistributes resources, but also serves to 'even out differences, achieve greater equality between generations' and "redresses inequality by race, gender or health status" (Atkinson, p. 5-6).

Efforts were made by both conservatives and liberals to connect welfare recipients with the world of work. This was necessitated by the fact that the welfare caseload of single parent families rose by leaps and bounds and consumed a substantial portion of the welfare budget after the 1970s. For instance, in 1995, 4.9 million families or 14.6 million individuals received AFDC and nearly three-fourths of the recipients were children under 18 years of age (Seccombe 1999:14). This shows that the assumptions made about welfare recipients by conservative groups were misleading in as far as their arguments gave the impression that the population category consisted of adults.

The behavioral defect theories so repeatedly advanced by theorists who follow the conservative line of thinking fall in this category. They have at least three common features that may describe them. First, they are simplistic because of their disregard for the heterogeneity of the population of the poor. Secondly, the theories tend to generalize from insufficient and selective data. Lastly, their approaches, in a sense, offer them shortcuts to quickly establish their position on the reforms that they seek.

Such arguments of conservatism have resulted in controversies that eventually led to the elimination of the safety net for poor single mothers and their children after 1996. But no sooner was the safety–net 'partially' eliminated than transfer of resources through a third party (charities and voluntary agencies) was thought about and advocated by the state itself. What all this indicates is the rush with which measures are taken and fence mending is resorted to perhaps at costs that have had stupendous, overt and covert, dimensions.

As Bourdieu (in Wacquant 1992: 27-35) puts it cogently, observations that fail to see the hidden and/or changing realities, invite hasty conclusions that can have detrimental effects on beneficiaries. Wilk (in Ensminger 2002: 245-49) sees the problem in terms of what he calls 'high theories' that are too 'abstract and too pure' such that they will not:

> produce directly testable statements about the world.
> Instead they provoke reductionism and consistency at the
> expense of reality....

As Katz (1995: 8-9) also curtly observed, grand theories, the personal deficiency thesis in the case of this research, "simplify and distort (realities, my emphasis) by imposing a false consistency..." based on experiences understood in particular ways.

Anthropology, as the study of the individual in group contexts, social relations and structure, culture and change at the grassroots level, can contribute toward the correction of the flaws in the explanations that are tilted toward behavioral dimensions. These kinds of explanations have built up biases against the system that served as a temporary social insurance to those who are commonly hit by hardships in times of semi-permanent economic busts in particular. Rsissman (1962: 2-3) puts the problem in context when he says that poor people have their own ways of doing things efficiently and that these ways are learned from coping with difficult environments that they are immersed in their daily lives.

Anthropologists made credible contributions to the understanding of persistent poverty in the U. S. in the 1970s and 1980s (Curtis et al 1995). But their micro-level studies on poverty and ethnicity and their neglect of the vertical links of these to the macro processes grossly limited their contributions (Curtis 1999: 105) to provide any meaningful resolution to the problem. According to Ensminger (2002: x) also despite anthropology's pertinent theories that provide credible explanations to such issues as poverty, the fact that it lacks the "bottom-up" understanding of the fundamental causes of poverty and dependency of single mother parents (this research), makes its uses less effective. In the late 1980s and 1990s, however, Curtis explains, broader issues of change in the realm of political economy have engaged the attention of many anthropologists. One of the main points that have emerged out of some of anthropology's studies is the recognition of the value of the discipline's "concepts, methods and analytical styles in explaining the ways in which changes in the political economy reshape community and family life," (Curtis 1999: 106-107). The enviable

characterization of political economists: that they should seek to 'understand and should contribute to the real world concerns' (Whalen in Whalen 1996: 18) should apply to the work of anthropologists.

Anthropological perspectives and concepts and an increased attention to the plight of the poor thus may serve as a corrective to the conservative position that declares that the poor are responsible for what may be described as their 'self-inflicted' problems. The liberal camp could strengthen its case for the support for education and training, critical factors that it advocated belong to the assistance packages, relief and long-term, that would eventually enable SMPs become self-sufficient. Such studies would also serve as a counterpoise to the partially biased outlooks of opponents of social programs.

Michael Harrington's (1962) work on poverty stirred the thinking of those in power (Kennedy and other national leaders, for instance), and this, among other studies, eventually led to the measure of waging a war on poverty in America. Frank Reisseman's (1962) piece on the plights of the deprived child supplemented Harrington's thesis that those who could not help themselves for reasons beyond their capacities deserve to be helped. Reissman made a note of the fact that any culture had positive characteristics of enabling people to devise ways of coping with their everyday problems and that given some support any people are capable of changing their circumstances for the better. These perspectives did help in the construction of the fundamental thesis for the war on poverty programs. A continuation of such discourses was lacking after the War on Poverty programs were initiated and implemented in the decades following the 1960s. Anthropology could have contributed a lot toward easing the conservative backlash against the social programs set up to help the poor. Similarly, today anthropologists can

go aboard the discussion forum on the question and help change the views of those who defiantly look at the other side of the problem and prop up their own positions in these times of serious challenges to the liberal position. One of the purposes of this dissertation research, as indicated in the introduction, is to give a bird's eye view of the struggle single mother parents with children make every day to make ends meet and ultimately achieve self-sufficiency. Many of these mothers make extraordinary efforts to work within the framework of job opportunities made available by the state and/or concoct their own to get by despite a severe shortage of work opportunities to earn livable wages.

9. Workfare: Main ideas and concerns

Workfare was a new concept brought into the lexicon of the welfare-dependency debate. It was a shorthand term closely linked to the coercive Community Work Experience Program (CWEP) and one associated with the Community Work Incentive or WIN (Epstein 1997: 48-49). It constituted a mechanism that imposed work requirements on recipients who had to work off their welfare grants (Murray 1984, Mead 1986). Recipients were, in other words, required to work, even in 'make work jobs', in exchange, for receiving benefits (Katz 1989: 225; Mead 1986). It was also looked at as a synthesis of the "guilt-inspired good intentions of the Great Society that stressed, compassion, empowerment and entitlement" (Katz, ibid.) and the "deep and strong Calvinist tradition of hard work in the U.S. (Nathan 1987: 60-61). Mead, one of the outspoken conservative critics of the welfare program, wrote extensively on the need for a strong work component that tied welfare benefits to work requirements. He was for punitive measures that would lead to denial of assistance in case of non-compliance to the

workfare scheme by recipients. His views on WIN and workfare undergirded the conservative position (Epstein 1997: 49)

But in the 1990's Mead seemed to have softened his position on the denial of assistance to those who did not participate in 'workfare.' Though it did not greatly improve earnings, nor reduced welfare rolls, Mead says in his revised view (cited in Epstein 1997), it did substantially increase work activity and helped to develop greater self-confidence.

Workfare initiatives were taken by many states (Arkansas and West Virginia, for example) that were out to help people to obtain employment and subsequently leave the welfare rolls. The Manpower Demonstration Corporation (MDRC) measured workfare programs' achievements through a study of some eight states in the mid-1980s (Katz 1989: 226). Although these states' workfare programs had some positive outcomes, the schemes "neither moved people out of poverty nor did they enable them to develop adequate skills." As such conclusions made about them reflected a guarded optimism on their successes.

A similar outcome was registered for Arkansas, San Diego, Virginia, West Virginia and Baltimore after three years of experience (Katz 1989: 223-235). The Wisconsin experiment, conducted between 1989 and 1993, set an example for workfare initiatives in other states. This particular state decreased its welfare rolls by 3 percent while the caseload nationally was 29 percent (*The Economist,* February 4, 1998). Successes and limitations of workfare are yet to be seen.

Efforts in Michigan have helped a little over 50 percent of welfare recipients in the state to get employment and disengage themselves from the rolls between 1992 and 1999

(Interview with Sorbet, Communication Department Head, Family Independence Agency (FIA), December 23, 1999). This is a notable achievement and one that is used to publicize and valorize the workfare program. By the end of 2003 and 2004, the number has gone down even further (interview with Janet Strope, another official of the Family Independence Agency, February 20, 2004). Strope said that the FIA does know how many recipients have gone off the welfare rolls in Michigan; and that what the conditions of these people are after being cut off the system is not known.

Some recipients with young children continue to receive welfare checks and participate in workfare programs. Some others have jobs. But there are those who may not be working. No information is available about the last category.

Still, compared with the politically successful programs of social security and Medicare, Skocpol, Weir and Orloff (1987) reveal the program may face severe difficulties (see quote in Katz 1989: 231). Their concern relates to the complexity of the management of workfare compared with the "broadly targeted, bureaucratically unobtrusive, and administratively simple social security program" (Ibid.). According to these writers, the social security program "remains popular and politically unassailable because it benefits every one". AFDC, the main category linked to workfare, on the other hand, continues to gather hostility and remains vulnerable as it targets a currently destitute group of families (Ibid.). Social security earners in contrast move from work to entitlement by virtue of their past contributions to the social good through past work.

As it is targeted at the very poor with little or no work background, workfare participants will continue to be stigmatized, in the views of Skocpol et al. This, they say, happens because the stigma from welfare is transferred with the subjects from their

welfare life history. One African American woman who applied for a job reports that she was labeled a "dummy" and/or 'stupid" for being in the welfare rolls (Seccombe 1999: 56-61). She felt she was denied the job for this reason (Ibid.).

The training and education and other benefits they get during their transition to the work world raises opposition from those working, that is, those among the near poor or economically depressed groups, situated a little above their level. More importantly, those displaced heavy industry workers show opposition to the program on the grounds that the favor done to those on welfare in terms of training excludes others, meaning those who are not on the rolls. This means that those workers who are dismissed because of their failure to be abreast with the cutting edge technology are not given the resources to update their skills like those on welfare. Workfare participants, Skocpol et al, further contend, also might depress labor costs by easing labor shortages in unskilled low-wage jobs thus affecting the living standards of wage earners, specially in the unionized industries. Since most of he AFDC participants are women and disproportionately African American, at that, a special and partial measure to find them jobs raises opposition and hostility to them from the other gender groups (black males as well) and/or racial categories.

These arguments demonstrate that groups whose interests are at stake freely create stereotypes. The wage earners in the above discussion did not want to see new laborers elbow their (the established workers') way into their 'protected' spaces and lower the living wage that eventually affects their wellbeing. Others who like to see welfare expunged from the system are taxpayers. These want their tax-dollars spent on themselves rather than on welfare recipients. In a sense, the heaping of labels on the poor

and welfare recipients emanate from such sub-texts or hidden transcripts, to use Gidden's (1990) noted handy term couched in such stereotypes as 'lazy' or lacking in effort, 'feckless', lacking in thrift and proper money management, possessing no talent or ability and loose morals and drunkenness (see Kweit et al 1999: 402), and so on, thrown at the poor.

Poverty, as we saw above, thus drew hostility from those who usually have the wherewithal. Welfare, a remedy thought to eliminate it was even more disliked for the reason that it was financed through taxes 'unfairly' taken from working citizens. Workfare that is meant to make those in welfare self-sufficient also faced rejection because it favored a segment of the society vis-a-vis others, workers mainly, who would welcome such assistance if it were given to them. The privilege it bestowed on welfare recipients created an ill feeling on the part of workers who consequently stigmatized the recipients.

A generation of stigmas thus follows the poor-welfare-recipient-workfare participants as they move from one stage of dependency to the next. At the same time efforts to reduce poverty are going on. Welfare and workfare mechanisms, intended to uplift the poor themselves, became markers of dependency and stigma. Additionally, their lives are put under a constant surveillance to deter them from their personal and habitual problem or from their social cum individual pathologies, as Polakow, in her study of single-mothers in Michigan, shows (in Mink, 1993). This approach of treating citizens who are expected to be self-reliant defeats the whole purpose of eliminating poverty. Unless welfare and workfare stigmas are peeled off and the efforts of the recipients are dignified, any program initiated to do good to the participants and society

in the ultimate sense would not achieve its noble goal. Polakow's (in Cozic et al, 1997: 2, internet copy) single mother interviewee (Deborah) in Michigan sums it all when she says that the frustrating stigmas stuck on them tempts them to do something harsh to themselves in order to "drown the pain" or even commit suicide.

Recipients are allowed a possession of $1,500 in assets and a car worth $1,500 in order to qualify for welfare. These are meager assets. Logical as it may seem; this level of asset cut-off point leads to a situation of fraudulence for one thing. And it becomes an obstacle to the recipient who may try to improve him/herself. A recipient who is not confident about the job market would tend to work around the cut-off point with a little effort to 'enlarge' her/his income. It encourages fraud as well. In fact, some recipients go to the extent of using their parents' names for ownership of cars that they use (Seccombe 1999: 195). This is detrimental to both the dependent recipient and society at large.

What can the poor, welfare recipients and workfare participants, as citizens, do to minimize the suffering they are exposed to as a consequence of the termination of the safety net that took away their rights and the stereotypes that are imposed upon them? Some of the means that they can use are the creation of organizations that can represent them in their struggle to achieve a degree of equality and enable them to realize their goals of finding good-paying jobs. Additionally, they have to forge alliances with other groups in society, namely social movements, in order to participate in the work of introducing reform to the ways institutions work. (Section 8, Chapter 7 also deals with this issue). Chapter 4, section 2 looks at the impacts of workfare or 'work first' in Michigan toward the latter part of the 1990s. Chapter 3 below deals with historical issues in welfare.

CHAPTER 3

THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL WELFARE AS IT RELATES TO SINGLE MOTHERS IN THE U.S

SECTION 1: GOVENRMENT INTERVENTION

1. Background

In this chapter, the central question addressed is how and why government began to intervene, to reduce inequality and provide assistance to poor single mothers and how much this intervention has or has not helped this category of population of the poor to be self-sufficient, thus reducing the burden of further assistance. The state did turn itself into a mammoth change agent by transferring resources to those war veterans and/or their families that participated in the American Civil War.

The progressive era, a period in which victim workers of the industrial revolution were affected as a result of their contact with risky jobs, ushered in a new era of care for those who labored. Workers needed the support of their wives in order to be productive, hence the beginning of support for women staying at home and taking care of the children.

The 1929 stock market crash was, in a sense, a time that helped initiate programs of support to families of workers who lost their jobs because of the crisis. The 'war on poverty' program was also one intervention that made a difference in the lives of mothers. Over time, many single-mothers were able to secure welfare that supplemented their meager incomes, or it became a major source of assistance that enabled some to go to school and build up their cultural or educational capital. Public welfare thus became a

tool for the pursuit of education, inter alia, which could not have been realized without this assistance.

In this chapter, I trace the beginnings of welfare programs for single mother parents from 1910, in particular, and I discuss the changing definitions and meanings that the concept has acquired as social welfare benefits were expanded to include more and more mothers that the framers of the institution did not clearly visualize. In addition, I discuss the problems that marred relations between institutions and recipients as well as others. The expansion of the program for single mother parents and the cost of the program has been the major bone of contention between those who saw the deleterious effects of the support system and those who considered it as a means of getting out of poverty. A discussion of the weaknesses and strengths of the social institution may help policy-makers reframe the approach in dealing with the issue of poverty and welfare that has been a cause of conflict (Kweit and Kweit 1999: 401) along ideological lines, that is, between the conservative and liberal positions. The inclusion of the ideas of the beneficiaries in the discourse on the subject of poverty and dependence, as in the case of this research and its use in crafting an improved social support system that not only provides temporary relief, but one that also assists beneficiaries achieve self-sufficiency, may help reduce the tensions that have pervaded social groups and the political life of the United States.

Social history as it relates to poor single mother parents in the United States may be distinctively considered to be a history of middle class women who struggled for or on behalf of destitute fellow mothers. Single mothers neither had the political power nor the resources needed for pressing the state to enact the right of protection of the mothers to

seek and obtain resources to feed, shelter and care for themselves and their children. Middle class women articulated the interests of the poor women. The struggle was waged in a bid to secure society's 'protection for working females and public benefits for poor mothers' (Wilkinson 1999:1, see also Katz 1989: 69-69, Jansson 1988).

The state was considered by some to be quite adamant about the problems of women's rights for a minimum living in spite of the fact that accidents in the mushrooming industries they worked for were imminent. The state also knew that other poor women who took care of children whose fathers had died in private homes. As Collins (1996: 34) cogently put it, national leaders chose to do little to reduce the 'inequality' that the social structural change industrialization brought with it.

When their husbands died, widows had no other option but to take some job that customarily paid meager amounts (Katz 1989: 67). As there were no public assistance programs, these mothers had to resort to family and charity assistance (Ibid) for the balance to maintain their households.

Skocpol (2000: 25-26), however, mentions that the state had approved and offered disability and old age pensions, job opportunities and social services to millions of veterans and survivors of the union armies that fought and won the American civil war. So, state support, on this count, goes back to the civil war era contradicting the claim that it started with the mothers' pension in 1910 or even the New Deal after 1929.

Single mother parents did not have the 'agency', to use Giddens, (1990, see also Kaspersen 2000: 30-40) apt terminology of their own, to demand support from the state following the loss of their breadwinner. The support that better-off women secured for them fell under the heading of widowed mothers and by extension their children (Skocpol

2000: 30-31). Although the program started for widows and their children (Ibid.) in time it extended the right to other mothers as well.

As such, mothers whose husbands deserted them, abandoned them or disowned them were allowed to join the class of benefit recipients, but with little credible income to feed themselves and their children (Skocpol 2000, Wilkinson 1999, Katz 1989). Other writers saw that this support was exclusive as it primarily served white widows (see for example, Handler and Hasenfeld 1991: 21). Around 1900, virtually any mother who lost her husband due to death and was hurt economically, qualified in spite of the claimed existence of discrimination (Skocpol 2000: 31). Skocpol documents that the programs were universal in their character and argued that their coverage crossed class, racial and regional (rural – urban) boundaries (Ibid.).

Skocpol notes that the U.S. Children's Bureau, established in 1912, became the agency that looked after the interests of widows and their children, irrespective of social and economic background. She mentions that the Sheppard–Towner Act of 1921 embedded the concept of support for not only the 'neediest' of mothers, but also for all American mothers (Skocpol 2000:31). The idea here was to link the right for state support to pensioner mothers and their children on a par with the right of each child to go to school under the broader right for public education (Ibid.)

Although this right was secured, the reality on the ground was different. Jansson's argument that what is enacted does not always bring dramatic changes that pave the way for securing benefits (see Jansson 1988: 98-99) is, in a sense, correct. Initially widows were preferred to any other type of mothers. They got more assistance compared with other categories of mothers. Herrick et al (in Dixon and Scheurell 2002: 94) reveal that

African-American mothers at some point were denied assistance as, for example, in New Orleans, Louisiana, under the pretext that they abused AFDC, and they were thus forced to eke out their earnings by working in the labor market (Levenstein, in JWH 2000).

It was this difficult situation mothers were in that influenced the initiation of advocacy for, and involvement in the pursuit of social provisioning for economically affected women and their children. The reasons for the call for the state to take responsibility was in part explained by the inability of 'voluntary' provisioning to address the unmet needs of social groups in the industrializing countries. This, according to Dixon and Scheurell (2002: 233), in time could have had the potential to threaten social and political life. The call for the state to step in was also partly explained by the natural responsibility of the state to support those in need as part of their citizenship rights of which the state is considered the repository. This state service to citizens was also found to be a means of stabilizing society and assuring its proper functioning. Others saw that the state had perforce to do this in order to appease the working class. Piven and Cloward (1997), for example, characterized the move by the state as a means of softening the working class that may well have changed the social structure by violent means as theorized by Marx.

Positions on this issue of the reluctance or willingness of the state to help single mothers and other poor persons differed. While some, as shown above, say that the state ignored the plight of the disadvantaged, others make the point that it had transferred a lot of resources to help them better their livelihood. Those who argue that the state had contributed a lot toward relieving poverty (Fugate and Orosz 1997: 86-88, Kweit and Kweit 1999-407, Anderson 1978: 15, 38) provide ample evidence of the types of

assistance and the amounts given to the poor over the years. The assistance provided has also been a good tool for opening up avenues for building up educational capital for not only the 'economically needy' but also for 'broad swathes of the citizenry' (Skocpol 2000: 30). Skocpol describes social security, including Medicare, as the 'best example(s) of social program (s)' benefiting all classes of employees in all sectors of the economy (Ibid: 31). This shows that the state, in a sense, has not evaded its social responsibility of helping those with dire need and less income.

But the issue takes a different meaning when the amount and type of assistance of aiding the poor, single mother parents in particular, the unit of analysis of this dissertation, becomes the subject of discussion. The assistance extended to the group of disadvantaged single mothers, defined as able-bodied and capable of working and earning their living, has been alleviative, or of short-term duration (Kweit and Kweit 1999: 404; Seccombe 1999). For example, the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program the centerpiece of which is 'work and employment preparation activities' has been described as expensive and hence capable of allowing only a limited number of participants to the fold each year (Handles and Hasenfeld 1991: 215-220). This program embodies within it transportation and other work related expenses including childcare that is crucial for recipients to make progress in their efforts to advance (Ibid: 212). These components are ones that this dissertation has found to be important to the welfare recipients interviewed for this research in Lansing.

This chapter poses three main questions relating to the plights of single mothers in the United States as they attempted to make ends meat on a daily basis. Did the position of women within the patriarchal system afford the opportunity to exercise their

citizenship rights as they related to getting support in times of need? Did the mothers have the capability to protect themselves from the vagaries of destitution? What was achieved for them through the intervention of others, the state mainly? What are they capable of doing for themselves now, given that primary (family and friends) and secondary sources (charities and the state) were only able to partially or temporarily assuage their sufferings?

2. Patriarchy, Power, the Position of Women and Their 'Protection'

Like many others, American society has been patriarchal to the detriment of the citizenship and the social rights of women. It was assumed that women's welfare was secured within the framework of the family. The husband was the provider and the role of women was to bear children and raise them, as well as take care of the organization of the family from the home front. In Britain's case, for instance, wives' financial and material contributions were not considered an important factor in the life of this primary social unit, that is, the family (Kidd 1999: 37). In mid 19th century America, however, women in the family supplied critical on-farm labor outside the circumscribed home front (Katz 1989: 66). According to this author they were also involved in household manufacture of clothing whose value declined precipitously in the first decades of the Nineteenth Century.

Before marriage, notes Katz (1989: 66-67), most women worked as domestic servants, worked in mills and a small number of them served as teachers as well as seamstresses. They also worked as entertainment girls inside and outside bars.

After marriage, Katz (1989: 67) relates that they mainly depended on incomes brought by husbands. They sometimes earned meager incomes from what Katz (Ibid.) calls 'customary' women's jobs and in small ways helped to raise and supplement their family's income. Their role in securing part of the family income was thus minimal, as much as their roles in the decision making process was marginal. Boxed in the household for a significant portion of their lives there was very little that they could do to avoid poverty when they were alone. They contributed only little toward the satisfaction of the needs of the family let alone taking the initiative to deal with the larger issues relating to inequality and poverty that affected their lives.

Confined to their households and overwhelmed by the responsibility culture had imposed on them, most single mothers did not get the chance to engage the state on their own behalf and terms. This role was thus taken for them, by default, by middle class women who were powerful and had the resources, time, influence and money, to methodically interact with the state and secure for them (the poor mothers) the social protection that they badly needed.

3. The Progressive Era and the Beginnings of Public Assistance to Poor Single Mothers/Widows and Others

The protection of women, poor women in particular, who suffered from lack of resources, was initiated in 1890's during what is commonly known as the Progressive Era (Herrick 2002: 209). During this period, progressive reformers advocated for government intervention in social welfare that before had been the domain of the private sphere — the family, neighborhood and community. There was only a limited amount of support forthcoming from the state, except within the workhouse framework, in the effort to

reduce poverty (Kidd: 1999: 152; Anderson and Ishwaran 1965: 131). Charity resources were not only small, but also uncertain in their distribution particularly during times of economic crises (Fugate 1997). The responsibility of provisioning, therefore, remained in the realm of the family and neighborhood that extended 'support and care in times of hardships, illness, incapacity and old age' (Kidd 1999: 152; Anderson and Ishwaran 1965: 128). The state, as the most powerful and rich social/political institution, had to come in to respond to the plights of those affected by circumstances beyond their control. Many widows and other categories of mothers were among the first to receive benefits from the state due to the loss of the breadwinner of the household owing to death and, earlier on, due to internal and international wars that the country was faced with.

Society more or less rewarded its war veterans. The demands made by World War II veterans for their maintenance, monetary rewards to be paid each month, (perturbing to politicians at first, see Skocpol 2000: 36-38, for an example) gave the springboard, among others, for the initiation of legislation to assist this group of people (veterans). The direct participants in these national security and defense activities were, by and large, beneficiaries of rewards that were instituted at various points of time. True enough, those demands translated into the funding of veterans' education, family allowance as well as loans and employment assistance for all returning from the front(s). Mothers' and/or SMPs' (who were the sources of this supply of fighters or military manpower) needs, however, were largely ignored. Their indirect contribution to all this was subjected to neglect or still worse earned them attributes of negative behavior—immoral, shiftless, lazy mothers who were thought of as conspirators in the production of children for no reason other than to obtain social assistance—that affected the public in general.

There is, of course, a strong correlation between public support and poor SMPs needs. Rather than seeing the link in relation to the cardinal principle that guided policy of 1910 toward widowed mothers who had no dependable place, family and/or charity, to turn to and hence, had to seek public support, those with the wherewithal began to stereotype the single mothers.

Government responsibility, according to Katz (1989: 68), considered an important source of assistance, however, "never reached more than a tiny fraction of eligible women." This support was expanded when, through the persistence of energetic women reformers, the federal government's children's Bureau managed to nationalize the mothers' pension concept in the form of Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) — a provision in the 1935 legislation that led to the birth of the social security system (Katz 1989: 68).

After World War II, the number of women pensioners increased as deceased war victims' wives were accorded pension rights, followed by those divorced by or separated from their husbands. A number of factors were responsible for this outcome. The dynamics that unleashed themselves in the context of the civil and welfare rights movements as well as the war on poverty programs can be cited as examples (Skocpol 2000: 44; Orloff in Hirschmann and Liebert 2001: 149 and Katz 1889: 68). The resultant policy initiatives taken were also credited for the move to create a semblance of equality among mothers, a large number of mothers who were denied social rights accorded to their peers. The 'suitable home' criterion which explained the exclusion was removed and mothers with children collected the benefits that were up to that time the sole entitlements put in place for a limited group of mothers, middle class and white.

Over time, the number of mothers who claimed support from the government increased owing to several factors. One of the reasons for the rise of the number of mothers who depended on public support was the decline in the demand for state unemployment compensation resulting from the fall in the unemployment rate (Ibid.).

Other reasons for the change in policy were the civil rights movement, the War on Poverty programs and the Welfare Rights Movement. Each of these factors led to changes in policy, according to Katz (1989: 68). These pressures compelled the state to allow mothers to apply and obtain public welfare with less difficulty. But such a free entry into the system was limited as the discourse on the issues surrounding the problem shows.

Benefits provided to single mothers were redefined as the decades progressed. So were also the fundamental reasons that gave rise to poverty conditions. Over the years, a broader swathe of mothers and children were able to gain from the hand out dispensed by the welfare state. What was later dubbed as abuse of the generosity of society by the 'undeserving poor,' however, led to the slow but debilitating retrenchment of the entitlement. This chipping away of state support later led to a dropping of large numbers of mothers from the rolls. The stringent measure did send many to the job world and to the primary sources of support (family and networks of friends) as well as charities that were usually unable to provide much in the way of satisfying the needs of many mothers. Some of those denied support from the state did find jobs that helped them survive.

However, there has never been satisfactory information about those who did not have adequate employment after leaving welfare or were attached to the primary sources of sustenance. Lisa Dodson, in Dixon et al (2002: 178-79) reports, based on a New Jersey

survey, that 23% were expected to go to their family for help, but only 47% of this category preferred to take that route. This shows that the loss in income from welfare left families to pick up the pieces by caring for their own. Although the state was more or less an official latecomer in the provisioning of the poor, whatever public resources it deployed had helped a substantial number of groups of single mothers and other categories of welfare recipients in many ways. The extent to which the assistance helped to make the families independent is still a matter that needs more investigation.

SECTION 2: BACKGROUND TO THE U.S. WELFARE SYSTEM AND IMPORTANT WATERSHEDS IN ITS HISTORY

1. Overview

Welfare provisioning was a private responsibility dispensed with to those who failed to provide for themselves due to some hardship. It was an integral part of the kinship system before the advent of capitalism and industrialism (Anderson and Ishwaran 1965, see Chapter 8, pp. 127-43). Support for the poor in many cultures was initially handled by the nearest of kin, friends, impersonal others and charities connected with religious organizations. But with the weakening of kinship ties due to industrialization and migration the capability continually decreased in importance. With further economic growth and abundance of resources the concept of self-pride and rugged individualism was given a strong lease of life in the American context.

In spite of changes in beliefs in the individual's ability to support himself/herself, however, welfare's appeal to brotherhood and mutual help values sustained itself. Welfare had a Christian tinge to it too when it came to outsiders' needs to seek assistance from circles outside the kinship system. In fact, the biblical tradition stipulates that those

who are blessed with wealth should give to the poor and as a consequence they will be given back or rewarded for their compassionate acts later on.

Anderson and Ishwaran (1965: 128-29) put the benefit of giving to the giver in the following words:

> If from his own substance he gave to those in need, that was one way of storing treasures in heaven, and there was one belief to the effect that if one did not pay a debt in this life, he would have to pay fourfold in the next life.

This same benefit of giving is exalted in the book of St. Luke, Chapter 14, Verse 12. The giver who gives to the poor "shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (New Testament 1989:55). Giving has thus a high value in religious terms.

This is a value that is still well and alive. That is one of the main reasons why so many charities and voluntary agencies are out there, including those in Lansing, to comfort and support many SMPs who have/had so little to live on.

Although religions and denominations both denigrate and talk about the virtues of poverty, they do help to enervate and/or reward those who are lax in their efforts to lift themselves up out of their abysmal economic conditions. This is encouraged in the statement that emphasizes that poor need not worry about life on Earth, as theirs is the Kingdom of God that comes after life. On the other hand, those who work more and harder are encouraged and they are, it is claimed, the ones who God likes and rewards. For instance, Protestantism, a denomination of Christianity "...stresses the importance of hard work and equality of opportunity in attaining success. Success is expected to be a result of self-denial and continuous effort, not the result of easy inheritance" (Hurst 1995: 310-311). While these kinds of positions legitimate inequality (Hurst: 1995: 311), they

also open a leeway for some, SMPs included, to see other possibilities of exploring means of eroding their unenviable condition of poverty.

But on the other hand, religion plays an integrative role (Hurst 1995: 310), when it does bring social groups, such as SMPs, together to form communities and prompts them to help one another. In fact, this integrative role seems to provide a way and an environment for connecting and encouraging SMPs to form social capital groups that this dissertation considers an important means of loosening the iron grip of poverty. Religion, as a social institution per Emil Durkheim (quoted in Hurst 1995: 310), can thus play an integrative role where such a feature may be missing due to the belief in individualism.

While such integration is secured through the agency of religion, the church per se finds two important roles to play in this regard. It enhances integration and lends a hand in support of groups that attempt to get out of poverty. It becomes one of the central points of distribution of financial and material resources and an embodiment or enthronement of spiritual solace to those who are caught in poverty.

That is why the church turned out to be one of the major pillars of support to the poor next to the primordial kinship structure. Below (see diagram), I attempt to model various support mechanisms that were and are there for the poor. I will try to make sense of how these institutions, the church, social groups and the state more or less worked in tandem in an effort to sway the mammoth and persistent poverty that exposed large segments of people in dire needs at different epochs in the welfare history of the U.S.

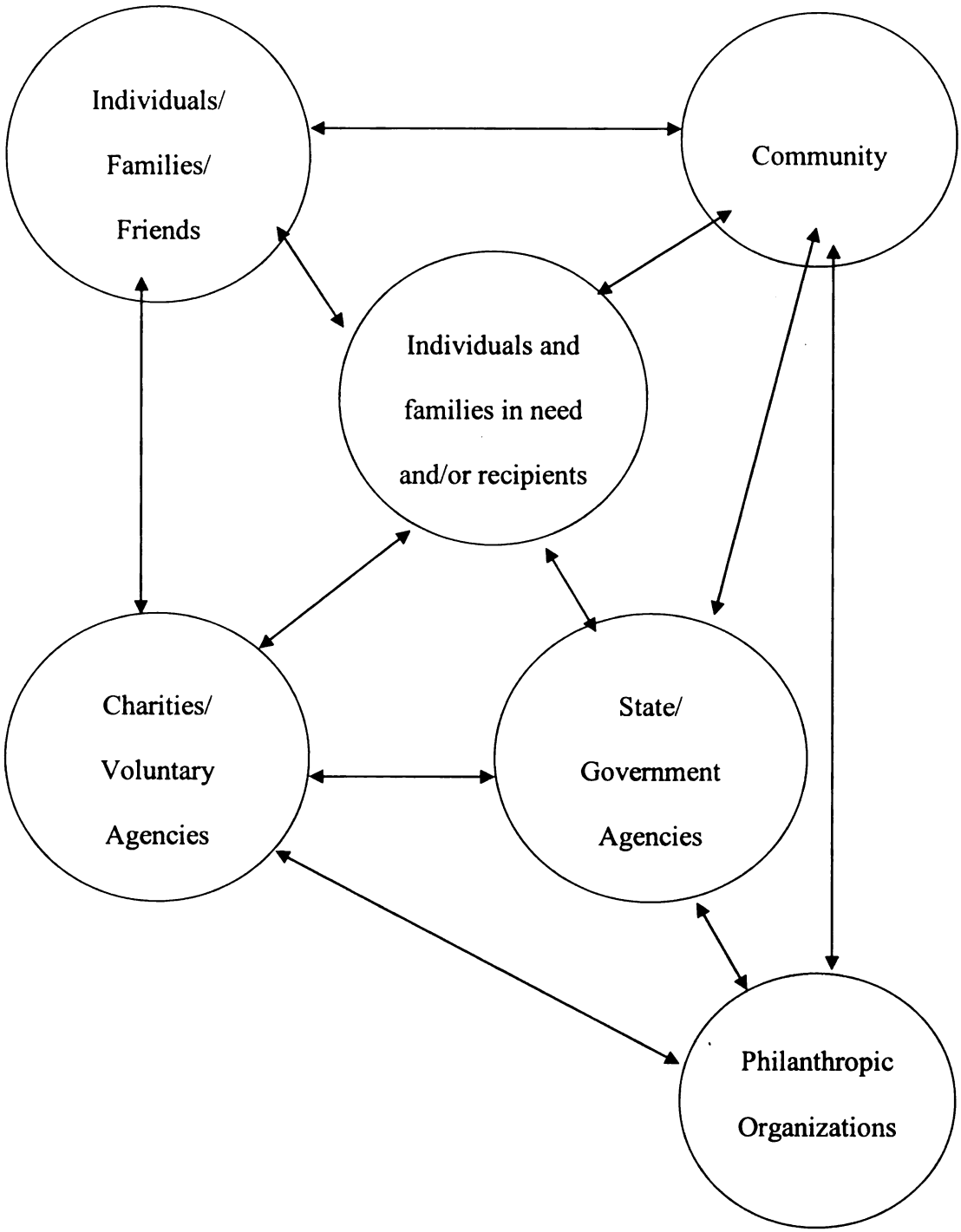
The churches in America have contributed a great deal toward the alleviation of poverty that paradoxically enough refuses to go away in spite of the deployment of extensive amounts of resources of the country. Skocpol (2000: 164-65) states that the

church even today needs to be at the forefront of a coalition of institutions and groups that seek some solutions to outstanding problems of being without adequate income as this especially pertains to SMPs. This may well be part of a possibly newly configured coalition that may take the lead in making life bearable to less privileged Americans (Ibid., see also, Herrick et al, in Dixon and Scheurell 2002) like single mother parents.

The question of what should be done to control and/or prevent poverty goes as far back as the beginnings of industrialization. Assistance to the poor evolved from a kinship to a more complex level as population increased and industrialization became widespread. Overpopulation in rural areas and fragmented and shrinking land resources compelled people to migrate in search of survival jobs in urban areas. But shortages of jobs in urban areas or other means of livelihood in turn forced these excess populations to seek assistance in times of hardship from 'better off' kith and kin, churches, communities as well as government.

Agencies helping the poor thus evolved from the smallest unit (primordial level), impersonal mode, and private charities and eventually grew to the public or the state level. Though all these support systems worked for the poor without any strong organic link between them, they nevertheless served the same objective—support for the marginalized. Individuals provided for the poor single-handedly when they saw fit or felt they were obligated by conventions and religious duty to do so. So did the state through the public institutions it created. Charities and religious groups, as mediating institutions between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' as well as the state in some cases, played the role of distributor of social resources. Charities were thus the funnels that distributed lifeline resources needed by the poor (Brown and McKeown 1997).

Figure 5: The relationship between welfare recipients and a variety of support systems ? families, communities, charities, the state and philanthropies.



Source: This Model was constructed from ideas taken from several sources in the literature. See, especially, Collins 1996; Handler et al, 1991; Hurst 1995; Katz 1989, Skocpol 1999, and Anderson and Ishwaran, 1965. See also Note 1 at the end of this chapter.

The American welfare system for the relief of poverty is similar to that of the European in that it was created to cope with population change and the consequences of the growing market economy during the 16th century. Outdoor relief supported women without a breadwinner so they could take care of their children with less difficulty. But such an intervention supported women with a high moral grounding (Abramovitz 1988: 193). Widowed women with mainstream/white backgrounds in selected counties (50 percent of the counties) qualified for this entitlement. This was institutionalized, as mentioned above, in the United States beginning 1910 (Wilson 1999, Abramovitz 1988).

Public assistance for a broader group of persons including SMPs was institutionalized after economic crises set in the U.S. An outstanding example of this was the 1929 market crash that the country experienced and that impoverished many from all classes of people including the rich, not to speak of the poor. Each of these groups and the differential impact of the crises is discussed in the various sections of the dissertation. Although a fuss is often made about the laxity and generosity of public programs of assistance, it was not the case that only the state was the sole provider to those in need in times of hardship and shifts in the structures of society. In fact, as Alan Kidd, in his book, *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth Century England* (1999: 2) observes: "Tax-funded public welfare benefits and services stand alongside... voluntary non-profit agencies organized on a philanthropic or mutual aid basis and the informal networks and services of household, kin and community." Herrick et al (2002; also examine the conceptual validity and practicality of this approach. The system was born in the 1930s in the United States.

In the years immediately after the Great Depression, President Hoover, said he was opposed to "any direct or indirect government dole – our people are providing against distress from unemployment in true American fashion" (Turner, in Marger 1997: 55-56). Instead, kin and local communities were officially expected to come to the aid of their own. President Hoover encouraged communities to set up food pantries and make use of community chests in order to weather the devastating effects of the economic and social crises of the late 1920s and early 1930s (McArthur 2002: 58). This was the federal government's initial response to the crises the Great Depression brought about. The weakness of the response was attributed to Hoover's bias toward business interests at the expense of the common man (an accusation leveled by contending presidential candidate Roosevelt) (McArthur 2002: 60). Kweit and Kweit (1999) bring in the existence of a fear factor in presidential decision-making in relation to public assistance programs. Hoover did not want to begin relief programs directly; instead he decided to give a $300 million loan (under the Emergency Relief and Construction Act – ERC) to the states to aid the needy in rural America, the country's cities and counties. This overture was made after farmers were discouraged by Hoover's lack of interest to help them (McArthur 2002: 59). This unreserved federal government extension of loan showed that not even counties and states were spared by the market crash. Revenues from property taxes could not be relied on because many people were simply unable to pay their taxes (Ibid.).

Both government and people understood the value of helping one another to squarely face the calamity wrought by the market crisis. But it happened that few people had the resources to give away (McArthur 2002: 58). Some people even went to the extent of sharing vegetables raised in their gardens and tolerated failures to pay back money owed

to groceries for items people took on credit (see McArthur, 2002: 34). Churches, institutions that are sought out for help during such periods of hardship, had less and less resources to aid the poor.

Hoover appealed to those who were employed to show benevolence toward the unemployed and hire them to do some work around their houses so they would feel dignified when they go home with some money they at least labored for. But many people were hard up and there was no way of meeting the great need that surfaced. Everyone was on the 'same fix' was the descriptor people and institutions applied to their common experiences of shortfalls in income (see McArthur 2002: 34).

As the preceding paragraphs amply demonstrate many institutions and existing networks were brought in to alleviate the effects of the devastating crises. But lack of resources did not help them much in meeting the majority of the needs of people. The state/federal government was the institution that had the resources they urgently required. This, in a sense, manifests the need for state intervention in times of hardship.

The argument that the state has no business in public provisioning is thus an argument that does not hold water. Although some see the demise of the state and its replacement with civil society, others make the point that without it (that is, the public sphere represented by the state) there would be 'no cooperation, no common loyalties, no public deliberations and action' (Tulchin 2002: 25). Following Marshall's defense of the welfare state, Tulchin contends, that the state, in its ideal sense, "ensures the right to speak, to act in pursuit of public goals and decide" (Ibid.). Civil society, an institution that also embodies the free market, on the other hand, "for all its importance in providing a realm of citizen participation in public life by definition, is the arena of partial interest"

(Ibid.: 24). Only the state, as an embodiment of the social, also, in terms of resources, is a credible source for the support of the poor and/or single mothers.

2. The Major Issues in the Debate For and Against Public Welfare in the U.S.

In 1935 when Christian charities were very much involved with the work of provisioning the poor, Bishop Aloisius Muench noted that such an intervention might endanger the sanctification of client volunteers and Diocesan workers (Brown and McKeown 1997: 193). Church groups like the 'Catholic charities that wished to remain out of the orbit of government influence, intrusions and controls were cautious in their links with the state (Ibid.: 194). While a dislike of influence is the motive in this regard, the fear of impersonal relationships that emerged out of the mode of assistance was also a thing that they wanted to get away from (Brown and McKeown 1997). Both Lansing Rescue Mission and Hanah's House, shelters in Lansing, frown upon an association with state. With state resources, they say 'there come control and support of programs that their religion disagreed with, abortion, for instance.'

Fred Kammer, President of Catholic Charities of America, does not like the control that comes with funding provided by the state. In his own words, "Government bureaucrats sometimes overreach, threatening our organizational integrity" (April 2, 2001, see internet link for more) when funds are channeled to service efforts for the poor. He made this point when he praised the faith-based initiative that the government widely publicized in the aftermath of the elimination of the public safety for the poor.

The difference in the way public resources are to be used and accountability requirements tagged to them led to the shunning of state funds for charity work. Church

and state in such circumstance went their ways separately. Churches mainly worked within the confines of their precincts and the state in all areas where the need for support manifested itself.

Although outdoor relief and the legally instituted public assistance programs helped millions of Americans to stand their ground, they have never gone to a soul-satisfying point for the greater majority of the poor. All along they entailed a paternalistic mode of relationships in terms of social provisioning. And as aid packages containing temporary assistance items, social welfare programs did not enable a good number of the unfortunate to achieve autonomy, despite the conservative theorists' belief in hard work and the liberal emphasis on skill development and provision of opportunity sets as appropriate means of controlling poverty.

These arguments leave much to be desired as they advocate for only a limited extension of support from the state. This apparently is the basis for the existence of continuing poverty within pocket regions of America and more so in inner cities. The type of support needed by the poor was based on insights and knowledge that has not been grounded on empirical studies involving the beneficiaries.

Public assistance to the poor or the needy has thus been a point of controversy among political leaders, scholars and citizens alike in the U.S. since its introduction in the 1930s following the Great Depression (Tulchin 2002, Katz 1989, Skopcol 2000, Burch 1999). Some, reports Katz (1989: 140-142), believed that social programs established to wage a war against poverty in the U.S. have virtually eliminated its vestiges except in some residual packets of the social ill. Martin Anderson, in his 1978 book *Welfare: The Political Economy of Welfare Reform, in the United States,* represents this line of

argument (Katz 1989: 140). Katz (1989: 141) quotes Anderson (1978) who declared that the "war on poverty" that 'began in 1964 has been won.' On the other side, however, Michael Harrington was one of the academics that responded to this rushed claim. He saw the reality and 'abundance' of destitution from the opposite direction (Katz 1989: 141); that is, from the side of those who witnessed the pangs of hunger that poverty embodied in its bosom. But it was, despite these glaring statistics that exhibited an upward swing in low earnings by many, that a group of writers took the social discourse space and espoused, as Harrington revealed, a methodology that he aptly described as: 'The statistical abolition of poverty'. These writers became an 'academic cottage industry' where they used data to suit their arguments. Their ideas turned out to be anti-public assistance programs when in fact 'mounting evidence of hunger, homelessness and destitution' as Katz (1989: 143) cogently put it, pervaded the social life of segments of people in the country. Other writers did not care whatever happened to the destitute. Their only objective was to show the wrongness of public assistance and its consequent elimination. Gilder in his book *Wealth and Poverty* (1981), for instance, argued for the reduction of taxes to the rich and the slashing of social spending (Katz 1989: 144-145, Collins 1996: 68). Mead (1986), contends that welfare recipients, while getting benefits, were not obliged to give back to their 'givers', meaning the state, or the public. What he meant by this was that the lack of reciprocity on this count form the side of the 'given' exhibited a gross imbalance in a much skewed relationship in favor of those collecting benefits. Mead, in his other book, *The New Politics of Poverty*, (1992, see pp. 48-65), attributes poverty to the factor of non-working that he sees as the main factor for lack of income. But while this is true in general, it does not give his reader the question of

adequacy of income even after all efforts to work are made by many poor people, single mothers in particular.

Charles Murray, the author who produced a book titled *Losing Ground* in 1984, brought two major lines of argument to the fore in his unrelenting attack on social programs. Murray supported inequality on the grounds that some people in society are better than the rest and that they should be rewarded for their achievements (Katz 1989: 151, Collins 1996: 70). He also theorized that what the world offered was only limited possibilities and with this constraint many youths with average talent and industriousness have the sole option of working hard and achieving modest gains (Katz 1989: 151). He selectively used evidence that he knew would convince his readers that social programs had only negative outcomes. As Katz (1989: 154-155) put it, he depended on hardly verifiable sources and in some cases on 'thought processes' that he (Murray) freely used as correct evidences and incidentally applied these in 'contextual vacuums.' Gilder's arguments also relied on 'haphazard anecdotes' that passed as evidence, according to Katz. These writings nonetheless provide the 'intellectual ammunition' that strengthened the position of the proponents of the abolition of the social programs.

No amount of supportive evidences to the contrary, supplied by the U.S. Bureau of Statistics, census reports and others would budge them from their beliefs and ideological positions, observes Katz. The debate, when seen from a macro viewpoint, raged between those who recognized the importance of the state as an agent of social provisioning and those who declared that it did not have the right to intervene in the economic and social life of people.

In between these could be placed those theorists who advocated for the concept of the minimal state (see Katz 1989: 149). No government has the moral right to coerce any person to share resources... (It) may not appropriate the wealth of an individual for the benefit of another (Nozick cited in Katz 1989: 149). Those who observed the socio-economic achievements scored as a consequence of state intervention did not only cite the major accomplishments, but they also supported an even more expanded role for this major social institution's (the state) role in the reduction of poverty. They attributed the decrease of poverty among the elderly to the comparatively bigger check they received, the broader access to health care services, the legal help accorded to the poor, the shrinkage of infant mortality rates, among others. All in all, the reduction of hunger before the stringent actions of those who attempted to halt some of the social programs initiated and presided over by the state, were detrimental to the cause of the poor. Affirmative action programs upheld by the Federal government constituted significant measures that pinned down discrimination against blacks and other minorities (Katz 1989: 155), including victims of gender disparagement.

3. Public Assistance's Effects on the Reduction of Poverty, Its Limitations and the Call for Its Dismantling

The U.S. public welfare programs, though less generous than other industrialized countries', did have equalizing effects in terms of income (Marger 1999:188). Single mother parents were among the beneficiaries of these re-distributive programs. Jansson (1988) also points out that "extraordinary progress was made during the 1970s" in particular, "in reducing the incidence of poverty as measured by the percentage of the population that fell below official poverty lines" (refer to p. 197). The benefits meted out

to the poor, according to Plotnick and Skidmore (1975), in the 1960s and 1970s increased rather quickly and "they have surely contributed substantially to the level of well-being of this group of citizens" (Skocpol 2000: 26, 1975: 74-75). These writers, however, indicate that even after transfers of cash and in-kind assistance to many people in need 'poverty had not reduced' (Ibid.). They further argue that transfers for relief and crossing the poverty line temporarily did not mean that poverty was overcome. On the flip side, they asserted that investment in 'human capital and community-oriented programs that may have long-run antipoverty effects, nonetheless, did not reduce income poverty in the short-run' (Plotnick 1975: 74).

Temporary relief assistance did help many mothers in sustaining a level of living that was much better than if the assistance were not there altogether. It gave many mothers the means to progress by providing them with a small resource base or the 'wherewithal' to advance their own education or send their children to school.

But this would not convince those who had all along been against social welfare. A sustained campaign against benefits offered to single mother parents were made. Social welfare in America was thus subjected to censure by many public officials and by citizens. Those who felt that the taxes they paid were burdensome and those resources transferred to the proverbial lazy, irresponsible and feckless individuals and/or single mothers made the distribution measures unfair. This concern and rebellion against the taxing welfare state emerged out of two possible frustrations. First, their own income, that is, the middle class' in particular, stagnated because of the high tax rate put in place and this was reason enough for them to show their antipathy toward welfare recipients (Herrick et al in Dixon and Scheurell 2002). Second, giving support to those who do not

make an effort to help themselves was considered morally wrong (Murray 1984, Mead 1986; Nozick 1974).

Those opposed to the transfer did not see the transfer in terms of responsibility of all citizens toward one another, toward the common good (Anderson and Ishwaran 1965: 128). If it were otherwise, it would have meant, in the words of Drucker (1989: 92-93) a move to "build into their own vision, their own behavior and their own values, concerns and responsibility for the common good.

Businesses were encouraged to participate more in the alleviation of poverty. But this was opposed by scholars like Milton Friedman who warned that business organizations should not concern themselves with functions that are out of their areas of activity, that is, their businesses. Friedman rationalized that running the business itself was problem enough to discourage veering off from a course that would hamper growth in their line of activity. Businessmen should, Friedman states, produce goods and services customers want and generate the profit needed to form some critical capital for, what he called, 'tomorrow's risks', investments and growth (Drucker 1989:97).

Drucker cites the case of Julius Rosenwald, the Chicago clothing merchant who created and financed the concept of the Farm Agent with a view to changing the backward American farmer. In a matter of ten years, says Drucker, the magic worked in that the farmer "acquired enough competence and purchasing power" to buy products from Sears Roebuck, Rosenwald's company. This is a classical example of investment in people for a delayed profit in sales of goods and services. Investment in single mothers who may constitute a liability at one time may also turn out to produce assets at some future date. This, in a sense, is investment in human capital on which Bourdieu and others

put emphasis on (see chapter 1 of this dissertation). The small size of the budget allocated for single mothers, compared to others categories like social security recipients should not have led to a questioning of the programs supporting single mothers at various points of time. Single mother parents constitute a population of beneficiaries that is the smallest user of public assistance (Jansson 1988: 197, Marger 1999:175) though one of the largest groups in terms of size. In terms of outlays, these specific public programs (AFDC) consumed $9.2 billion (local and federal contributions put together) in 1970 and grew to $13.9 billion in 1980 (Jansson 1988: 197). Social security expenditures (programs for the elderly) were, however, 7.4 times the figure for 1970 and 9.7 times as large as that of the AFDC in 1980 (Calculated from figures used by Jansson 1988: 197). The social security budget appropriation for means-tested entitlements for 1999 by the federal government, on the other hand, consumed 23 percent while that of the AFDC was only 6 percent. Some three out of four dollars went to non-means tested programs (Jansson 1988: 197), social security, for instance. The cost for the upkeep of lone mothers was for sure 'small and was shrinking' compared to the total social welfare budget, but it 'bore the onus of public hostility, which inflated popular conceptions and generosity. AFDC rarely lifted women over the official poverty line, but it fueled, according to Katz (1989: 68), "myths about the poor women who turned to it for survival." It is against this background that the social history of public assistance in the U.S. should be examined.

4. The 'Why' of the Welfare Response to Poverty at the National Level

Public welfare programs began to take the broader institutional shape that they have had for over six decades beginning the years after the Great Market Crash of 1929. They

were created in order to respond to the destitution that befell a good segment of the American population in the aftermath of the economic crash beginning 1929.

Major questions that need some probing and reflection about the state's takeover of the work of provisioning the poor follow. Why did the state in the U.S. involve itself in public assistance programs? What sets of services and institutions did it replace or supplement? When and why were challenges to its programs put up and sustained? What was the consequence of the challenges?

5. Watersheds in the State Welfare Program: Establishment, Development and Demise

Support for the poor in the United States can be looked at as having gone through some significant watersheds interspersed with some minor changes that both bolstered and/or weakened the watersheds. There are at least four phases — three supportive and one (un)supportive — of public assistance to the poor in the United States.

These signify that the public support system has evolved in response to the social problems that present themselves following traumatic economic periods, particularly during the 20th Century. They demonstrate the practices followed and the legislation that affected the social safety net in the country.

I will attempt to explain this evolution under four headings and/or see them in terms of watersheds while briefly explaining each of them. The evolution of social assistance thus could be seen in terms of two major sets of watersheds — policies and institutions — that reflect significant departures in the ways the poor were supported nationally.

The first set of watersheds could in general be represented by shifts in perspectives and policies in the way resources were transferred to the poor so they could survive.

Conceptually, these could be categorized in a sort of general "time-big event" categories of pre-market-crash (the period before 1929), post-market crash (the years following the 1929 Market Crash), war on poverty (the 1960s) and the period of chipping away of the welfare state (1980s-1990s).

The social assistance evolution may also be seen in terms of what successive American administrations and/or presidents have done to involve the state in social provisioning or tried to slash or withdraw some of the services in an effort to resolve the inequality and/or poverty problem or enhance it in the context of the free market. This constitutes the second set of watersheds in the evolution of social assistance in the U.S.

Perspectives and Policy Changes

The first perspective-policy watershed may be classified as the prelude to the coming of the state as a provider when extra-state institution-giving — charities and philanthropies as well as private individuals — was the norm, but that they could not rise to the occasion of satisfying the relief needs let alone enable the poor to stand on their feet.

The second perspective-policy watershed is represented by the declaration of a national and state commitment to care for those who were devastated by the market crash of 1929-32. This apparently began a major change in the perspective, for a fleeting moment though, that was strongly rooted in the valuation that it is the market, not the state that should bring normalcy to economic crises and hence deliver individuals and groups from any form of destitution.

The third perspective-policy watershed is represented by an attempt to purge poverty once and for all by making the state the major role player and provider of resources, a goal initiated with the objective of enabling low-income and/or poor Americans to share in the fruits of the increasing prosperity of the country. It was assumed that transfers of huge public resources would, as it were, lift the poor to a point where they can support themselves. The fourth perspective-policy watershed is the undoing of the social programs that were instituted to care for those citizens who, one way or another, did not make it in the drive to improve their livelihood, that is, achieve the Horatio Alger fictitious story — story that proclaims that success or the American dream could be achieved through "self-reliance and hard work" (Webster's Dictionary, 1996: 558).

Administrative Interventions

These watersheds could also be seen in terms of the actions taken by U.S. administrations to respond to the crises the country faced with respect to economic downturns or financial crises or questions of morality as these relate to work or economic misery of a substantial segment of the country's people. These could again be seen in terms of the New Deal Era (Roosevelt), the Great Society Era (Kennedy-Johnson), Retrenchment Era (Reagan) and the social safety net elimination era (Clinton).

The welfare programs that the American state initiated can then be considered as having imprinted four major administrative or presidential intervention watersheds and three important protection expansion attempts to benefit single mothers. Single mothers, as mentioned earlier, have been one of the largest groups of recipients of public assistance whose benefits were continuously subjected to budget cuts and elimination at

certain periods of economic crises. These mothers also constituted a segment of public welfare beneficiaries who have been stigmatized in order to squeeze them out of the system that they were assumed to have exploited unnecessarily beyond acceptable times of crises. These mothers belonged to the category of the 'un-deserving' poor, those who could be employed but remained unemployed for a host of reasons.

The four major administrative intervention watersheds in public assistance in the U.S. are marked by the New Deal overtures, the Great Society: War on Poverty programs, the Reagan welfare budget cuts of the 1980s and the elimination of the safety net in 1996. Also, what may be identified as second level supplementary measures of expansion were constituted by the 1988 Family Support Act (a Congressional initiative), the Family Assistance Plan (President Nixon's input), and the Better Jobs and Incomes Programs (President Carter's alternative plan). All these attempts were positive in nature, but they did not get off the ground that much. Strong presidents influenced the directions changes took with regard to welfare programs.

The New Deal programs

The magnitude of the problems the 1929 market crisis brought with it was such that people who earlier thought that poverty would not touch them, not even for one moment, were compelled to depend on public assistance in order to take care of their daily needs. Close to 15 million people were without work between 1929 and 1932. Many withheld guilt and shame that was attached to the socially constructed labeling or stigmatizing public assistance recipients. As in Oliver Gold Smith's new type of heroine, Kate Hardcastle, in the novel (in Hopper and Lahey 1958), they had to swallow their pride and

be on the rolls until better days came. These particular segments of people managed to build up their economic base and improve their lives slowly as the country got out of the effects of the economic crash.

The New Deal programs benefited millions of economically disadvantaged Americans during the depression era. Social security to the elderly poor and welfare programs to single mothers and other classes of the needy took shape within the framework of the New Deal responses to the vagaries of the Great Depression. Yet, even FDR, the father of the modern welfare system, in no uncertain terms declared that, the "Federal Government must and shall quit this business of relief," (Turner, in Marger 1997: 56) leading to the undercurrent of the reluctance of the state to continue to help the unfortunate, in particular, those that had been the victims of structural deficiencies.

It seems that three possible reasons have led to the decision not to make the assistance to single mothers and their children an entitlement like that of the Social Security, which started out as a permanent income source for the elderly. First, given the large number of mothers and their children, it was rationalized that the outlay for running the program, would strain the national budget as much as it constrained local governments' activities (Kweit and Kweit 1999:404; Skocpol 2000). Smart as he was, FDR did not want to go against this received knowledge and the unnecessarily elevated aura that enveloped the ethos of individualism and the entwined value of earning one's livelihood by one's sweat (Collins 1996: 96). Second, by making AFDC in particular much like social security, FDR did not want to make the system to create loopholes to honest work, which is solidly embedded in the work ethics of the country (Ibid. 93).

The Social Security Act of 1935 certainly extended support to children with fragile family structures and conditions. It was put in place under the title: 'Aid to Dependent Children' (ADC). Mothers of these children did not figure in prominently. They remained in the background and no issue relating to their capacity to work and feed their children arose in the context of this categorical aid.

The contribution of the New Deal to the support of single mothers and other poor people was extremely high. For one thing, it mediated the divergent positions held by liberals and conservatives on social policy directions and showed that government and business-directed development of the economy were, in general, compatible (Collins 1996). At least the combined usage of the two systems during the New Deal days imprinted the value of providing temporary assistance to those in need and a massive support to them in times of hardship high on the national agenda and in the culture of the country. On the other side also, it implanted the truism that business is also vulnerable and that the mighty force of society embedded in government is the only way of securing an economy that is usually broken by cyclical crises like the Great Depression.

But such an understanding and mood changed when economic crises situations are over. The pride of the opponents of social welfare and their pre-economic crises era views, are resuscitated once again with the passage of the time of difficulties. The shift in the perspective that led to the toleration of welfare recipiency, temporarily, was again retracted and the blame of the poor and welfare recipients was later re-energized. The claim that those who did not work strained the economy by taking critical investment resources that businesses needed to expand the American economy took central focus.

A perspectival change of sorts thus reared its head in the discussion of the subject matter of welfare. The assumption that the poor were victims of the economic crises during the second quarter of the 20th century took hold of the discursive space to a degree. The dominant view today is that the poor are a burden to society and therefore are irresponsible people. Blaming the victims for their condition is a position that needs some critical examination. This change in perspective in a sense indicated that there are factors other than personal or familial deficiencies and/or inadequacies that explain welfare recipiency. In the view of liberals, rather than emerging from personal constraints, the problem is rooted in perhaps the ways the economy is structured thus requiring its (re)organization by the society.

The War on Poverty and Great Society programs

The 'rediscovery' of poverty in the 1960s mainly through Harrington's 'The Other America'(1962), the coinage of the 'intergenerational culture of poverty and claims of the civil rights movement evoked thinking along new lines. It led to the ambitious program of Presidents Kennedy and Johnson — a program directed at eradicating poverty from the landscape. A consequence of such a discovery by social science scholars preceded the gigantic move to reduce the social ill of poverty in the country.

The launching of the 1962 'War on Poverty,' ushered in the third watershed, that both helped many low income people escape poverty and, paradoxically enough, paved the way for innumerable social conflicts between those citizens who were opposed to public assistance and those who supported it. In any case, the War on Poverty legislation paved the way for the widening of the coverage of many more segments of the

poor/SMPs and emphasized opportunity ? education, training, locking in to work ? as a means of lifting up beneficiaries out of poverty.

Thus, the second watershed evolved between 1950 and 1961 to assist families with unemployed breadwinners (Abramovitz 1996: 317; Piven and Cloward 1988) and the poor in general. Again, this category of assistance was clarified more when, in 1962, the support system of children and families was further institutionalized with the apparently more inclusive 'Aid to Families with Dependent Children' (AFDC).

It looks like it is the inadvertent change of name – assistance to families and AFDC -- that changed the focus of the controversy over the assistance given to mothers instead of children. The implicit argument here is that the change made lone mothers or women with children the beneficiaries of public assistance rather than children.

The War on Poverty, Great Society Program implemented in the 1960s and the 1970s was in part meant to be an initiative to finish the New Deal's attempts to deal with poverty and equality. President Johnson declared that 40-50 million people (Anderson and Ishwaran 1965) at the time were wallowing in poverty and that government intervention and the use of the growing societal resources following the Post World War II affluence of the country was capable of addressing the problem (Kweit and Kweit 1999). But the lack of proper planning in the execution of the various programs eventuated in the clash between local government officials and the new development committees. This factor became an obstacle to a smooth operation and thus it made the efforts less rewarding. The involvement of America in the Vietnam War and the social unrest that gripped the country in the 1960s radically changed the priorities enshrined in the War on Poverty Program.

The weaknesses of these government-led war on poverty programs and the financial outlay they entailed, refurbished the pent-up conservative backlash so that, in a matter of two decades, they had slowly chipped away at the liberal programs of reducing inequality and poverty. The damaging anecdotes represented by terms such as 'welfare queens', 'Cadillac' auto owner-drivers and others, referring to welfare recipients by Reagan in the elections for the presidency were capitalized upon to discredit 'abusers' of government assistance (Kaus 1992: 176). All this was looked at as a tool that was effectively used by the conservative camp to score political points against what was commonly called 'big government' with all its 'tax and spend' liberal tags coined for the purpose.

The Reagan Budget Cuts and Public Welfare

President Reagan's cut backs on spending on social programs under the pretext that government meddled in the 'natural' operation of the economy and paved the way for large segments of people who earned incomes without working was based on the philosophy that "accepting welfare (was) debilitating because it create(d) a dependency relationship" (Kweit and Kweit 1999: 411). The President's objective was the reduction of the number of public welfare dependants by making access to the doles difficult, and by making the regulations for the receipt of public assistance stringent. Many single mothers were cut off the system summarily. Categorical program transfer were collapsed into block grants and states allowed to have discretionary power to deny or provide benefits (Collins 1996; Kweit and Kweit 1999: 406). The private sector, consisting of business groups, banded together and was hard at work to restore the pre-New Deal capitalist principles of development (Collins 1996: 106). The idea behind this move was

to pave the way for an unfettered market economy that would enable businessmen to freely play in an unencumbered world of the free market. In such a situation, businessmen would not have to worry about regulations placed on activities relating to the environment, health and safety as well as the imposed "redistributive tax policies and other restrictions on their ability to cut costs and increase profits as they saw fit" (Ibid).

The Reagan administration's policies as they related to the AFDC program were a set back to the gains welfare recipient single mothers with children made particularly during the 1960s and 1970s. Reagan's surgical dismantling of the welfare system delivered a deathblow to the Family Assistance Plan (FAP) and the Better Jobs and Incomes Plan (BJIP), initiated by Nixon and Carter, respectively. Both initiatives did not see the light of day. Nor did they muster enough steam to make an in-road into the legislative body, the Congress, (in the case of Nixon's suggested plan). Inflation that cast itself during Carter's presidency led to the withdrawal of the BJIP altogether.

Elimination of the Safety Net: Beginnings of the end of public welfare

The fourth and final watershed is represented by the August 1996 legislation: The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). In the wake of the failure of the programs of public assistance and other proposals to accommodate poor single mothers' needs along with those of other beneficiaries, a powerful pressure to change the welfare system was in the making. This force was nothing but the congressional measure that eliminated welfare as 'was known' in 1996.

Many single mother parents lost their benefits just like many others had been in the process of losing them over the last two decades of the 20 Century. The Personal

Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of August 1996 handed down the deathblow to the benefits that assisted single mothers and other poor people for almost six decades. Single mothers were seriously hurt by the measure (Seccombe 1999, Collins 1996) that severely shrunk benefits and instituted more stringent requirements to gain access to the safety net.

This legislation rescinded public assistance as 'was known' in the U.S. President Clinton's election promise in 1992 to fix the welfare state program was capitalized upon by those who incessantly called for a revanchist state's coming of age and undoing the measures the welfare state had taken to 'unfairly' assist those who did not deserve to be helped or the 'undeserving' poor who should have been working instead of depending on public doles. This persistent call for the elimination of welfare state generosity eventuated in a surgical removal of AFDC and a 'transplant of...limited support' with an arbitrary time limit.

After bitter conflicts and power struggles, welfare as 'it was known' was thus eliminated in the late 1990s. But astoundingly enough, no sooner was the door locked after the 1996 legislation than it was slightly opened, rhetorically if not practically, at least, with the concept of 'compassionate conservatism' that was a hallmark of the 2000 presidential election campaign. Large numbers of people who were supposed to find employment and throw the rolls asunder as a result of the strong economy, instead found themselves flooding the services provided by charities and NGOs, viz., homeless shelters and soup kitchens and other services in towns. Lansing, the geographic location for this research, turned out to be one such space where SMPs linked themselves with these organizations in order to weather the storm of destitution.

6. The Plurality of Assistance Sources Embodied in the Overall Welfare Response

The transfer of huge resources by public institutions to single mothers did in many ways help some recipients to move ahead. But the effort did not enable many to become self-sufficient. What role have primary sources, that is, families and friends mainly, been playing to help those in jeopardy while public assistance transfers made some contributions toward the alleviation of the problem? What were secondary sources of support like charities and voluntary organizations doing to help the mothers help themselves? Why did the resources of family/friends and charities fall short of addressing the root causes of the poverty problems of single mothers? Why have charities in particular been keeping the 'temporary' assistance tag and continuing to play significant roles, even today, after what may be called the 'creeping official termination' of public support to the poor?

Government assistance, though comparatively speaking large, was not by itself enough to satisfy poor families' needs. Single mother parents, as a matter of course, also relied on resources that primary sources, relatives and friends, as well as charities and voluntary agencies offered. But the economic crises of 1929 and subsequent economic difficulties also affected families/friends as well as the charities/voluntary agencies, and the amount of help that was flowing from these sources was very much reduced and limited.

Yet, single mothers and other poor people had no other alternative means of weathering the effects of crises situations they experienced including the cuts in public assistance, but to continue to seek support from these very sources in order to fill the gap left by the state. These institutions, however, have amply demonstrated that they too can

not be relied upon when crises like the Great Depression of 1929 shake their foundations as many cases in Michigan at that time proved (see Fugate et al 1997: 90, McArthur 2002). An effective coordination of efforts of the primary and secondary support systems remains the only option to partially meet the needs and demands that arise in times of hardships as Herrick et al (2002) suggest.

Possible Options to Get Around the Problem of Poverty

To summarize, the agency(ies) of choice, as the literature on poverty reduction indicates, families/friends, charities and the state, in their own ways provided assistance of varying natures to address the problem of poverty and inequality. The support provided was mainly limited to emergency assistance though.

The safety net, provided by the state, has only been a partial safety net because the welfare checks and other forms of assistance made up only part of the income that went as disposable income of the beneficiary parents. It constituted only a small portion of what was needed by the poor and near poor as Bianchi, in Chafel (1993: 108) also argues. It paid a portion of the rent or any combination of expenses of the poor families.

But the rate of poverty in the country, other than showing some decline in the number of people below the poverty line at intervals during the last four decades of the 20th Century, more or less remained high and single mothers parents with children have been among the most affected of the welfare-dependent populations. A coordinated, or what Herrick et al (2002) call a 'pluralistic' mode of addressing the problem needs to replace the more or less lone intervention that represented the overall support modality. But this time around this coordinated effort needs an injection of a heavier dose of closer

interaction and exchange of information as well as a system of combining of resources in order to produce a measurably satisfactory outcome is a justifiable way out.

As the saying goes 'two heads are better than one'. The combined input of all three entities — the family and/or the network of friends, charities and the state — may help deal with the problems of poverty of single mothers more effectively over time. This means that the lone or single agency exertions that do not hit the nail on the head may be fashioned into a methodically coordinated response that would lead to enduring independence that would in turn make relief support unnecessary.

This objective could be achieved by taking two important measures — changing the basis of the discourse on the issues of poverty and encouraging SMPs to be active participants in the social issues that determine their destinies. Given the continued existence of suffering SMPs with children are exposed to in America, changing the basis and the course of the discourse that centers on poverty and inequality is a primary step that should precede the overall effort. Stereotypes and stigmas built into the current discourse that take the issues along ideological and political as well as ethnic/racial lines need to be reevaluated. It should be replaced by perspectives that evolve out of critical appraisals of the objective conditions of the unfortunate SMPs and the relationships these have to the social structure that in any case needs to be studied and established.

Scholars who have done a lot of research and show concern for the poor, the working poor and the unemployed, among whom are single mothers and their children, point out that this line of discourse would lay the basis for the construction of polices and practices that would change the whole approach to dealing with the scourges of poverty and social inequality. Skocpol, one of the scholars who spearheaded discussions on the issue,

suggests that public intellectuals and supporters of a 'more equitable society' should organize "inside and outside the electoral system, and push politicians and other institutional leaders toward a bolder stand on behalf of all working parents and their children" (2000: 171). Similarly, Katz (1989: 238-239) invokes the idea of 'reconstructing the way' the society thinks about poverty and acting to reaffirm the importance of community, equality of citizenship and achievement of human dignity that should be primary societal preoccupations and should constitute a point of departure in installing positive changes. The inclusion of the subjects, single mothers, in this effort expedites the processes of the change sought. The quality of the discourse and their superior knowledge about their needs and the means of satisfying them are best expressed and chosen by them rather than others. Kozol's (2000: 100) observation that mothers'/ single mothers' work as domestics in the homes of wealthy people (in Manhattan) and that this exposes them to the neat life styles of these families is relevant to the point discussed here. The mothers, according to Kozol, see at close quarters a sense of what:

> Their lives are like. They learn about the 'ingredients of life that cultivate entitlement and graciousness and opportunity and also leave these children with the likeable capacity for understated recognition of their own advantage.

Unlike the views of their detractors, single-mother parents among the poor know what is good for them and struggle to tailor sets of incomes to defray their overall household expenses and meet their social obligations. The overwhelming evidence presented in the works of Carol Stack (1974), Seccombe (1999) and Jonas Gilbert, cited by Melissa (in Jonas and Wilson 1999), Jonathan Kozol (2000) proves the point. These writers argue that resources pulled with several strings from diverse resources bases,

within the family and community at times, bail out poor single-mothers from the considerably restrictive circumstances in their everyday lives.

The wholesale claim that the mothers 'do not work and wholly depend on public welfare' is largely without credible evidence. Such a negative attribute, as Hirschmann and Liebert (2001) put it so well, leads to the disparagement of these mothers as 'welfare queens' the Reagan-era perspective, and in the process essentializes the argument about the poor in the direction of mere dependents on others for their livelihood (see also Kweit and Kweit 2000). The more subtle argument, embedded in the legislation that eliminated the welfare safety net in 1996 (see PRWORA, 1996 as interpreted by Hirschmann, in Hirschmann and Liebert 2001; Kweit and Kweit 1999) suggests that there are always opportunities for all to work and to be able to feed one's family members. The point made here, in the free market system's assumptions, is that there are jobs that are 'crying for employable people.' The implied argument here is that it only takes the ability to touch the leverage points that are readily made available by the free market in order to turn calamities into opportunities. And that what needs to be done is to reconcile the need and job demands of mothers with the availability of jobs so the dependence of this segment of the population would be made unnecessary.

Yet, the fact that so many people in the economy are laid off (see interview with AL (March 1992), the Mid-Michigan Chapter of the Red Cross (1999), Volunteers of America and Lansing City officials (December 1999 and November and also December 2003) indicates that the claim is not supportable with credible facts. There is no question about shortages of jobs as exhibited by the unemployment rates that never go to the zero level. Poor persons like the SMPs, who are the subjects of the discussion here, have no

way of getting enough hours to work even if they land on jobs. Single mothers' or poor individuals' disposable income is substantially reduced most of the time because of the general shortage of work hours that is a general feature of the American economy. This has been true both at the national and state as well as local levels. But in spite of this reality, scholars like Mead (1992: 72), argue that "...increasing working hours does a lot more for overcoming poverty than raising wages." The issues involving work hours and wage levels need more dispassionate research, policies and action if poverty in America is to be dealt with seriously.

Note 1:

Anderson and Ishwaran, (1965), quoting from Dixon Wecter's, *The Age of the Great Depression: 1929-1941,* New York. Macmillan, 1948, make a reference to the shift from primary, family and community levels where each individual shares and contributes to members' lives and change, to a state-run welfare system as a revolutionary change. The state withdrew support to the poor as it felt this was a domain of the private up until that point (See Anderson et al, Chapter 8, Social Welfare Under Urbanism, pp. 137-139 and Chapter 9, Social Control in Urban Society, pp. 145-147).

TRANSIENT SOLUTIONS TO ENDURING PROBLEMS: LANSING'S SINGLE MOTHER PARENTS' STRUGGLES TO SURVIVE AMID CONFLICTING BELIEFS AND PERSPECTIVES ON POVERTY, WELFARE AND WORKFARE, AND INADEQUATE RESOURCE SUPPLIES

VOLUME II

By

Teshome Tadesse

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CHAPTER 4

I want all my children to be in college to break the cycle. My children will be the first on my family's side and my husband's family's side to ever go to college. If my children succeed and graduate from college, do you know what a landmark that would be? If they finish college and break the cycle of poverty in my family, that would be phenomenal to me.

Single Mom Anabelle, a Lansing shelter resident
March 23, 2005

SECTION I: THE WELFARE/WORKFARE IMPACT AND THE VOICES OF SINGLE MOTHERS IN LANSING/MICHIGAN

1. Preamble

This chapter has two major sections. In the first section, conditions of the poor and what the response was to the economic crises in Lansing in the past. The extent of the response to the problem by charities and government agencies of the state of Michigan and whether or not the combined institutional effort had enabled single mother parents to survive and become independent is examined. The efforts made by the state to train and hook SMPs to jobs or provide them with jobs including workfare ones and in so doing its attempts to decrease the welfare load is highlighted. Specifically, what was done by the state and charities and voluntary agencies to lay down the groundwork for the mothers to undergo training for searching, securing and retaining jobs is highlighted in the section.

The second section deals with the critical problems single mothers face(d) following their exit from the welfare system. In this section, both the mothers and their benefactors discuss their problems and frustrations and what needs to be done to address some of the perennial roadblocks that poverty harbors in their disfavor. They make suggestions based on real world situations that they experience.

In this chapter, therefore, an attempt is made to discuss the major issues raised in Chapter 1 in a summary form and treated in-depth in chapter two and highlight the perspectives of the three groups that are the focus of this dissertation – single mother parents with children, voluntary organization and government specialists.

2. The Poor, Economic Crises, and the Welfare Response in Lansing

Lansing had its share of problems in the aftermath of the 1929 national economic crisis. Many people were out off work. The State's "industrial collapse sent people back to the land, where they often found marginal conditions," according to Bryson (in Michigan State University Symposium Proceedings, January 19, 1980: 2). The agricultural population rose by 1.2 % to hit a 17.5 % mark of the State's total population during the crisis. This increase was reflected in the rise of the farms from 179,000 in 1930 to 197,000 in 1935 (Ibid.).

Employers provided rural land for the unemployed so they could grow food for their families. Employees too worked at reduced salaries and wages so their employers could manage the bankruptcy weather hanging over their heads. Neighbors cared for those in trouble and employers created organizations that pulled resources to meet the needs of those who lost their jobs. The work of many business organizations was later taken mainly by charities. These changes in structures and responses give some clues as to why the problem of poverty does not go away so easily as the discussions that preceded the elimination of the safety net in 1996 demonstrated.

One major reason given for the failure to deal with the problem of poverty is the lack of agency that needs to do the work by locating itself right at the level of the group,

SMPs here, that needs the service. The agency should mainly be the victim herself — the single mother and/or an associated group of these mothers.

There are more than two dozens of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), charities and other human service agencies with various missions that cater to sets of different needy clientele in the city (see Tables 92a_c in Appendix 1). The Homeless Resolution Network of charities and NGOs of the city and its environs and the representatives of City Hall have been carrying the banner of cooperative work among line/forefront organizations for the last 15 years. Their mission has been one of exchanging information, coordinating and planning of services and one of advocacy work on behalf of the homeless, and now, of course, a diverse group of people who one would not imagine to be added to the list of those shelter seekers some years back. These are the new poor among which are single mother parents with children

Much as they serve many homeless persons including single-mother parents — who in some cases are also welfare recipients, the charities have not been able to keep up with the demand for shelter spaces for SMPs. Neither are the charities able to deny space to those who work some twenty workfare hours as per the requirements of the latest Welfare Reform Legislation of 1996. The change and/or shift in the demographics of the homeless population from alcoholics, drug users, the mentally ill, to the unemployed and now to the employed/welfare recipient category, is an interesting development that requires a new definition of the clientele. The responses to deal with the problem need to be redesigned accordingly. Obviously, this needs new languages/concepts followed by a new set of measures to be able to alleviate the problem effectively. Paradoxically enough, the existence of homeless persons who are employed and receive welfare checks

and yet live in homeless shelters, in a sense, erodes the long-held view that welfare recipients are lazy, that they like to depend on others rather than work and support themselves. It clearly puts the view in doubt and makes the case that the problem of dependency on welfare may well have its roots some place else as well. Structural deficiencies are among the explanations that obviously cannot be ruled out. This is a point that needs some reappraisal. The problem, in any case, needs an open mind, a new approach, and reevaluation.

The desperate situation of homeless mothers with children, a subset of the single-mother parents in Lansing, is an indication of the seriousness of the problems these mothers encounter in their daily lives. Because of the lack of adequate incomes, some SMPs take their abode in the shelters for as long as the particular charity or non-governmental organization regulation, established to help them, allow (interview with, Melanie Winnicker and Paul Elam, Lansing City Human Relations Services, and Volunteers of America officials, April 4, 2002).

Although the charities and NGOs have an open door policy of caring for such SMPs, the limited resources that they are able to garner and the subsidies they receive compel them to deny services to some that seek their help. Service provision capability of these agencies to individuals and families was only slightly higher than 50% (See Tables 11-14 below).

The shelter needs for homeless families are less well-met daily than for those of individuals. Only some 95 or 55% of families who sought shelter beds during the time of the 'One-Day Count' managed to find them. Some 143 individuals or 46.7% were able to

secure beds (see Table 11, p. 212, below). Ninety-five families found beds, while 77 were unable to do so.

Families and their members fare worse than individuals in terms of getting transitional housing. While transitional housing facilities were available for individuals the unmet needs constituted 23. Conversely, the unmet needs of families were 122.

Individuals are by far better when it comes to the acquisition of permanent housing than families. While the figures with respect to transitional housing for families show 0% acquirement, 50 individuals out of 84 were able to get housing in this category (see Table 11, p. 212, below).

Demands for all supportive services such as job training, case management work, childcare, transportation and so on were on the high side. The supply side was weak. Availability of services for categories of special needs populations was also low. Critical services such as those for chronic substance abusers, veterans, and persons with HIV/AIDS were fewer in number, according to the report that was produced by the Network Strategy Funding Committee of the Greater Lansing Homeless Resolution Network (April 2002). Services for youth had better availability during the period the data was collected.

Table 11: Bed unit needs in shelters, inventory and gap in service.
Data on emergency shelter, transitional and permanent supportive housing need (estimate) availability and gap; collected by a network of charity and other care agencies in the Greater Lansing Area or Lansing and its environs.

Type of Service	Estimates of needs	Inventory	Unmet Needs	Total
Emergency shelter bed need total	178	238	240	656
Individual	306	143	163	612
Families	172	95	77	344
Transitional Housing	313	214	145	392
Individuals	54	77	23	154
Families	259	137	122	518
Permanent Supportive housing	134	50	84	268
Individuals	134	50	84	268
Families	0	0	0	0

Source: Continuum of Care: Network Strategy Funding Committee, Planning Document, supplied by the Network Strategy Funding Committee, April 4, 2002, pp. 11-12.

Childcare needs were found to be substantially high. Availability amounted to 125, while lack of it run to 220. Transportation needs were satisfied for 163, while they were not for 180 cases (Refer to Table 12, p. 213, below).

Table 12: Estimated need for critical services to homeless individuals and persons in families with children

Title of Supportive Service	Estimated Need	Current Inventory	Unmet Need/Gap
Job Training			
Individuals	395	90	305
Families	108	25	83
Case Management			
Individuals	445	183	262
Families	200	92	108
Child Care			
Individuals	0	0	0
Families	345	125	220
Substance Abuse Treatment			
Individuals	247	75	172
Families	129	10	29
Housing Placement			
Individuals	494	212	282
Families	431	160	271
Life Skills Training			
Individuals	469	100	369
Families	215	75	140
Health Care Information			
Individuals	445	90	355
Families	-	-	-
Transportation			
Individuals	-	-	-
Families	345	163	180

Source: Continuum of Care: Planning Document, supplied by the Network Strategy Funding Committee, April 4, 2002: 11-12.

Table 13: Estimates of sub-populations, availability of services and gap in individual and family contexts.

Population Type	Estimated Need	Current Inventory	Unmet Needs
Chronic Substance Abusers			
Individuals	247	75	172
Families	89	10	29
Veterans			
Individuals	124	23	101
Families	15	2	13
Persons with HIV/AIDS			
Individual	90	8	82
Families	4	0	4
Victims of Domestic Violence			
Individuals	124	31	93
Families	75	31	44
Youth			
Individuals	24	9	15
Families	19	16	3

Source: Continuum of Care: Planning Document, supplied by the Network Strategy Funding Committee, April 4, 2002: 11-12.

Low-income housing needs compel many individuals and families to seek non-profit organization shelters in town, but the nighttime shelter services are not adequate for the needs that arise. The Rescue Mission's (a charity) low capacities and increasing needs for beds and longer 'stays' show the increasing level of needs for the years of 2000 and 2001 (see Table 14 below).

Table 14: Shelter beds availability and needs as reported by the Lansing Rescue Mission.

Service type and needs (Number of beds for temporary or longer stays)			
Year	**Needs for Men, Women & Children**	**Women served**	**Children served**
2000	14,615	2,652	3,620
2001	21,256	4,572	8,185

Source: *Lansing State Journal,* January 16, 2001. The data for this table is reconstructed from the data presented on the *Journal.*

The number of single mother parents currently or previously on the welfare rolls and now in shelters cannot be easily determined as it is difficult to keep the records with a degree of accuracy. Data collected from voluntary agencies and churches in 2001 at a series of GLHRN (Greater Lansing Homeless Resolution Network) gives some ideas about the numbers of the single mothers parents with children that stay with the various agencies for shorter and longer periods of time and move on (see Table 92_b, Appendix 1). But according to officials of Volunteers of America, there are such single-mothers who do live in their shelters for shorter and longer periods of time. In fact, the mothers have to work in order to fulfill the 20-hour requirement set by the PRWORA (1996) from their shelter abode or base (Interview with officials of Volunteers of America, Heaven House and the City of Lansing).

Low-paying jobs are suspected as explaining the homeless condition among single mother parents in the shelters. Melanie Winnicker, a former official of the Lansing City's Human Relations and Community Services Department, intimates that some individuals and families pay over 30% of their incomes for rent (Interview with the *Lansing State Journal,* January 16, 2002). Renters who earn $6 to $7 per hour from fast food restaurants cannot pay the average $515.00 rent for the City's major residential areas/facilities/apartments (Housing Commission's 200 survey, quoted by *Lansing State Journal,* Jan 16, 2002). Bad credit and evictions are other reasons for being homeless (*LSJ,* January 16, 2002.).

One of this dissertation's key research questions is to test the reliability of the assumption that single mother parents on welfare or semi-welfare recipient status do not get enough hours of employment per week/month or year in order to cover the bills for

their households' basic needs. As such, they are compelled to piece together employment-generated resources, family/friendship support resources and human services/charity organization assistance as well as welfare checks to sustain themselves and family members from day to day. The alternative single mothers have is to work close to 60 hours (Kweit and Kweit 1999) or reach a level of 98 hours to pay their bills (Interview with John Danahue, Chicago Homeless Coalition Administrator, November 28, 2000). At this juncture, this dissertation suggests that encouraging single mothers to network and form social capital groups that can supplement the primary and secondary sources of support to deal with the poverty and welfare dependency problems be taken to heart. This suggestion is based on the productive experiences of single mother parents who had achieved degrees of independence through working cooperatively (refer to Carol Stacks' (1974), Seccombe's (1999) and Gilbert's {see Jonas and Wilson1999} research in the area). It seems that this broadening of active mutual support system has a potential of paving the way for self-sufficiency.

Single mother parents on welfare and those with intermittent welfare recipient status are not able to make enough to pay their bills. Even those who have already exited the public assistance environment and become 'self- sufficient' are not able to make ends meet. Interviews with randomly selected SMPs during the time of the pre-testing of the questionnaire for this dissertation, showed that many mothers who experienced budgetary shortfalls each month visited food distribution centers in town. Many mothers who participated in the filling out of the actual questionnaire also visited the Advent House Ministries in Lansing and the Central Methodist Church every Wednesday and they went to the South West Neighborhood Center in Lansing on and around the 10^{th} of each month

to obtain food and other supplies. Some of these mothers intimated with me about the circumstances that compel them to frequent the food distribution centers. Some of these mothers worked with different organizations and they were among those who did not satisfy the income requirements to qualify for welfare benefits. Casual discussions with them made it clear that they had to come to the food distribution centers to supplement the limited resources that do not keep them afloat over a given month.

Soup kitchens run by a number of churches such as Central Methodist Church (Thursday's Fellowship Luncheons), Advent House Ministries (weekend lunches), Volunteers of America (daily lunches and dinners excepting dinner over the weekends), open their doors for the needy. Mount Hope Church in the City (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday lunches and Wednesday dinners) is one church that is frequented by the elderly. All of the soup kitchens attract huge numbers of destitute diners from far and near the City of Lansing.

As demonstrated above, what single mothers get paid in the form of minimum wage ($5 to $7) is not sufficient to cover expenses like rent that in some cases consumes 70 percents of poor families' incomes, let alone pay for all their other basic needs (see Polakow, in Opposing Viewpoints 1997: 2, and http://galenet.galegroup.com/). The poverty level in the U.S. has been generally increasing at an increasing rate (Wilson et al. 2001: 33-41). The change in the rise of the level of poverty is not consistent over time periods involving consecutive years. Sometimes the rate goes down. But the trend is that it is increasing at an increasing rate. Data for a selected series of intermittent years shows that the average percentage of the total population affected ran around 18% (refer Table 42 in Appendix 1 and Figure 11 in Appendix 2).

Poverty can be controlled and reduced where the will to do so exists. Of all segments of the poor in the U.S. many people that are 65 years and older have benefited from government programs that recognized their problems and deservedly took measures to cater to their needs. For instance, the number of people who were below the poverty level in this category in 1980 was 15.7 million. In 1998, this figure went down to 10.5 million (see Figure 12 in Appendix 2). This is a significant achievement, given that the figure for the overall poor population has been going up.

In Michigan too, at the time when the national and the state economy had been booming (for the period of the mid- and late 1990s) some 194,000 people were unemployed in 1999 (see Figure 1, in Appendix 2). While the labor participation rate for women was 61.2% that for males was 76.3%. This larger percentage of unemployed women indicates that a larger number of single-mother parents contribute to the inflation of this category of unemployed persons in the state.

The number, including most single mother parents on welfare rolls, was reported to have gone down from 430,000 (1992) to 230,000 (1999) (Interview with M. Sorbet, Director of the Communications Office, FIA, December 1999). The lowest number of the unemployed (194,000 for 1999, see Fig.11 and accompanying Table for Appendix. 2) demonstrates that the balance of 230,000-194,000, that is, 36,000 (the excess dependent) people worked or received support from other sources and, may be, they brought home some sort of income to supplement the welfare checks that they received from the FIA.

Under TANAF also, the number of single mother parents on the welfare rolls nationally had been falling during the past few years. A comparison of the figures of needy families in 1981 and 1999 shows that the number fell from a high of 3.8 million

(1981) to 3.6 in 1983 and rose to 4.5 (1991) and then declined 2.5 in 1999 (see Figure 4 in Appendix 2). This is a big change. The figure for Michigan for the same category of mostly SMPs in 1995 went down from 195,000 families or 578,000 recipients to 92,000 families or 257,000 recipients in 1999 (see also Figure 5 in Appendix 2).

These figures do not include those families and members who, as it were, choose not to be assisted despite their need to do so. Lansing city officials recognize that an unspecified number of individuals refrain from getting public assistance (Interview with Melanie Winnicker and Paul Elam (April 4, 2002).

Recipients of federal food programs also grew substantially from 1980 to 1995. The highest recipient population figure was in 1995 when a total of 26.6 million people sought food assistance and they were provided with food stamps representing monthly food rations (see Figures 6-1 and 6-2 in Appendix 2). The number of recipients has gone down from 25 million in 1996 to 23, 20, 19 million in 1997, 1998 and 1999, respectively. But despite the decline in the food stamp recipient population, the rise in the number of assistance seekers from voluntary agencies and churches seemed to compensate for the reduction in the number of those who thronged the public support systems. A number of activities have to be put on hold or eliminated by many non-profit sector agencies (See interviews with officials of Christo Rey (December 7, 2003), Salvation Army (December 19, 2003, Volunteers of America (December 19, 2003), Haven House (November 24, 2003). Space for staying in the shelters is far behind meeting the full need of the population that seeks assistance. Budgets for stays in motels and transitional housing are also under-funded, according to the Mid-Michigan Chapter of the American Red Cross in Lansing.

Charity and non-governmental organizations repeatedly remind the public about the gross shortage of resources for distribution to the needy. The number of recipients of public assistance was not going down as a consequence of the increase in the employment rate that was a feature of the 1990s in Michigan as nationally. A shortage of resources resulted because of the draconian measures the state took to slash the already small resources apportioned for these programs of relief (interviews with officials of the Michigan Chapter of the American Red Cross, Volunteers of America, City of Lansing, Lansing Rescue Mission in 1999, 2002, 2003 and 2004).

The state in the United States began to involve itself in relief or public assistance when the traditional sources of support, the family and charities, were not able to provide for millions of Americans who were made destitute by the Great Market Crash of 1929. The discovery of a great deal of poverty in both the urban and rural settings in the country also evoked a series of mammoth relief and recovery programs to control and/or eradicate them beginning the mid-1960s. But these programs came under fire because the cost of running them surged ahead to a level that the tax-paying public was little prepared to continue to generously give its blessings. Conflicts that reached levels of saber rattling by the major parties and the larger public ensued. Public welfare to the poor was in time systematically ended as a concept. Yet, assistance for single mothers with children in particular is continuing contingent upon their willingness to work and/or go to school.

The need for public assistance to the poor is thus still there one way or another. Even the state that dismantled the safety net with a certainty that government, through its improper beneficence, was the cause for the withdrawal of many able-bodied persons, single mothers included, from the work force and hence the creator of dependence, seems

to have been subjected to a second thought about the problem. The whole idea of compassionate conservatism that was injected in the discourse relating to the poverty of a good segment of the American population during the 2000 presidential elections is a case in point. The state has thus come to realize that poverty could not be controlled, let alone eliminated, without public intervention. The state has, in other words come to terms with the idea that without larger flows of resources to those in the lower rungs of the socio-economic structure, the sufferings poverty brings about would not be minimized. Consequently, the state has been entertaining the idea of transferring resources to charities, NGOs and voluntary agencies that work in the service of the poor. Although, nothing is known about the amount of resources that had or would be given to the non-profits to serve the poor, that many people in government and outside still relish the position that only the free market system fixes the problems poverty brings in its wake.

3. Work First/Workfare Successes, Problems and Prospects: A brief case study of Michigan

Through the Job First program or what is commonly known as workfare, some 235, 905 welfare recipients in Michigan left welfare from September 1992 - September 1999 (Interview with Sorbet, FIA Communication Department Head, Dec. 23, 1999; FIA Program Descriptions, November 1999). The cases for these recipients were closed, according to Sorbet. This is no mean achievement given that enabling welfare recipient to find jobs or some means of obtaining or other ways of helping themselves is a tremendously difficult task. For one thing, most of these citizens have little or no training due to, among other things, the fact that the 'life chances' they were able to take advantage of to educate and hence prepare themselves for the job world were minimal.

For another, many of these individuals have immense difficulties with self-esteem after having experienced grueling hardships because of their exclusion from the formal world of work.

In 1999, there were 220,793 individuals who constituted a welfare caseload in the State of Michigan. Efforts were made to help them to join the labor force in due course, according to Sorbet. The plan, on the part of the state was to assist them until they were self-sufficient, she added.

The reasons for the decrease in the welfare caseload, in the view of Sorbet, were threefold. The first one was the requirement of the law that people on welfare should be put to work. Second, the welfare recipients themselves wanted to work for reasons of feeling independent. Finally, the good performance of the economy that was credited for creating employment opportunities (see also PAPED documents). The reduced welfare caseload (despite the low unemployment rate of 3.8% in 1998 and between 4 and 4.9% for 1996 through 1997) was below the national average (see Michigan's FIA Information Packet, April 1, 1999: 7; also refer to Table 1 and Figure 5 for Appendix 2).

Even though many welfare recipients are still on the rolls, the State has put on hold the five-year limit for recipients who go beyond the Federal Government's declared termination of assistance to those recipients in need. Under the national plan no client can exceed the five-year limit receiving help. But Michigan's own decision has made it possible for those who may not be able to find employment within the labor market to continue to get support from the state (Sorbet, interview, Dec. 23, 1999).

Needy families can thus apply for assistance any time as long as they fulfill the employment requirements set for welfare recipients. They assured that they would be

able to receive assistance even after they enter, exit and reenter the labor force if they show any need during their lifetime.

All this is a notable achievement by the State of Michigan, as it constitutes a compassionate gesture. But there are some reasons that may be cause for concern. First, the unemployment rate, after showing a progressive decline between 1993 and 1998, did start to go up in 1999 (see Figure 1 in Appendix 2). It is projected to rise to 4.3% in 2000 compared with the lower percentage for 1999 (Ibid). The second concern is that the number of former clients getting off the welfare rolls and coming back to it showed no sign of decrease. Their return indicates that the welfare-to-work program has as yet some fundamental problems that it needs to address.

The third and major problem is subtler than the first two. It is the rise in the number of citizens seeking assistance from charities and the increased activity of the non-profit community in Michigan. Lansing Rescue Mission's Director Dan Hicks reported (Interview Dec. 27,1999) that the agency was compelled to purchase six more houses and increase its bed capacity from 30 to 70 between 1994 and 1998. Some 45 of the beds were reserved for single mothers with children. In Dan Hicks' view, the rise in the number of destitute citizens is a result of the lack of affordable housing, domestic violence and substance abuse.

He revealed that the reason behind the crowding of the shelters for the homeless-poor is the shortage of service givers. Services are provided by non-profit organizations only. As no government run shelters were available, he maintained, sharing the responsibility for the explosive need of the homeless-poor in 1999 by important

institutions of society were miserably lacking. Shelters in the Lansing area were quite full most of the time as a consequence.

The shortage of shelter for the homeless poor was supplemented by the motel accommodation services of the Mid-Michigan Chapter of the American Red Cross in Lansing. This organization's expenses for motel users increased steadily between 1994 and 1999 (Report for the Homeless Awareness Week (HAW), American Red Cross, November. 8, 1999). The Red Cross provided motel accommodation for 2,341 people between Oct. 1998 and Sept. 1999 (see HAW Report). Of the total persons needing accommodation, 65.8 percent consisted of families with children. Again, of the total clients, 43.3 percent represented single parent families. The number of children among the motel users ran as high as 60 percent.

The HAW Report indicated that the hike in the number of motel users was a result of four factors: first, the 'sky high' or rising rent in Lansing and its environs, or conversely, the refusal of landlords to take low-income clients as renters. Second, the requirement that stipulated that renters were required to have two years of 'positive rental histories of good credit ratings' and, third, a 'faster and faster shrinkage' of low-income housing units constituted a factor posing a problem to the poor (HAW Report: 1).

In this context, the Red Cross posed fundamental questions that it believed were both challenging and frustrating to itself and the other non-profit agencies in the Greater Lansing Area. These were framed in a rhetorical question formats as:

> What is going on? Are we not experiencing a growing economy? Has not public policy change put record numbers of people back to work (HAW Report 1, November 8, 1999).

The HAW report also put the overall problem in a proper perspective. The report's terse summary read that the problem was:

> A shrinking inventory of low income housing; lack of livable wages for our working poor and lack of resources for those who cannot work (Refer to HAW Report 1).

Shelter providers in other areas, namely, Owosso, Charlotte and Grand Rapids, also talked about a record increase in the number of the homeless-poor, according to the HAW Report. These worrisome reports were not peculiar to Michigan. As shown in the introductory section of this chapter, the same problem was experienced nation-wide. Some fundamental questions cross one's mind as one thinks about the overall problem.

Is there a connection at all between the decrease in the number of people leaving the welfare rolls and the increase in the number of people who are seeking assistance from the non-profit sector? Does the large number of children who are placed in motels (60 percent of the users in Lansing, according to the HAW Report) along with their single-mothers have anything to do with the change in the welfare system? Is there any means of establishing this possible relationship between the exit of single-mothers with children from the welfare system and their dependence on the non-profit shelter and other services? Are some people 'disentitled' somehow as the effort of getting employment is going on? Or, in other words, is sifting those families who hooked themselves to jobs or were hooked through third person/group efforts, managed satisfactorily or did it harbor unexpected/hidden problems? These constitute a good set of research questions.

These questions were posed to the officials interviewed in both institutions, that is, in the FIA and non-profit agencies. But all the interviewed officials were not able to give definitive answers. "We do not have any figures for these" was the common and

consistent responses given to the queries (interviews with Strope, January 20, 2004, and Sorbet, December 23, 1999). Evaluation of the situation of 'work first' program and its attendant constraints awaits an in-depth research. A few of these questions are, of course, supplied by this dissertation.

SECTION 2: THE VOICES OF THE POOR AND THEIR BENEFACTORS

1. Preamble

In this sub-section, I highlight the major factors that obstruct single mothers' efforts to be independent and relegate the need for subsidies from the state and the voluntary sector to the background and supplement their meager incomes. The lack of living wage in the labor market of the economic sectors that they depend on, the absence of credentials that do not add up in spite of efforts on the part of several SMPs to build their skills and curb transportation difficulties that, among other things, limit their connection with the job world and food distribution chain. These factors constitute single mother parents' daily routine encounters in their bid to gain a higher level of income and an adequate level of food resources.

The stigmas and stereotypes that are stuck on single mothers and their perceptions of the impact of these in their daily living and the accusation that they take advantage of the system are tabled and evaluated by the chapter. The role social capital can play in mitigating the problem of childcare and the roadblock transportation poses in the efforts single mothers put forth to be self-sufficient is also discussed.

The issues of particular focus here are living wage/minimum wage, availability of jobs, education and skill building that I place in the universal category of problems. Welfare dependence, the temporary nature of jobs available for single mothers and the

attendant low-paying service jobs, as opposed to well-paying manufactory jobs that are usually available to mothers, force them to find other ways of supplementing their incomes through interactions with private and public sources of support. The factors of transportation to work, school and run errands and get back home, childcare, healthcare and cooperation between single mothers to ease the hurdles they face in their day-to-day lives are also discussed. The mothers talk about the roadblocks they face as they experienced, assessed and evaluated them first hand. Voluntary agencies and government actors that are in what may be identified as the 'seek-support' continuum also corroborate the stories told by the mothers and/or criticize them consistent with the interactions that take place in diverse service provision and receipt environments.

The three categories of interviewees agree on many points like budgeting of income, prioritizing and spending within limits as well as taking the lead in and charge of decisions that (SMPs) have to make on their own behalf. Some of the similarities and differences in the views held by the three groups of interviewees are highlighted below.

2. Continua Between Living Wage and Minimum Wage

The interviewees tended to argue on the issues surrounding the living wage and the attendant minimum wage that goes with it. The living wage is usually talked about in theoretical rather than in practical terms and remedial solutions are not readily available to take care of the problem. The ordinances issued by cities, and Lansing in the context of this dissertation, shy away from enforcement unless they involve contracted out work done by businesses on behalf of the city. The call made to create jobs that pay enough 'take home' wages is but only feeble. In an Executive Order issued in September 2003

and planned to be implemented January 1, 2004, Mayor Tony Benavides, for instance, encouraged businesses to pay adequate amounts to workers so 'they can live above the poverty line' (Mayor's Amended City of Lansing Living Wage Plan, Sept 12, 2003). The rationalization for this order was put in the following words. The move, the amended plan said, would increase "consumer income, decrease poverty, invigorate neighborhood business, and reduce the need for taxpayer funded social service programs" (Ibid.). This statement addresses the issues that this dissertation raises with regard to empowering and assisting single mother parents to come together and lay the seeds of small businesses to eventually earn incomes that would preclude the necessity of attaching themselves to public assistance programs for longer periods than needed.

The living wage standard that is contemplated by Lansing and Ingham county officials has been an $18, 336 annual income for a family of four or $8.83 an hour or $11.04, if health care contributions are added (Layne, November 27, 2002:1). Businesses with five or fewer employees are not obligated to adopt the living wage plan (Ibid.).

Businesses have been strongly opposing the plan on the grounds that "government mandates to increase wages or interfere with business practices to hire and negotiate with employees" is out of joint with interest and sound business practice. The ordinance to increase the living/minimum wage is "spreading like wild fire" in spite of businesses' efforts to block it and has passed or it is under consideration in Ann Arbor, Detroit, East Point, Ferndale, Kalamazoo, Pittsfield Township, Warren, Ypsilanti, and Ypsilanti Township as well as, of course, Lansing: (see www.detroitchamber.com/public_affairs/index.asp?scid=&rcid=76, undated).

Owners of capital continue to vehemently oppose the idea of the living wage increase. In a statement 'Stop the Living Wage Ordinance From Coming To Your Community,' the Detroit Regional Chamber opposes the idea (Ibid.). Ingham County's Chamber of Commerce executive director for government relations, Summer Minck-Hallwood, described a 'living wage mandate was a bad economic decision.' She said the chamber and its members 'opposed the proposal partially because it referenced sub-contractors, small businesses and non-profits' that the ordinance previously exempted, as well as businesses with five and fewer employees.

Two contradictory problems emerge from this controversy on increasing the minimum wage and the insistence on keeping it down as a result of the resistance shown by business. The government wants to see the minimum wage rise in keeping with the rise in the rate of inflation, but business opposes the idea on the grounds that it hurts investment. Corporations and businesses meanwhile export jobs to overseas markets where the wage rate is exceedingly low. Government, on the other hand, supports the activities of foreign businesses in the U.S. because they create jobs for American workers. It does this because these businesses replace some of the jobs lost due to the migration of American manufacturing jobs to China and other less developed countries.

The argument that jobs are moving from Lansing to overseas manufacturing destinations and, under these circumstances, increasing the minimum wage is unjustifiable is not correct. The two issues are different in nature. But customer assistance jobs such as those of American Express and other credit companies, astoundingly enough, also migrate to overseas markets in S. East Asia and South America and the Caribbean nations. The issue of jobs straddles economic sectors that employ low-income

Americans and migrants, including single mothers. When one talks about an increase in the minimum wage one is also talking about these job categories.

The question of where replacement jobs for those departing ones should come is a query that needs to be given more thought and primacy in policy considerations. It is one question the answer of which is evident – creating more and more jobs with good wages.

Pamela Loprest's 'article' (August 20, 2001: 1-2) on welfare reform and what it provided for assistance recipients/leavers in terms of autonomy throws some light on what the excitement and positive attitudes that the attendant discourses produced. The reform, Loprest contends, had certainly led to decisions by recipients to hook themselves to some work. But the jobs the mothers managed to secure or the wages received neither satisfied nor fulfilled the expectations of all those who called for and were involved in introducing change. Loprest describes the situation in the following words:

> ...a fair number of people have gotten jobs, and that's been a success.... But, ... the types of jobs... are low-wage jobs without many benefits, and there's a real issue about being able to keep those jobs, and how to help people maintain support for their families.

The flight of jobs to overseas markets is then only a symptom of the overall problem. There are plenty of jobs within the U.S. that need(ed) to pay living wages and ones that lower hours of employees under the pretext of 'slow business'. If business is unable to solve this recurrent problem, government, an embodiment of society, should always get prepared to step in and resolve the partial debacle somehow.

The discrepancy between the hourly wage rate paid and the living wage that workers currently earn is wide. The federal government-defined minimum wage of $5.15 now is much below a level that barely covers the basic needs of low-income persons or single mother parents. The minimum wage usually lags behind the inflation rate.

Lansing and other cities do have living wage ordinances; but these only affect business enterprises that get government contracts. The provisions embodied in the regulations are more often dismissed with the point that 'instituting mandatory minimum wage...would stifle business development' (Bhala 2001: 150). Such an outlook does not bode well with state enterprises in India and China where income adjustments are freely made even if it means that the capital of the enterprises is affected. By increasing wage bonuses to offset rises in cost of living, they hope to induce an increase in labor productivity. Low income of workers negatively affects their incentive to be productive. Participation and equal opportunity are, according to Bhalla (2001: 170) fundamental for the implementation of programs and projects. Poor SMPs in Lansing and elsewhere in the U. S. are not lucky in this regard. They are very much marginal to the system that is supposed to serve them. Their incomes are very low indeed.

Marger (1999: 51) asks whether or not a $16,276, an arbitrarily declared annual income in the U. S. can support a family of four "safely above poverty". Peoples' needs and consumption rates differ by gender and age in the U.S. and across the world Marger (ibid.) reveals quoting the U.S. Bureau of the Census 1998 (see also Amartya Sen, 1981: 438; 1984: 381-382 and 376-379; 1987, 1995; Orr in Hula and Jackson-Elmoore 2001.

Government and Voluntary agency interviewees for this dissertation concur with the position that the living wage in Lansing is very low. They point out that single mother parents in the city in part fail to liberate themselves from the firm grip of poverty for the reason that the minimum wage is low. This wage, they argue, remains fixed well below what it can help purchase in the way of a basic food basket and other allied basic service needs by families.

For Sweeney (Salvation Army) one needs to earn a lot more an hour than currently to survive. (Interview transcript 2.7.2004: 6). According to Sweeney:

> You can't live on a $6 an hour. The living wage in Lansing is $11.75. That is a big difference. It is an endless cycle that needs to be broken, but it's going to take something big (Ibid).

She elaborates further:

> If you are making $500 or $600 a month and you are barely making ends meet, one emergency, and you could be on the streets. That is what a lot of our women (single mothers in particular) experience. This is... a net to fall into when things go wrong (see transcript 2.7.2004: 7).

Sharon (volunteers of America) feels the same way, too. Given the cost of living in Lansing, single mothers and other poor people need to make $10.00 to pay their bills. This is a rate that can enable people to:

> reasonably even try and support housing and some food and utilities and things like that. If the folks that we are working with... are unable to make(ing) that kind of hourly wage, then the chances of their being able to support themselves are little (Transcript 2.10.'04).

Taylor (Hannah's House Administrator) puts the income-cost of living expenditure gap in terms of the low wage that SMPs earn (Transcript December 11, 2004: 7). The services that SMPs buy run high all the time. She sees the problem in the context of the lived in experiences of single mothers. She expresses her sadness about the increasing basic services' costs to families and laments that these are not accompanied by changes in the minimum wage rate that can help pay for them. She makes the comparison between basic need item costs and stresses:

> ...housing costs, energy or utility bills have gone up. All that's gone up; the wage of McDonalds hasn't gone up in comparison (see Transcript December 11, 2004:7).

For her, the type of jobs SMPs can get – jobs that 'will support' themselves and their children, meaning 40-hour jobs rather than 'seasonal jobs' or part-time jobs with adequate rates of pay, are a must if they are expected to support themselves (see Transcript December 11, 2004: 7 and 9).

Charles Steinberg, Lansing City Human Services Specialist, relayed that the 'minimum wage is lagging way behind inflation' (Interview January 5, 2004; Interview Transcript 2.1.2005: 14). He notes:

> The main policy that is being pursued here locally is to have a living wage... There is also an effort to get (sic) minimum wage increased, but of course the business sector screams and hollers.

According to Steinberg, business owners would usually say to themselves 'we couldn't pay more. I might have to sell my Lexus. I have to take my Rolex down and trade it for a Timex.' What he means by this is that personal leisure and higher standards attained win the battle and empathy and care are overwhelmed by the need for maintaining standards of life achieved by those who are comfortable. While the better off do all they can to retain their economic standing intact, recipients struggle to put together a survival resource base by interacting with public and private assistance institutions. They talk about what a living wage means to them and what they do to make ends meet.

The recipients interviewed – Rachel and Shaq'itta – emphasize that a living wage is absolutely essential to meet theirs and their children's basic needs. Though the needs of both single mothers differed in many ways, they expressed the point that shortages of

resources, financial resources in particular, complicate their lives and compel them to interact with both primary and secondary sources of support. While Rachel works, Shaq'uitta was craving for a job at the time of the interview.

Rachel made $7.00 an hour from her job. She has four small children to take care of. As she put it cogently, what she earns is not enough to help her household survive. She intimates:

> The jobs out there aren't paying enough for a person to carry on. My rent is $610. I have four children. If you do the math, between bills and rent and living on $7.00, it does not add up (Interview, January 6, 2004; Transcript January 29, 2004: 1).

Rachel recognizes that she is a low-income person. She reasons:

> I wanted a family and he (her husband) at this point is in prison, so that is why I am low-income at the moment, now (Transcript January 29, 2004:1).

She speaks about her condition of life in religious terms. Although she considers herself a low-income person, she does not see herself as poor. She says:

> I am not poor. I am actually very rich today in this world; but in this society I would be considered poor. I know my Lord and Savior does provide for me and he's providing me a home in Haven and here on earth, he does help me to survive (Interview, January 6, 2004, see also interview transcript January 29, 2004:1).

Unlike Rachel, single mother parent Shaq'uitta was in the process of establishing herself. She lived at the Crossroads (a voluntary agency and shelter in Lansing) when the interview was conducted). She lived with her two-year old daughter. Her financial needs at the time of the interview were not much.

Her aunt from Chicago returned her phone call during the Christmas holidays, as related by Shaq'uitta, her aunt said to her:

> ...If there is anything you need, I will try my best. I know you are trying to do it on your own, you can always come back....

Shaq'uitta said that her aunt at that point in time knew what she (Shaq'uitta) needed was small amounts of money to buy some things for her daughter and herself. But there was no way she could go back to Chicago. She was in Lansing to stay. She expressed her needs at the time of the interview in the following manner:

> I need a couple of dollars, you know. Maybe $2 or $3 would help me. It is not like I am starving. I have plenty of food to eat. I don't really need pampers, because my daughter is out of those. I don't really need anything. I just need a job so I can start saving some money so I can get out of here (the Crossroads Shelter).

She worked for the Meijer Store sometime earlier, but she quit because she had no way of getting to her work; she did not have a car that she could use to go to work and return home. Her place of work was not at a proximate location with her residence (shelter). She was eager to get a job: "so I can start saving some money, so I can get out of here" (Interview December 31, 2003; Transcript January 29, 2004: 3). At the time of the interview Shaq'uitta was not worried about paying rent of buying her food. Crossroads supplied her with what she and her daughter needed during the period of transition to an autonomous life she was trying to construct. The need to get a job and make to the job is a continuing problem mothers face.

The minimum wage issue is a serious problem to Lansing's single mothers who participated in the survey conducted for this study. The survey results show that 50 % of the mothers made between $5 and $9 an hour. Only 10 % were paid between $9 and $11

an hour. The cost of living in the city requires that, at least, $11 an hour, which is the minimum that can keep the mothers afloat, should be earned.

The survey conducted for the dissertation, shows that the average wage for those who responded to the question was less than $8.50 an hour. This does not correspond with the $8.83 declared for a family of four without the inclusion of spending estimates that is $2.11 extra (Layne, November 27, 2002).

Table 15: Survey Table Q34: Per hour earnings of SMPs for work done outside home

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 less than $5.00	6	7.5	15.0	15.0
	2 $5.01-$7.00	10	12.5	25.0	40.0
	3 $7.01-$9.00	10	12.5	25.0	65.0
	4 $9.01-$11.00	7	8.8	17.5	82.5
	5 $11.01-$13.00	4	5.0	10.0	92.5
	6 $13.01-$15.00	2	2.5	5.0	97.5
	7 more than $15.00	1	1.3	2.5	100.0
	Total	40	50.0	100.0	
Missing	9 missing	39	48.8		
	System	1	1.3		
	Total	40	50.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Source: Computed from this dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

3. Scarcity of Jobs

The problems SMPs face are not limited to their inability to secure a living wage. At the end of 2003, some 5-7 percent of the American people were unemployed nationally. In Michigan, the unemployment rate went to 7% for the same year. Lansing also

experienced the problem – some 5.6% of the population was unemployed in 2003. The reasons for unemployment in the American context are many. But, according to Collins (1996: 55) many people find themselves unemployed either because they 'get discouraged or (have) disabilities or home responsibilities.' Many SMPs are caught in lots of responsibilities connected with taking care of their child(ren).

From the perspective of the single mothers, the problem of connecting with the job world as this relates to their ability to budget their time between work and their responsibilities at home emerge out of the complex responsibilities that they have to shoulder in order to keep up their households. The technical difficulties Shaq'uitta faced everyday stymied her decision to work. Here is how she puts her problems in perspective:

> I have been working for a while. I was originally from Chicago. So, I moved out here and I found (sic) working at the Meijer ... and every thing was going fine until I had come to this place (Crossroads Shelter). I tried to work there, but I was working late hours, so it was real hard for me like 8:00 p.m. to 1:00 at night; and getting back was hard, plus taking daughter to her baby sister was hard so I had to quit my job. I am trying to find a different job, so I can get things back on, so I can start saving money. (Interview December 31, 2003; Interview Transcript January 29, 2004: 1).

Lack of jobs in their home towns compel mothers to move to other cities. Sahq'uitta, for instance, moved to Lansing from Chicago because she was informed that jobs would be available in this city more than others. Rachel, one of the single mothers interviewed for this dissertation came to Lansing for the same reason Shaq'uitta moved to the city. Rachel explains her predicaments in the following words:

> I moved out here to Lansing because I found a job down here. I couldn't get one in my hometown. I lived in Mount Pleasant (Transcript January 29,2004:1).

The problem with single mother parents' inability to help themselves boils down to two factors as the above statements show. The first, of course, relates to the non-availability of jobs within their original localities. Some are unable to find jobs that were full time. Of the 51 participants who responded to Question 22, some 17 or 21% said that lack of jobs was the reason for their unemployed status, while 34 or 42.5 % said this was not the reason. To the question of whether or not the collection of welfare checks was the excuse for not getting a job, 32 or 40 % said that this resource was enough for them to get by. Obviously this percentage includes both disabled mothers as well as those who may not want to work and instead depend on the meager amount that they obtain from the welfare office.

Those mothers who said that they had other reasons for not getting jobs is not small either. For instance, 17 mothers or 21 % out 51 respondents said that their reason for not getting jobs was other than obtaining welfare checks and transportation difficulties (see Tables 45 and 46, Frequency Tables for Q 23 a and b, respectively, Appendix 1). It was simply the lack of jobs. Further research on these issues would provide data for better policy constructions to deal with poverty and dependency problems relatively effectively.

Of the 56 respondents who completed questions 23 and 26, some 27 said they worked as regular employees, as 'workers from home' and as other/casual workers. The participants here were 56 and they represented 34 % of the respondents (refer to Tables 45-52, constructed from the data contained in Frequency Tables Q23 and 26 in Appendix 1). The 27 respondents also constitute 34 % of the total participants in the survey (N=80). As indicated earlier, lack of transportation in part explained the reason why more single mothers were unable to participate in the job market.

4. Transportation

Lack of transportation means is the second reason why SMP are unable to find work. A mismatch between work hours they (SMPs) are given and their responsibilities at home is an additional problem they have to contend with. Asked why they were jobless, 17.5 percent of the 14 out of 49(N=80) respondents to this dissertation's survey said that transportation was one of their major problems they encountered in their effort to find jobs. The seriousness of the problem is also reflected in the expenditure item levels of the single mothers' households. Transportation ranked fifth in terms of budget consumption of the mothers who participated in the survey.

Single mothers have to make trips to several charities and others in search of support. The survey data indicates that the most frequently used transportation means included the bus system, personal vehicles, walking and rides from friends and family members, and the percentages of these were 26 (33%), 25 (31%), 20 (25%) and 12 (15%) (61 out of the total of N=80 participants), in that order, (refer to Tables 54-60, Frequency Tables for Survey Q 37, See Appendix 1). The use of borrowed cars, bikes and other (options) each were used by six percent of the respondents. The most frequently used system, busing, takes a lot of time to reach one's destination, the work place of single mothers. Moreover, many neighborhoods and segments of Lansing are not served by the CATA bus system. Of the 49 respondents who marked Survey Q 23, some 14 or 18 percent (see Table 46, Frequency Table Survey Q 23 (b) in appendix 1) indicated that one of the reasons for their being jobless was lack of transportation and 35 said it was not. Inability to find jobs, welfare versus work regulation issues that had to be followed and the 'other' (option) in the survey question were more or less given similar percentage values.

An attempt to see the relationship between time of stay on welfare and use of transportation ('walk', 'use of own vehicle', 'asking for rides' and 'using the bus system' was attempted. Only 3 % of those recipients who were on welfare for more than three different time periods said they walked to their work and assistance service organizations. But 35 % of those who were on welfare for less than three different time periods had to walk for the same purpose.

Only 8 % of those who were on welfare for less than three time periods sought rides to their work and service institutions. However, the percentage for those who were on welfare for more than three different time periods and needed ride was 36. Only 38 percent of those who used the welfare system for less than three time periods boarded the buses to go to work and service agencies. A good number (64%) of those who were linked to the welfare system more than three times made a heavy use of the public transportation system for making the trips to their jobs and service points (see Table 19, p. 241, Survey Question(s) (60 and) 37b in Appendix1, are the data sources). Why this happens may be a good line of research for collecting data for policy-making purposes.

Table 16: Cross tabulation Table 1-A: Relationship between number of years on welfare (Question 60) and type of transportation used to go to service points

Welfare stay and transportation use			
Years on welfare	Walk		
	No	Yes	Total
3 times and under	24 (65%)	13 (35%)	37
Above three times	11 (79%)	3(21%)	14
Total	35 (69%)	16(31%)	51

Source: Computed from this dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

Table 17: Cross tabulation Table 1-B: Relationship between number of years on welfare and type of transportation used to go to service points

Welfare stay and transportation use			
Years on welfare	Drive own car		
	No	Yes	Total
3 times and under	24 (62%)	15 (38%)	39
Above three times	9 (64%)	5 (36%)	14
Total	33 (61%)	20 (39%)	51

Source: Computed from this dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

Table 18: Cross tabulation Table 1-D: Relationship between number of years on welfare and type of transportation used to go to service points

Welfare stay and transportation use			
Years on welfare	Ask for rides		
	No	Yes	Total
3 times and under	34 (92%)	3(8%)	37
Above three times	9 (64%)	5(36%)	14
Total	43 (84%)	8 (16%)	51

Source: Computed from this dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

Table 19: Cross tabulation Table 1-E: Relationship between number of years on welfare and type of transportation used to go to service points

Welfare stay and transportation use			
Years on welfare	Use bus/public transportation system		
	No	Yes	Total
3 times and under	23 (62%)	14 (38%)	37
Above three times	5 (36%)	9 (64%)	14
Total	28 (55%)	23 (45%)	51

Source: Computed from this dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

This dissertation's survey has also produced an interesting data on the distribution of residences of participants and the supportive service locations. It was found out that locations of supportive agencies were crowded in fewer zip code areas and that users had to employ multiple transportation means to get to the service locations they needed to pick up supplies and obtain other support.

5. Support/Food Service and Survey Participant Residence Locations

Most of the supportive services are located in a rectangular area between the intersections of Martin Luther King Avenue and Oakland-Grand River Avenue; Pennsylvania Avenue and again Oakland–Grand River Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue and Chestnut Street, and Pennsylvania Avenue and Hillsdale Street (see digitized and mapped figure, that is, Figure 6, in Appendix 1). Some 24 of the supportive services are crowded within this perimeter. Only 8 are further away from this particular rectangular area. In terms of streets/avenues, the conjointly running Grand River NS Oakland Avenues, the Hillsdale and Chestnut streets as well as the Shiawassee Street that extend from east to west contain the services. Martin Luther King Avenue, Dwight, Larch, Pennsylvania streets provide the concentration arteries for the same services.

Looked at from the angle of residence locations of the survey research participants, five of the 12 zip code areas, identified as the areas where they have roof over their heads or rented places, are the most important ones (refer to Table 42, in Appendix 1). Some 20 live in the 48911 zip code area. Eleven live within the 48910area. Also zip code areas 48915, 48906, and 48912 provide residence locations for 9, 8 and 5 SMPs in that order.

The concentration of the support services obviously creates difficulties for many SMPs who have to budget more time to pick up food and other supplies as well as run errands or handle some important business that is crucial for their day-to-day lives. The distribution of these services within neighborhood areas and/or school compounds would make live easier for SMPs who partially depend on these services.

6. Do Single Mothers Who Are On Public Assistance Work?

Unlike the prevailing general view that the poor and/or the subjects themselves do not work, empirical data show that they do. The 1999 HAW Report (Mid-Michigan's American Red Cross, November 8, 1999) also indicated that of those in the homeless category the agency helped with motel accommodation, 31.9 percent, had at least one adult member working. The fact that nationally, 44 percent of the homeless-poor work also is an indication that they try to meet the challenges of everyday life (HUD Report quoted by CBS, Nov. 12, 1999).

The survey done for this dissertation also reveals that 24 out of the 74 or 30.0 % of the SMPs who completed the questionnaire had jobs. About 50 respondents or 62.5 % said they did not work (six out of the 80 did not mark the question). But many, despite the prompting follow up question, did not explain the reasons for their situation "if you are not working, why?" (Refer to Table 45, Survey Q23 a, Appendix 1).

Similarly, answers given to the question: "If you are working on more than one job, how many hours do you work on each of these jobs each week" (Question 26) drew a less than satisfying response. Some five single mothers who had an extra job or who found casual labor opportunities added between five and 18 hours to their total 40-hour weekly work. Some 14 mothers who had or did not have jobs claimed that they worked on

regular or part time jobs that they happen to find, two worked from their home and four said they worked, but put the work in the "other" category (Cross-tab data from this study's survey; see Table 20 below too).

Table 20: Survey Table Q22: The number of unemployed and employed SMPs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	50	62.5	67.6	67.6
	Yes	24	30.0	32.4	100.0
	Total	74	92.5	100.0	
Missing	9	6	7.5		
Total		80	100.0		

Source: This dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

Table 21: Survey Table Q24: Types of jobs held by SMPs in the survey

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 nurse's aid	6	7.5	13.6	13.6
	3 restaurant worker	3	3.8	6.8	20.5
	4 cleaner	5	6.3	11.4	31.8
	5 office assistant	1	1.3	2.3	34.1
	9 cashier	4	5.0	9.1	43.2
	10 other	25	31.3	56.8	100.0
	Total	44	55.0	100.0	
Missing	99 missing	36	45.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Source: This dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

The poor, single mothers in Lansing, more or less, work like anyone else in the general population. The survey data of this study shows that 30% of the respondents or 34 % of the total participants worked (this does not include those who worked from home

and those who put themselves in the 'other' category per Survey Question 26 a-d and 26_DT (see Tables 47-51, frequency tables for the question, in Appendix 1 for details).

The number of hours the survey participants worked, however, depended on the kind of jobs they were able to find. Some worked on regular jobs, while others indicated that they worked whenever they were able to find jobs, including casual work, at any time.

Some of the mothers also worked more than those who were employed in the formal labor market. Look at those mothers and fathers who work two or more jobs to make ends meet—those who have to work over 50 hours each week to break even with respect to the bills (Kweit and Kweit 1999) that they have to take care of. As Seccombe (1999: vii) has also put it so well, the "problem of welfare has little to do with lazy women or the structure of the welfare system." It is rather "the structure of low wage work," tenuous and insecure as it is, that "can't support a family in a decent manner" (Ibid.).

The lack of jobs is also seen in terms of whether or not '...real, viable employment opportunity is out there' (Steinberg, Interview Transcript February 2004: 11) when it comes to the situation of single mother parents. Steinberg saw the job scarcity problem in light of the non-availability of 'gainful employment' that many writers on the issue see as significant for controlling the incidence of poverty.

Sharon (Volunteers of America) links the problem of finding jobs by the poor or SMPs with the 'downturn in the economy.' For her fewer jobs are available and these 'tend to be service (sector) jobs with low pay' (December 19, 2003, and see Transcript January 29, 2004: 6).

Sweeny (Salvation Army; interview December 11, 2003; Transcript, February 2, 2004) makes the point that recipients who use the services of her agency find it difficult to get full-time jobs. She said:

> The majority of the women that we meet that are making ends meet... have two part-time jobs, usually temporary work. They are not offered full-time, very often. (See Transcript February 2, 2004: 8).

Sweeny points out that the problem of finding jobs is linked with the non-availability of jobs as well as the loss of them and reduction of hours of work for employees. These, she sees as factors militating against the capability of the poor/SMPs who try to help themselves and their families. She notes that this is an everyday occurrence. She puts the hustle the mothers undergo in context:

> I see it everyday. They come in (Salvation Army) and they say, 'you know, I lost my job' or 'they cut my hours' and... 'I could not pay rent...' (Transcript February 2, 2004:13).

Taylor (Hannah's House administrator) also sees the problems single mother parents face as ones connected with the unavailability of jobs or lack of employment. She contends that it is not necessarily getting the jobs, but also finding 'employment that supports them' (SMPs) is the issue here (refer to Transcript December 2, 2004: 7).

As it stands, for Taylor, the scarcity of jobs and the low pay that is tagged to them is often times the crux of the problem for SMPs. The seasonal or part-time nature of the jobs further complicates the lives of the mothers. The shifting nature of the jobs, meaning, the shrinkage of the hours of work, works against the efforts single mothers make to be independent, Taylor intimates (see Transcript December 11, 2004: 9).

Ann Mellon (Administrator of the South Central Neighborhood Center in Lansing) concurs with what the other voluntary agency administrators and specialists emphasized with regard to the job crisis as it relates to single mothers. She says:

> It has been hard to find (a) good job for single mother parents. It's not easy. We are finding a lot of families are having trouble getting a full-time job, and well-paid full-time jobs. There are a limited number of full-time jobs (that) pay sufficiently to maintain their family (see Transcript Dec. 11, 2004: 6; interview, January 8, 2004).

The reason for this, according to Mellon, is mainly the availability of fewer jobs or the savings that businesses like to make by hiring a lesser number of employees. She thus attaches a structural explanation to the problem.

> Either businesses are hiring part-time or the number of jobs are simply less," she stresses.

The "overall economic situation and businesses' declared aim to retain more profit explains the problem for her. She puts the problem of scarcity of jobs and the failure to pay sufficient wages in the following words:

> A part of it is the economy and part of it is the business approach to save resources... because if you have a part-time employee your benefits that you have to pay are less – health care, sick time, all those benefits that are paid for employees. So businesses are looking at that. It is a little less expensive to hire two part-time employees than it is one full time (Transcript December 11,2004: 6).

7. Education

One of the reasons advanced toward explaining single mothers' economic problems has been their poor education. Education is indeed considered a passport to a good life. That is why Bourdieu has said that it is a tool for achieving the good life. As part of the cultural equipment enabling those who possess it to do better in life than others, Bourdieu

puts it among the crucial factors that help one to wriggle or move with twists and turns out of conditions of poverty.

No wonder that it is given a high mark in the list of factors that enable single mothers to escape poverty and welfare dependency. Single mothers are encouraged to further their education as this factor, in both its short-term and long-term advantage senses, has a pay back that translates into self-sufficiency in the long run. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996, argues: 'Higher' education is a way out of the quagmire of poverty and reliance on public assistance (Collins 1996, Hussain Fayyaz, in JRSI Publications, October 1996: 9).

Education is, therefore, key to improve the chances of the poor to escape their poverty. As Marger (1999: 66) also argues those citizens with less education would usually remain in poverty with dead-end jobs. As he succinctly put it:

> ...those with the least years and poorest quality of schooling will take their place at the end of the job queue. As a result of their low educational level they will have the fewest skills. Thus they will qualify only for jobs that are the least challenging and that offer no opportunities for advancement... Many, of course, will be unable to find even those low level jobs. Thus just as low education assures a correspondingly low level of work, the poor jobs assure a low income since these are the jobs that pay minimally (ibid. 66-67).

This argument emphasizes the value and the rewards that come with it. Without a greater level of education SMPs would suffer because they possess only a low-level education and hence deficiency in critical skills. The data collected and analyzed by this dissertation's survey indicate that many of the SMPs stop their education at high school.

Only 31 % of the single mother parents in the survey, discounting those who marked the 'other' category, are above high school in their education. The large majority, 46 %, has gone as far as completing high school only (see Table 22 below).

Table 22: Survey Table Q6: Level of education completed by SMPs in survey

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 primary school	3	3.8	4.1	4.1
	2 middle school	2	2.5	2.7	6.8
	3 high school	37	46.3	50.0	56.8
	4 two years of college	17	21.3	23.0	79.7
	5 four years of college	6	7.5	8.1	87.8
	6 others	9	11.3	12.2	100.0
	Total	74	92.5	100.0	
Missing	9 missing	6	7.5		
Total		80	100.0		

Source: Computed from this dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

But the question is even if they do complete high school would they be in better stead to earn more income? Obviously, they would not. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents have a level of education that is high school and two-year college. Yet, less than 30 percent of the respondents said they had jobs (see Table 15: Survey Table Q34, p. 236). It is no wonder that this is the case when one compares this reality with that of the 15,562 manicure and pedicure trainees in the 1980s, only 1409 were able to be gainfully employed (see Kweit and Kweit 1999: 416). The case of manufactory and indeed professional workers whose jobs were lost due to migration to less expensive wage rate areas within and outside the United States and the consequent exodus of the employees to

service job sectors shows markedly that education is in some sense less of a factor in achieving a reasonably high income for the survival of a family in the American context.

The problem rather lies in the structure of the system that creates good jobs with living wages or keeps the minimum wage unchanging and limping behind the inflation rate for a number of years. It takes a change in the structure of the system, that is, taking action to provide a 'livable wage' in all economic sectors and at all levels to ameliorate the situation.

The practice of businesses under the system in the U. S. is not to pay livable wages to most single mother parents and others in the same class category. Even mothers with comparatively higher level of education are not rewarded that much. For instance, of the 32 respondents with some education at high school and beyond high school levels, 81 percent earned rates of $11 and under per hour from work (refer to Table 23 Survey Table Q 6-a below). Those single others who made $7 and below, were 40.5 percent. The percentage for those who earned between $7 and $ 11 was also 40.5. Only 19 percent of the total respondents were paid between $11 and $15.

Table 23: Survey Table Q 6-a: The relationship between school level completed and per hour earnings

SMPs' earnings by school level			
Per hour earnings	High school & under	Above high school	Total
Under $7	7 (54%)	6 (53%)	13
7-11	6 (53%)	7 (54%)	13
11-15	3 (50%)	3 (53%)	6
Total	16	16	32

Source: This dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

What do SMPs interviewed as key informants for this dissertation say about these issues? Both Shaq'uitta and Rachel realize that education is the means by which they can escape poverty.

Shaq'uitta expresses her problems in the following manner:

> I only got my high school diploma. It is going to be hard for me to find a higher paying job.

The past in terms of her education was disastrous for her, she said. The distraction from her education came as a result of her pregnancy while she was in her teens. Aside from creating an obstacle for her, the pregnancy affected her relationships with her parents. As she noted:

> My mom talked about adoption and abortion. My dad felt so bad because I won't graduate from high school; I wasn't going to college or anything (Interview December 29, 2003 and Interview Transcript January 29, 2004: 4).

Following these bitter experiences, Rachel has come around the realization that education is an important tool to organize one's life in a reasonable manner. She is determined to continue her education. She says:

> This year, I graduated on time with a 3.2. I stayed in school. I was even planning on going to college... things got too hectic at home with me and my mom, so I couldn't deal with it no more. I was fed up with that... (Interview Transcript, January 29, 2004: 3-4).

That was why she left home (Chicago) and came to Lansing, in search of an opportunity to further her education, get a job and seek the support the her daughter's family. The family was ready to support her in her plans to go to school as well.

Rachel, another SMP interviewee, has a different view of education. She says that she 'hopes to go to school and get an education'.

One day she decided to take maternity leave from work to sign up for college. But her plan was stymied because her childcare money was denied by the Family Independence Agency. She is saddened by the refusal of the Agency to help her in this regard. She laments:

> Every time I have set up for anything like that, it's always fallen through. I can't go to college this spring because they are not paying for childcare. They aren't paying for my classes. They were supposed to pay for my classes and they are not. So the financial... the financial aid that I filled out... hasn't went through; so I won't be able to start this winter. Hopefully this summer... if I get financial aid, I will be able to do it in the summer, if they help with childcare.

But all told, Leis wants to go to school not because it is a priority for her. As she put it: 'there is no other way', other than going to school. Several problems emerge when one attempts to plan and go to college.

SECTION 3: PERCEPTIONS ABOUT STIGMAS AND ABUSE OF THE WELFARE SYSTEM

1. Stigmas and Stereotypes

Single mother parents with children do not only suffer from shortages of financial or material resources. To make matters worse, they are also subjected to stereotypes that define their behaviors' and self-evaluation that has an impact on the behavior and action on the self. Single mothers are also stigmatized which means that some find labels of social disgrace stuck on them. (Eitzen and Smith 2003: 201).

Why are welfare recipients stigmatized? Who blames the mothers? How do they take or avoid being blamed? The public image of "lazy, baby-making women, living off other people's labor" cited by the single mothers Rogers-Dillon (in Eitzen et al 2003: 65-67) interviewed gives readers some ideas about the kinds of labeling that goes with welfare recipiency as it relates to single mothers.

They are also stigmatized according to Seccombe (1999: 51) for "being ... unmotivated and taking advantage of the welfare system." The explanation also takes a racial dimension that Hirschmann and Liebert, (in Hirschmann and Liebert: 2001: 5) see as the model of an undeserving "African-American woman, who not only has grown up on welfare, but insures her continuation in the system by having babies for the sole purpose of increasing her welfare check..." is brought to the picture.

Although, contrary to the current pressure applied to push welfare recipient mothers into the labor force, the same traditional valuation that prevented them to compete for jobs and occupations that were the domain of the male world, is working against the interests of the single mothers with children today. As chapter 3 has shown, poor single

mothers of today, in particular, are treated differently from middle class widows who were encouraged or supplied with welfare resources and were allowed to stay home to raise their children. (Hirschmann and Liebert 2001: 5).

The point relating to the question that is the blamers of welfare recipient single mothers is interesting. According to Seccombe (1999: 50) "...distrust and hostility toward welfare recipients is widespread among the more affluent populations." But members of this same wealthy population, although they felt disgraced when the 1929 stock market crisis reduced them to recipients of welfare, whiled away the time using public welfare as their temporary means of survival. Even though it is the affluent that usually blame them and stigmatize them, welfare recipients themselves feel disgraced by the fact that they obtain public funds to make ends meet. This demonstrates that the stereotypes constructed by others, the well-off, in particular, have become part of the values held by the recipients themselves and make them embarrassed when their relations with the welfare system is established, meaning when others know about the single mothers' status (see Rogers-Dillon (in Eitzen et al., 2003: 65-67; Seccombe 1999: 52; Hirschmann, in Hirschmann and Liebert 2001: 93-94; Dodson 1998: 126-128),

Single mother parents often attempt to hide the fact that they are on welfare. They manage to do this by not talking about it. But what Rogers-Dillon (in Eitzen et al 2003: 67-68) calls 'symbols of stigmas' represented by food stamps, the arrival of the food stamps and the inadvertent announcement of their arrival in the mail by the SMPs children (Seccombe 1999: 52) as well as the use of the food stamps at checkout points in stores were found to be embarrassing for many recipients. The censure delivered at a checkout point at a Meijer's store (a drama observed by the writer of this dissertation) is a

classical case of embarrassing remarks that usually assumed rather than their impact on real recipients. The story relates to the experience of a man who had a few steaks along with other grocery stuff and was unloading the items on to the check out belt. Another male shopper shows up from behind and says: "I too would have liked to buy those steaks if I were provided with food stamps." But the steak purchaser paid the cashier with a credit card to the embarrassment of the labeler himself. The labeler then disappeared and queued on another check out point wearing his guilt and shame. Such blanket and rush statements show that SMPs face criticisms in public places like food distribution centers where they are seen collecting food and other supplies like in Lansing's churches and neighborhood centers where part of the research for this study was conducted.

2. Perceptions and Feelings of SMPs About Stigmas

A cross tabulation of the differential in perceptions of feelings among SMPs who completed high school and those who had above high school education shows that generally there is no significant difference among both groups. Both groups agree that the general population stigmatizes single mothers on welfare.

Table 24: Cross Tabulation Table 1-N: Perceptions of SMPs compared with educational level

Perceptions about stigmas and educational level of SMPs			
	High school and under	Above high school	Total
Agree	15 (60%)	10 (40%)	25
Disagree	5 (55%)	4 (45%)	9

Source: Computed from this dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

Table 25: Cross Tabulation Table 1-O: Perceptions about stigmas as experienced in stores

Perceptions on stigmas expressed in stores and educational level			
	High school and under	Above high school	Total
Agree	11 (52%)	10 (48%)	21
Disagree	7 (70%)	3 (30%)	10

Source: Computed from this dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

Table 26: Cross Tabulation Table 1-P: SMPs' experiences of pain from expressed stigmas

Stigma and experiences of pain			
	High school and under	Above high school	Total
Agree	20 (67%)	13 (33%)	33
Disagree	3 (43%)	4 (47%)	7

Source: Computed from this dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

But a slightly higher number of those who completed high school felt that they went through such incidents inside stores (mainly at check out points when they paid for their purchases with food stamps) more than those whose education was beyond high school.

What are the stigma experiences of the single mother parents who were interviewed for this study? When asked whether or not she was criticized for seeking some kind of assistance, Shaq'uitta (Interview December 31, 2003; Interview Transcript January 29, 2004: 3) said that she never came across such experience, but she believed that it might eventually happen. She continued:

> If it did I'd ... feel very uncomfortable. If I come in for your services, depending on who I am; I could be the richest or the poorest or whatever! I am getting something;

> I am buying something from you. It don't matter who I am,
> I don't want any body to judge me.

This remark reminds us that being judgmental about people, be they consumers of welfare services or those who buy something in a store, is not right. Rachel, another interviewee for this dissertation, felt that single mothers are subjected to criticisms and denied service even by staff in the welfare office. Rachel was disturbed by her encounter with her social worker who gave her a difficult time because she was 'a little late from the Michigan Works seminars that recipients are required to attend in order to continue to get their welfare checks and childcare money from the state. She was told that her assistance would be cut off as a result. Rachel expressed her disappointments in the following words:

> ...because there are people that have used the state (some take advantage of it) ... (they) treat everybody like they abuse the state and are very difficult with you to even help you get on your feet because they assume too much. (Interview January 6, 2004; Interview Transcript, January 29, 2004:1).

Voluntary agency heads also provide us with some insights about the problems stereotyping single mothers leads to. Sharon Dad of Volunteers of America says that poor single mothers:

> ...behave the way they do not because they want this alternative, but because they reach a point where they think that they don't have access to mainstream resources or they really feel that they have no choices and have come to a place or really, desperation and hopelessness. The biggest challenges we have are motivating people you have made the decision to step out, to step back in and trust somebody or some organization enough to assist them in the process. (Interview, December 19, 2003).

Taylor of Hanah's House does not agree about the 'lazy' label that is stuck on single mothers. She has not met anyone that fits this label. Occasionally, she sees some 18-year-old girls:

> Who have been supported by their mom their whole life. They don't know the reality (that) you need to work to support yourself, but that's more immaturity, that's a growing process. I know a lot of people that feel that their teenagers are lazy... (the label) extravagant (a label for mothers) frustrates me because what can you buy extravagantly if you are a mother and a child on $450 or whatever it is a month. Most people eat that at McDonalds a month, (as) families (Interview, December 11, 2004).

Sweeny of Salvation Army does not see any place for stereotyping of single mother parents. She says "Single mother parents I see work very hard. They are very grateful when you help them" (Transcript 2.7.2004:8). She adds:

> In the shelter system, the women work harder at their chores... They have a sense or responsibility. They are very responsible for their children. The people that come in here (Salvation Army) are hard workers. Maybe they can't get a job. Maybe they do have a lot of children.

Single mothers are thought of as being in the saddle of the widely used 'free rider' problem, Sweeny says. It is easy to tell these mothers to "go and get a job. You have to be in 'their life' to understand how difficult that may be. It is a misperception."

Steinberg of Lansing City brings in a new dimension to the problem of how people in poverty are seen by some people. He views the problem emanating from an entrenched value system that 'elitism' seems to promote. He brings up and quotes from discourses that transpire around the holiday dinner table. The discussions concerning the jobless, according to him, around "Why don't you get a real job. Get an MBA and get a real job? (Transcript 2.1.2004: 9). He laments: "We live in a culture of increasing elitism where to

be poor is to have a disease. It doesn't look good for the country" (Transcript 2.1.2004: 9).

The problem of stereotyping has two dimensions for Mellon of the Southwest Neighborhood Center of Lansing. She says that sometimes some support agency staff think recipients are lazy and at other times it is believed that they are not. For her though:

> It is not (being) lazy, it's being overwhelmed. You can be overwhelmed. And yes you might miss an appointment or you might not have all the right paperwork done correctly. But that's because of the challenges (December 11, 2003.

Failure to realize that this hurdle is real on the part of their viewers makes single mothers frustrated, Mellon reminds us. She makes the point that:

> Many women are frustrated because they sense that people think they aren't doing their job; they are trying their best. Maybe they need help to do it better and to be more effective. Many of them are trying very hard. I know there are things they can learn. Sometimes we don't give people that skill. (Interview Transcript January 8, 2004:4).

3. Recipients and Welfare: Taking advantage of the system

Stereotypes that are common are 'lenses' that are, therefore, constructed to view single mother parents in a bad light and blame them for their destitution. There is yet another stronger accusation that is directed at single mothers with children. They are also accused of taking advantage of the welfare system.

To Sweeny of Salvation Army this is not a justifiable indictment. Abuse of the system, according to Sweeny is connected with the 'free ride' assumption. A small percentage of around two percent may be involved in this matter. She expresses her indignation about the wrong assumptions relating to cheating in the following words:

> You (the blamers) pick that two percent and blame the rest of the population. People call here (the office) all the time and... ask me what we (Salvation Army) did with the (donated) money. They say: "I don't want my money to go to that...", or "I don't understand why you are going to help those kinds of people, they just need to get a job." That offends me and I explain (give) my opinion.

Abuse of the welfare system casts itself also in another aspect of life of single mother parents with children. This particularly relates to the concept of the presence of a 'man in the house' regulation that was implemented during the early stages of the expansion of welfare benefits to single mothers with children. The regulation required that single mothers should not have a male partner who, it was assumed, could bring income to support the household. Sharon Dad of Volunteers of America remembers her own history when fathers were running out the backdoor because someone was coming in to take a look at the house and its situation as well as interview the mother that was on welfare, "that was unfortunate" (Interview Transcript 2.10.2004: 8).

Single mothers also viewed abuse of the welfare system in misunderstanding terms on the part of welfare office decision-makers. As noted earlier, Rachel, one of the single mother parents interviewed, made the point that the complex daily entanglements of some mothers is interpreted as an engagement in lying in order to get benefits. Rachel said that the staff of the welfare office called her a 'liar' for two reasons. First, they suspected she was getting benefits despite the fact that:

> I don't have a job. They have kind of put my case on hold until they find out otherwise. I guess some paper work wasn't filled out, because I don't know what paper they do need... which is not my fault. Everything is on hold right now (her benefits).

Second, Rachel said, unlike their suspicion, she works and she receives the paperwork from the welfare office in the mail. She said she would get it filled out with the help of her boss and send it back to them soon.

These are the kinds of engagements some mothers are involved in their daily lives. This, however, does not mean that there are other single mothers who cheat in their relations with the public welfare system.

Actually some mothers do cheat and the literature on welfare to the poor finds this to be true. Hirschmann et al (in Hirschmann et al 2001: 94) evinces that the welfare recipient mothers are compelled to cheat because those who do so are 'rewarded' and those who go by the rules get less or are denied benefits. In a sense this practice, according to this view, appears to be justified.

Kathryn Edin sees the problem from a different angle. The single mothers Edin (1991: 468-470; see also Hirschmann 2001: 94-95) interviewed made the point that the large expenditures that they incur to satisfy their basic needs, compels them to lie about the incomes they get. These particular mothers also work on side jobs. They do not report their whole income. The reason for this is that if they reveal their full income, their honesty translates into slashing their benefits. Is there a way out of such a 'hide and seek' game? A search for this alternative should be fallen on to for perhaps redirecting the resources, time and energy, on blaming the players in the game – single mothers and more importantly society represented by 'big and spending government'.

SECTION 4: THE SOCIAL CAPITAL APPROACH TO ABETTING POVERTY OF SINGLE MOTHERS

Expanding the horizons of single mothers' efforts to be autonomous may lead to self-sufficiency in the long run. Some single mothers with children may be able to fend for themselves through an individual effort. But as a group they can resolve a lot of their problems through networking and working together. What do single mothers say about this alternative?

Rachel was asked if she would participate in a cooperative, mutual help support group that may help in alleviating problems connected with child care, one of her big stumbling blocks in her daily life. Her initial response was "I don't have to. I am very busy." She went on, further stating:

> It doesn't work for me; for one thing, having four children is a big job. For me to get with another woman who has 1, 2, 3, 4 children.... exchange... I don't like to put that stress on another person. I don't trust another person to deal with my children, the way I would deal with my children. The love is not going to be there, because they are not mothers. They are not related to them at all and I feel that for myself. I would be too stressed out to bring in any more children into my home, to deal with some one else's children. I don't know too many mothers.

Her responses to the idea, as her remarks indicate have mixed messages. On the one hand, she says she does not trust stranger mothers who would give the quality care she provides to her children. On the other hand also she does not want to create problems to other mothers by entrusting the responsibility of caring for her children. Rachel did not, however, relate the fact that she allows a baby-sitter to handle her children while she went to work at the time of the interview.

But subsequent questions and further discussions on the value of cooperation, Rachel changed her position and supported the idea. She said:

> If there is a way for us to help each other and be able to contact with each other ... have some kind of support group in that way (sic) where we would help with each other's children that would be great.

Rachel even went further than her previous understandings of cooperatives and expressed her earlier thought out plans of educating herself in the area of childcare and run such a center at some future date. She further reasoned:

> That is why, myself, I was going to try to go to school to become a child care director, so my children can be with me and also help other mothers who need childcare. That would be very helpful if what you are saying, ... if there was such a thing, which I never heard of ....

For Shaq'uitta also cooperation between mothers is helpful in many ways. She said that such a group would be a source of exchange of information and would enable one to learn from the experiences of other cooperative members.

A young lady who Shaq'uitta worked with at the Meijer store was helpful to her in many ways. This friend of hers and another one exchanged childcare services. That was an informal cooperating group in the making. But as Shaq'uitta said, the big distance between the locations of their (her friend) new residences would not permit them to continue the childcare mutual help project they started.

Charities and voluntary agencies that support single mothers also like the idea of starting social capital groups for the mothers. For Mellon (January 8, 2004 interview) such cooperation and their eventual growth into small businesses can generate employment opportunities to the mothers. This, she said, helps a lot; as there are only a

"limited number of full time jobs" because of the bad shape the economy has at this time and the decision of many businesses to give part-time work only.

Virginia Taylor, Hanah's House director, liked the social capital group idea because it worked well for minorities who come to this country as settlers (Interview, December 11, 2003: 13). If single mothers start these kinds of ventures they would be 'empowered' and take care of many of their problems.

Salvation Army's Sweeny also sees the cooperative ventures for single mothers as a good idea. She says that this should be established on a strong foundation where people who would guide the group and give them 'solid advice so they would be successful' come forward. In her view:

> There are a lot of services out there that single mothers could do that would fit their schedule, which would benefit them or would benefit the general public. It would be a good, productive way to go. People can't complain if you are starting a new business. Most new businesses are subsidized to some extent (December 11, 2003 interview).

Sharon Dad, of Volunteers of America, believed that the idea of encouraging single mothers to become entrepreneurs is a noble one. But to her, this needs a lot of support, training, for instance. "If we provide training as a community," as the venture is "more than just producing the product, it would be advantageous to the mothers" (Interview, December 19, 2003; see also Transcript, 2.10.2004: 10). She emphasized that the community should focus on giving them the necessary training as "we don't want to set people up for failure because they have not been properly trained."

Steinberg, Lansing City's Human Resources specialist, (January 4, 2004), likens the social capital group idea with that of the Michigan self-help clearing house group that gave support for single parent support groups that were designed specifically to engage in

activities a cooperating group ran a childcare unit under the sponsorship of the Black Child Institute three decades ago.

Through the clearinghouse group, self-help units of single mothers also shared job leads and recruited adult education advocates who created intimate connections with welfare recipient mothers and helped the mothers with educational activities in addition to providing mentoring.

The social capital route to resolving single mother parents' poverty, Steinberg believes, needs a more systematic intervention. For sure, he said, the involvement coming from the county and the state in Michigan's case is a must.

Social capital indeed provides a way out of the quagmire of poverty. It makes networking possible and once this is laid out, the trust that the members need to work together emerges.

Rachel's, one of the single mothers interviewed for this study, expressed fear that 'other mothers are not known' initially is legitimate. But, her fear was allayed once she thought about during the course of the interview for this study. The limited resources that individual mothers are only able to scrape would be bolstered if they pool them for some substantial work involving cooperation. The financial as well as labor exchanges contributed toward the childcare service would later grow and translate into the maintenance of full scale childcare centers owned and run by the social capital groups that single mothers create.

Note 1: Abbreviations used for identifying neighborhood centers and Voluntary agencies shown on page 52 above:

In-depth interview participant locations:

Gateway Community Services (Gacose), and Central Methodist Church(Cemech)

*Neighborhood and support services:

Southwest Neighborhood Center (Sowenece); Baker Donora Neighborhood Center (Badonococe), Capital Area United Way (Caarunway)

*Voluntary Agencies:

Hannah's House (Haho); Christo Rey Community Center (Chrecoce); Salvation Army (Saarm); Volunteers of America (Voam); Haven House (Haho), and Lansing Rescue Mission (Laremi).

*Government agencies:

Family Independence Agency (Fainag); City of Lansing Human Recourses Department (Cilahurede); Michigan Works (Miwo) Ingham County Health Department, North Lansing, (Incohede), Ingham county Child Health Department (Incochhedep).

Not 2: Additional list of names of participants and organization officials interviewed

Al, Spokesperson of the 1992 Tent Protest of Homeless Persons, staged at the Capitol Grounds, interview conducted by Teshome Tadesse, for a semester paper for a graduate course in Anthropology, taught by Prof. Whiteford, Spring Semester, 1992.

Strope, Janet. Director of Family Support Services, Family Independence Agency, Lansing, Michigan, Feb. 2004.

Leslie Prame, Training Department Head at the Central Michigan Works Office, South Lansing Branch.

Annabelle (age 43), shelter (resident), run by the LRM, 2005 at the time of interview.

Desiree, Jones (age 27), shelter resident LRM, 2005.

Shankkle, Heather (age 23), shelter resident LRM, 2005.

Flores, Mary, a Department head at the St. Vincent Catholic Charities.

Lisa, a single mother in Lansing who offered to be interviewed after she filled out the questionnaire for this dissertation, Michigan Works First, Lansing Community College Branch, March 22, 2004.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS: SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND POVERTY, AND THE RESOURCES NEEDED TO TACKLE THEM

1. Preamble

This chapter discusses the resources single mothers are able to garner from work and support institutions. It examines the level of resource needs, the discrepancies and where these resources are, in general, secured from and their distributions.

The first half of the chapter discusses issues connected with welfare recipiency and human resources development, the benefits reaped from keeping welfare in check, the fact that poverty can affect any one and that no one may be immune to its effects. The final half deals with issues relating to the potential power of poor/single mothers and how this may be concretized in terms of improving their lot and what roles civil societies and social movements may play to supplement SMPs' efforts.

2. Public Expectations of Single Mothers on Welfare: Resource shortages and attempts SMPs make to remedy the problem

As the discussions in the previous chapters show, single mother parents are required to be every thing that many of them may not possibly be at one and the same time. For instance, they are, inter alia, expected to raise children, an extremely sensitive job that affects their relationships with supporting institutions like the Family Independence Agency (the welfare office in Michigan); the expectation that SMPs should provide 'standardized' care for their children and themselves, as well as the responsibility of getting jobs, holding on to them and fulfilling the requirement for schooling themselves for all the outcomes this may in the end bring with it in the way of escaping poverty.

Education

Both single mother parents who receive(d) supplemental resources of all kinds and their benefactors see that education is the key to lift mothers out of poverty and dependence on others. The mothers expect and/or are expected by others to go to school and work at home and outside at the same time.

These statements and requirements have a theoretical rather than empirical base. How could single mother parents, save enough to finance their education when their other basic needs are hardly met with the meager resources that they concoct from several sources? This is where the state, according to Janet Strope, Interview February 20, 2004; Interview Transcript November 27, 2005) should take a more serious and positive approach to help SMPs in addition to other institutions whose singular purpose is the provision of some of the means to attain the mothers' educational goals.

It takes a much more solid support, rather than nominal and/or temporary assistance, to enable single mother parents complete some higher level of education. The inordinate amount of time some mothers take to finish their education provides the clear signal that only a constant flow of resources is the biggest factor that clears the obstacles that single mother parents encounter in their desire and attempts to further their education.

Education emerges as the single most important means of escaping poverty and dependency on public welfare as both the literature and interviews conducted for this dissertation indicate (see discussions by interviewees in Chapter 4). Only 46.3 percent of the respondent single mother parents completed high school (see Table 22: Survey Question 6: Level of education completed on p. 249). Given that good jobs are usually

available in some specialized areas, single mothers education should be geared toward high skill job specialization in order for them to land on jobs that pay and provide job security.

The scores of years that former single mother parent Rubie took to finish her first degree shows that an awfully long time is sometimes needed to complete one's education. Rubie took 27 years to go through her undergraduate education. This amply demonstrates that patience and perseverance pays at the end. Rubie's reiteration that without the support she received from the state and other institutions she would not have been able to achieve her educational goals does make considerable sense. She now works with the Family Independence Agency's health care services and she is one of the frontline workers who assists those mothers who are also in the situation she was when she needed support.

Education is among the major resources that are credited for subjecting poverty and dependency on welfare to ever more control at the household level. But the limited resources allocated by the state for the purpose, and the numerous difficulties single mother, for instance, faced (childcare, transportation and adequate cash to pay for critical bills) with regard to moving ahead in terms of education, partly explains why poverty stays with single mothers. Of the 74 participants who responded to the question (Survey Question 6) on education level completed 37 or 46.3 said they completed high school; 17 or 21.3% were two year college graduates and six or 7.5% (refer to p. 249 above) made it through the undergraduate level. Enabling single mother parents to go further than high school may ease the problem of poverty for some mothers. For, sure, funding single

mothers' education should also be accompanied by other critical financial support if this particular group is expected to be self-sufficient.

Resource Needs

Poverty and the attendant public welfare dependency as it relates to single mother parents with children has frequently raised questions revolving around the major issues connected with three classes of resources ? good paying jobs with living wages, intermediate resources as well as long-term needs (education, for instance) satisfaction resources. The three categories of resources are not mutually exclusive. They are inclusive of each other and constitute linked up factors each of which interfaces with the other.

The lack of basic necessity resources ? that is, the smallness of the income of single mothers, the soaring behavior of the household expenditures relating to food, rent, utility that the mothers are able to garner from work and all sources of assistance, are responsible for the persistence of poverty among single mother parents. These basic need resources have to be there in substantially significant amounts in order for the mothers and their children to survive in the first place (refer to Figure 4, Chapter 1, page 87) depicting the relationship between poverty among single mother parents with children and resources that need to be allocated in order to enable them to be self-sufficient.

The intermediate resources ? childcare, healthcare, and transportation ? have to be there also so the mothers can leave their children in safe hands, their children are cared for adequately so that they (the mothers) can go to work and school and get back home with less worries. All these three sets of resources have to be in hand in larger quantities

so the mothers' households would function properly and fully. Cash assistance or what is commonly referred to, as welfare when it comes to the support of single mothers is a key factor for the upkeep of the household.

Secure Jobs and Livable Wages

Secure jobs accompanied by living wage incomes, adequate resources for long-term capabilities need to go hand in hand to create the groundwork for escaping poverty and eventually making public welfare support unnecessary. Edelaman (2002: 1) elucidates the point more when he makes the observation that: "if people had more income, they could contribute more to the cost of purchasing, health care, child care, or housing." Polakow (in Mink, 1993: 32), quoting the 1993 Report of the National Law Center (survey of 19 cities in the U. S.), reveals that childcare for two ofsprings, for instance, at the market rate wipes earnings brought home by single mothers from minimum wage jobs. Rent for two-bed apartments also "exceeded the maximum AFDC allowance for a family of three in 100 % of the surveyed cities" (Ibid).

These factors constituted part of the durable resources needed to overcome poverty and dependency on public assistance. But more often than not they were not tried for three major reasons. First, the idea would go against the ethos that the free market rather than government/state should be the motor behind development. Second, the cost of supporting these programs was rising considerably and that government's role interfered with local prerogatives (Kweit and Kweit 1999: 413). FDR's, compromise with the powers that were, the business sector in particular, in eliminating the phrase that required states to provide support to the poor at a level "compatible with health and decency" from

the Social Security Act of 1935 in order to secure its passage set back the ground work for the subsequent feeble responses to durable solutions to the poverty problem (Ibid: 407). In the following paragraphs, I will attempt to show what the consequences of these factors meant to the households of single mothers with children.

A series of questions on whether or not single mothers deserve to get support, particularly resources like welfare checks, critical services like healthcare and food stamps, childcare and transportation subsidies to commute work/school and home, need reviewing given the low incomes that the mothers earn. Also, expenses relating to utility and housing subsidy, which constitute recurrent costs to the families, make up significant outlays that many mothers are simply unable to shoulder at times. A good number of the respondents though owned the houses they lived in.

The seriousness of the housing problem can be seen from the research done by Kozol who reveals that the issue is much more serious than has ever been thought about earlier on. Kozol (1988: 1, 14; see also Affordable Housing Institute, "Distancing the Homeless," Yellow Review 7: 153-167 quoted in Kozol 1988), in his critical studies in New York says that some 300, 000 hidden homeless people, among whom are single mothers existed in the City. More than 10 million people pay over half of their incomes for rent. The Affordable Housing Institute at Rutgers Institute raises the number to 14 million odd people (quoted in Mercer 1990, cited in Timmer et al 1994: 12).

The survey research data for this dissertation shows that 44 participants or 55% of the single mothers did not own their own homes. They were renters of their residences. And this expenditure takes a good deal of their incomes. Rent sucked some 34 percent of each SMP's incomes (refer to Table 27 below and see Table 40(1), p. 335).

Table 27: Survey Table Q42-2: Rent as a major expenditure to SMP households

	Rent Amount	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	$46.00	1	1.3	2.3	2.3
	$75.00	1	1.3	2.3	4.5
	$76.00	1	1.3	2.3	6.8
	$100.00	1	1.3	2.3	9.1
	$115.00	1	1.3	2.3	11.4
	$119.00	1	1.3	2.3	13.6
	$124.00	1	1.3	2.3	15.9
	$150.00	2	2.5	4.5	20.5
	$155.00	1	1.3	2.3	22.7
	$175.00	1	1.3	2.3	25.0
	$200.00	1	1.3	2.3	27.3
	$240.00	1	1.3	2.3	29.5
	$300.00	3	3.8	6.8	36.4
	$350.00	3	3.8	6.8	43.2
	$395.00	1	1.3	2.3	45.5
	$400.00	2	2.5	4.5	50.0
	$450.00	1	1.3	2.3	52.3
	$495.00	1	1.3	2.3	54.5
	$496.00	1	1.3	2.3	56.8
	$500.00	2	2.5	4.5	61.4
	$525.00	1	1.3	2.3	63.6
	$550.00	2	2.5	4.5	68.2
	$591.00	1	1.3	2.3	70.5
	$600.00	1	1.3	2.3	72.7
	$616.00	1	1.3	2.3	75.0
	$622.00	1	1.3	2.3	77.3
	$650.00	2	2.5	4.5	81.8
	$670.00	1	1.3	2.3	84.1
	$675.00	3	3.8	6.8	90.9
	$695.00	1	1.3	2.3	93.2
	$801.26	1	1.3	2.3	95.5
	$950.00	1	1.3	2.3	97.7
	$958.00	1	1.3	2.3	100.0

	Rent Amount	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Total	44	55.0	100.0	
Missing	$.00 missing	36	45.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Source: This dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

The shortage of resources the mothers encounter compels them to frequently interact with the institutions that provision them partially or totally (shelters including pregnancy care and temporary residency services after birthing). Single mothers turned to significant others and social and political institutions in search of some kind of support, support for their children in particular. The average number of children by participants is 2.6 (calculated from this dissertation's survey data, see Table 28, below).

Table 28: Survey Q9: Distribution of number of children of respondent SMPs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
	1	11	13.8	14.7	16.0
	2	30	37.5	40.0	56.0
	3	10	12.5	13.3	69.3
	4	10	12.5	13.3	82.7
	5	8	10.0	10.7	93.3
	6	4	5.0	5.3	98.7
	8	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	75	93.8	100.0	
Missing	9 missing	5	6.3		
Total		80	100.0		

Source: This dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

The most usual sources for this support are fathers of their children, charities or voluntary organizations as well as agencies of the state at the local level and the federal

government. Fathers of the children advance some money for the maintenance of their children. As Table 29 (Survey Table Q35) below though indicates, fewer fathers pay child support. Even if they do, as responses to question 35-I 6 show, the amount is very small.

Fewer numbers of single mother parents received child support from their children's fathers. Only 15 out of 80 recipients who completed the questionnaire got child support. The support payment from former partners or children's parents ranged from $20 to $100. Only 2 or 2.5% received $50 each and another 2 or 2.5 % were paid $200 each.

Table 29: Survey Table Q35-I 1: Child support payments made to SMPs by fathers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	$20.00	1	1.3	6.7	6.7
	$50.00	2	2.5	13.3	20.0
	$80.00	1	1.3	6.7	26.7
	$100.00	1	1.3	6.7	33.3
	$191.00	1	1.3	6.7	40.0
	$200.00	2	2.5	13.3	53.3
	$246.00	1	1.3	6.7	60.0
	$263.00	1	1.3	6.7	66.7
	$296.00	1	1.3	6.7	73.3
	$550.00	1	1.3	6.7	80.0
	$650.00	1	1.3	6.7	86.7
	$720.00	1	1.3	6.7	93.3
	$961.00	1	1.3	6.7	100.0
	Total	15	18.8	100.0	
Missing	$.00 missing	65	81.3		
Total		80	100.0		

Source: This dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

Neither do many obtain assistance from the state. Only eight of the eighty who participated in the survey research were recipients of state allowances and this constitutes only 10% of the respondents. The income collected from the State of Michigan ranged between $140 and $.589. Here again only 2 (2.5 %) made the lowest in the range and 2 (2.5%) the highest.

Table 30: Survey Table Q35-I 6: State support to single mothers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	$140.00	2	2.5	25.0	25.0
	$460.00	1	1.3	12.5	37.5
	$552.00	1	1.3	12.5	50.0
	$564.00	2	2.5	25.0	75.0
	$565.00	1	1.3	12.5	87.5
	$581.00	1	1.3	12.5	100.0
	Total	8	10.0	100.0	
Missing	$.00 missing	72	90.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Source: Computed from this dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

Payment secured from the Family Independence Agency varied from a low of $130 to $659. Here again two (2) or 2.5 % gathered $313 or 3.8% $401, and 5 or 6.3 received $489 each.

Table 31: Survey Table Q35-I 7: Family Independence Agency's support to SMPs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	$130.00	1	1.3	5.3	5.3
	$140.00	1	1.3	5.3	10.5
	$189.00	1	1.3	5.3	15.8
	$300.00	1	1.3	5.3	21.1
	$311.00	2	2.5	10.5	31.6
	$367.00	1	1.3	5.3	36.8
	$401.00	3	3.8	15.8	52.6
	$406.00	1	1.3	5.3	57.9
	$412.00	1	1.3	5.3	63.2
	$489.00	5	6.3	26.3	89.5
	$589.00	1	1.3	5.3	94.7
	$659.00	1	1.3	5.3	100.0
	Total	19	23.8	100.0	
Missing	$.00 missing	61	76.3		
Total		80	100.0		

Source: Computed from this dissertation's data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

Some 15 individual SMPs who participated in the survey research received an average $147 per month from absent fathers on behalf of their children. The average monthly subsidy from the state for eight SMPs was $447. The Federal government or FIA's check for 19 mothers averaged $381 per month. What the mothers received from 'other' (Q35 I-8 option), unexplained sources, amounted to an average $489 (see Frequency Table 53, Survey Q35 I-8, in Appendix 1).

Table 32: Survey Table Q40: Child support given to SMP participants in survey by FIA

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	$25.00	1	1.3	4.2	4.2
	$60.00	1	1.3	4.2	8.3
	$75.00	1	1.3	4.2	12.5
	$90.00	1	1.3	4.2	16.7
	$100.00	3	3.8	12.5	29.2
	$167.00	1	1.3	4.2	33.3
	$200.00	4	5.0	16.7	50.0
	$250.00	2	2.5	8.3	58.3
	$300.00	6	7.5	25.0	83.3
	$340.00	1	1.3	4.2	87.5
	$400.00	1	1.3	4.2	91.7
	$500.00	1	1.3	4.2	95.8
	$1,780.00	1	1.3	4.2	100.0
	Total	24	30.0	100.0	
Missing	$.00 missing	56	70.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Source: Computed from this dissertation's data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

A look at the income and expenditures of SMPs

The incomes SMPs made from their work and support services would not enable them to save any money at the end of each month. The survey data indicates that most of the mothers interviewed experienced expenditure excess over the incomes they received.

Table 33: Survey Table Q39: Excess expenditure above income

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0 no	21	26.3	37.5	37.5
	1 yes	35	43.8	62.5	100.0
	Total	56	70.0	100.0	
Missing	9 missing	24	30.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Source: This dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

In fact, the survey data indicates that 43% or 35 of the 56 recipients' who responded to the question: 'Does your expenditure go over your income?' said they spent more than their disposable income each month. Only 21 respondents or 26.3% reported that they did not exceed their income levels.

Many single mothers make these deficits by resorting to borrowing. They borrow from parents, other family members, friends, working children, charities and churches and others. The numbers of single mothers who depended on these sources and their percentages in relation to the number who responded to Survey Q41 and the total participants (N=80) of the survey are shown in the table below.

The parents of the single mothers constitute the most frequent sources loans as the data in the table below shows. Churches and family members other than parents are also important sources of accessing loans.

Table 34: Survey Table Q41: Borrowings by SMPs to finance household deficits in income

SMPs borrowings from various sources to supplement household income (N=80)				
Source	No. of SMPs	Respondents	Valid percent	Percent
Parents	20	54	37.0	25.0
Family	14	54	25.9	17.5
Friends	6	54	11.1	7.5
Working child.	2	52	2.5	3.7
Charity/church	16	54	29.5	20.5
Other	19	53	35.5	23.8

Source: Computed from this dissertation's data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

Structural Problems, Inadequacy of Support and Education Outcomes

Many single mother parents receive all these items of support and combine them with the resources that they themselves raise through work. Yet, a portion of their benefactors criticizes them for not working enough to sustain themselves. Many SMPs though work, attend school and do the piecing of supplemental resources to live from day today.

The little changing low education status of many a mother has been an obstacle to their advance. While key informant interviewees for this dissertation recognize that the only way they see out of poverty for them is the extent to which they push their education (Shaq'uitta's and Rachel's interview transcripts, January 29, 2004), as far as they possibly can. But while financing their education is the most critical problem, the preoccupations with their young children, and most importantly lack of reliable childcare workers and their attendant expenses, constitute additional inhibitions to their plans to move ahead (see Rachel's interview, January 6, 2004 and interview transcript, January 29, 2004.

While these structural problems limit SMPs' desire to learn, the tendency to blame this segment of society for its lack of interest in education is without a credible foundation. Such an evaluation emerges out of a practice that is based less on critical thinking that sees the links between social phenomena. The attitude that SMPs have to or that they would make it on their own goes against received knowledge about the situation. Some single mothers go to the highest achievement level such as in education, that is, they complete their higher education with distinction (see interviews with Taylor, December 11, 2003, and Steinberg (Lansing City's Human Resources Department),

January 5, 2004). But these mothers, according to Steinberg and Taylor, Director of Hanah's House, a charity in Lansing, belong to the exceptional category. Stein mentions the SMP who, with five children in her household, was, some years back, able to go through one of the highest educational specialization areas, medical school, with a lot of sacrifice. The fact that such mothers reach the highest educational and professional levels indicates that other single mothers have the potential to overcome the problems that pose obstacles to their educational goals.

Public Assistance and Reduction of Poverty Among SMPs

Leaving aside the exceptions, the question of what can be done for those mothers that are less successful should be subjected to a critical look. This obviously leads to many queries. Given that the ideological controversy and public distaste for and conviction that too many single mothers' stay on welfare' and the subsequent deep budget cuts that affected this particular segment of recipients, what is it that should be done to ameliorate the situation? Should government rethink the problem and take actions that would allocate enough resources in order to deliver single mothers and their children from semi-permanent crises that have became distinctive character of SMPs' lives?

But the conviction that the free market system resolves the problems of poverty has so deeply entrenched itself that a softening of this position requires a lot of effort and struggle. The tax cuts to the rich signify that this position has taken a firm hold as a strong perspective. The tax cut is made possible also after social public health insurance, Medicaid, for instance, are clipped off and the resources that government needs from the better off to finance these social programs is made unnecessary as a consequence. Single

mother parents who belong to the category of the poor lose and those who are blessed with the tax cut benefit.

The question then becomes, is it a tax cut or the benefit that goes to the poor as a means of liberating them from poverty that should take center stage as an issue engaging policy-makers? Should they be left in the hands of the rich who, it is claimed, (re)invest them for 'growth' purposes? Or, should they be optimally distributed in such a way that more and more people, including SMPs, whose incomes improve over the long haul, would shape up the economy even better by expanding the pie and making the slice larger to many more citizens? (See Brewster 1987: 39, see also Katz, 1989: 149-150, Nozik 1974, cited in Katz: 231) These refer to 'new', when, in fact they relate to the old problem of poverty (Brewster 1987:39). They replay themselves out even after so much was discoursed about them in relation to social justice and the right of all citizens to be employed, cared for and enjoy life to the fullest, among other rights.

Successive administrations used different economic models to maintain a balance between government revenue and expenditure as well as the route economic development should be coursed (Brewster 1987; Kweit and Kweit 1999; Skocpol 2000). Control of deficits and keeping down overspending beyond the capacity of public revenues has been a primary objective in the agenda of successive administrations (Skocpol 2000; Brewster 1987) as this pertains to public provisioning. But the deficits have persisted despite the attempt. Brewster (1987: 43) expresses concern that the deficits' newly acquired behavior of recurrence even during times of economic recovery and growth during the past few decades will pose difficulties to some positive performances of the economy of the U.S. in the future. This concern is well taken because its earlier transitory nature has ended up

taking structural dimensions (Brewster 1987) that has had wide-ranging implications. Under these circumstances, not only is the growth of the economy affected, but also the sources of financing social program whose positive outcomes may inversely (a result of human resources development) invigorate the economy.

Every time the economy faces some recession, administrations elongate their hands and invariably cut budgets set for social programs, programs with fuzzy constituencies and dubious support structures. The victims of such heavy-handed measures of balancing the budget, aimed at controlling the deficits, fall on those programs with weak constituencies whose members are less organized and are the least able to flex their political muscle being poor and hence much less organized at the same time (Skocpol 2000: 57; Kweit and Kweit 1999: 410). Although welfare to poor single mothers on AFDC accounts a mere 1% of the Federal Government's total spending (Congressional Digest, 1995: cited in Seccombe 1999:11); see also Mickey Kaus 1992: 177) the axe that cuts social assistance funding falls right on these programs' appropriations more than on other similar social assistance programs. Kaus (1992, ibid.) also quotes Mario Quomo, former governor of New York, as pointing out that with food stamps, the expenditure on single mother parents would go up to 3% of the annual federal expenditure. FDC also represented 3.4 % of the expenditures of all states in 1991 (Ibid.) This takes us to an examination of which programs do take larger shares in the budget expenditure of the federal government.

Which social programs do take a larger portion of public revenue? And why are some social programs subjected to severe incisions and others left alone or even rewarded? These questions need to be answered adequately to assess the agenda behind

budget (re)appropriations and/or withdrawals of critical resources that are important for doing justice to the sharing of the national pie and hence avoiding suffering that befalls the poor. But as mentioned above, such a distribution of social resources is also viewed as a factor that may pave the way for raising the productivity of the economy in the longer term.

3. Welfare Recipiency and Human Resources Development

Welfare recipiency may in part be associated with human resources development. In its strictest and short-term sense it is a 'hand out' to the poor, or to the 'indigent' in the longer-term, as Marger (1999: 174), reminds us of the meaning attributed to it by many. But in another sense it is a 'hand up' which means it pulls those who are in the lower rungs in income terms and it has a potential of helping users of the resource jump over the poverty line. The public assistance program, according to Katz (1989: 75), was a victim of the fuzzy institutional structure that was constructed when the welfare state came into being. When the concept of the welfare state was applied to public support programs, social insurance benefits were written as entitlements; while public assistance to the poor were pigeonholed into the means-tested category (Hurst 1995: 36, Katz 1989: 75). Those who apply for the last category of welfare program need to prove that they have critical basic needs to evoke a positive response from public authorities. Marger (1999) sees social insurance or social security by another name, as one of the largest components of public assistance programs (Ibid. see also Katz 1989: 75). What he identifies as 'up-side-down welfare' or 'corporate welfare', quoting Huff (1992),

constitutes a third and unofficial area of public assistance, at that, though it is not acknowledged as one (Marger 1999: 174, 176).

I will come back to the discussion of this point later on. But two socio-economic and/or economic reasons as well as political reasons need to be discussed regarding what Haveman, in Perry et al. (2000: 250-253), identify as 'winners and losers' in the provision of public assistance. Haveman says that the elderly who most usually drew low incomes during their working years were in deep poverty and they needed public support. The state stepped in and raised their benefits by 72% or from a low of $420 a month to $720 (Haveman 2000: 251). It was a direct public benefit that saved the day for the elderly.

What Haveman called intact minority communities of those in two parent families, African Americans included, also found themselves in better stead as a consequence of a narrowing down of the income gap between racial groups (dominant segments and minorities). Although poverty and insecurity for these groups remains comparatively high, the progress achieved has helped many families among them to say good-bye to poverty comparatively speaking, however.

The vacuum left by these two groups was filled by what Haveman (2000: 253) identifies as the 'new poor' ? in which group he fits mother-only families, children and youths (especially minority young men). SMPs with children have been the focus of this dissertation. These children and their mothers now, as before, suffer more because of the elimination of the pubic safety net or welfare programs. The number of children in poverty in these households (see chapter two above) has risen to 21% in 1999 from a low of 15% in the 1960s and 1970s when public transfers/allowances were generous. Why

were the resources to children and their mothers under AFDC subjected to big cuts over the years, during the last three decades in particular? This relates to the general question of why authorities focus on slashing budgets of social programs that help the poor and/or SMPs. The elderly who were the poorest of the poor found themselves less poor when their benefits improved as a consequence of the Social Security Act of 1935.

The organization of the elderly in particular and their ability to vote for or against politicians (Kweit and Kweit 1999) were the main reasons behind the decision to increase the monthly social security pay of the group. In fact, the budget increase for prescription drugs and visitation rights to doctors of their choice is now in part motivated by the need to attract their votes in upcoming elections to political offices. How could such a decision otherwise be made during a recession that has led to severe cuts in other social programs, education included?

Another group/class of people who politicians need to gain votes and support are wealthy contributors toward (re) election campaigns. Exaggerated to seem tax cuts to the rich only, are, in actual fact, a change in the tax structure for all working persons (Refer to: www.whitehouse.gov/news/reports/taxplan.html). The rich, in particular, may be rewarded with tax cuts more than any other group. But that is quite another matter. The report on the President's Agenda for Tax Relief (February 12, 2001) in no uncertain terms, says that the tax cut is meant for working persons. Over the long run, the 'hard-working', those who are 'risk-taking' will benefit, the tax cut document says. But those who are dependent on government programs will not.

The rich do benefit a lot from the tax cut. The tax cut, therefore, in a sense constitutes a measure of transfer of public resources to those who do not need them in

most cases. It is assumed that, some benefit from such a tax policy reinvest the money they save owing to the measure. But the evidence for such an outcome needs to be grounded on empirical studies, and should not be elevated to a status of truth through a simple logical reasoning. In other words, it should not simply thrust a trust on those who have money necessarily would invest the additional resources they obtain from such sources as tax cuts, to create more jobs, among others things.

There is a major question that we have to grapple with under such circumstances. What about those members of the society who Haveman (see arguments above) described as losers in the tax-social programs cut games? The public benefits the 'losers' get should not be narrowly defined as money that is paid for lazy and shiftless SMPs, blanket statements that do not apply to many SMPs, statements which, in many cases, lend themselves to more investigation. It should also be viewed as a vehicle for human resources development within the family — both SMPs and their children. Human resources development does have positive implications on the growth of the economy.

That was why, it appears, that training programs were made a component of the assistance package to public welfare recipients (Hurst 1995: 369) during the late 1970s and late 1980s, though not practicalized during both periods. In fact, education and skill training was made a major component of the Family Support Act of 1988 that required welfare recipient mothers, those in the able-bodied category, to work and advance their knowledge base. Some researchers (for example, Kweit and Kweit 1999; Collins 1996) say that the 1988 Family Support Act lays emphasis on education for AFDC recipients that they see as means of getting recipients off welfare.

Hurst (1995: 258-260) notes that the level of investment one carves out (from ones disposable income) for education or skill development eventually determines the gains one makes in the labor market. He quotes Gordon (1972) and Mincer and Polachek (1974) to show the prevailing argument that minorities, women and African Americans, for example, earn lower incomes because they invest less of their income in their education and/or skill raising. These arguments are also supported by government agency and charity heads in the City (See especially Janet's interview, February 20, 2004 as well as those of Baverly Weiner, Heaven House Administrator, a charity in East Lansing, and others.

4. Who Benefits When Poverty is Kept In Check?

Rather than seeing SMPs as a segment of people, who in the nature of things, labor at home and outside to survive, and seeing public assistance as a factor that supplements their small but hard-earned income, blames are hurled at them for their poverty and these became customary practices. Sprees of stigmas have frequently been unleashed against them. Those in the 'comfort zones' usually coined stigmatizing words from the vantage point of dominance in the discursive space. Consequently, single mother parents' underdog position in the control of the discursive space and their loss of power in making decisions on social issues, engendered their inability to maximize their welfare within the framework of the system. The reciprocity between the service of the mothers and society's needs such as in manpower supply and suction is relegated to the background.

The Great Depression and the turmoil that ensued in its wake brought about a change in the definition of poverty (Kweit and Kweit 1999: 404). The middle class and those

beyond tasted destitution along with the poor (Ibid.). The plight of workers in Michigan during the depression in the early 1930s was so humongous that many were compelled to use their bank accounts initially, then went to relatives and friends and begged and, when the worse came to the worst, they turned to refuse bins to find some edible food (Michigan State University, January 1980: 97) to survive.

These, workers turned into dependents as a consequence of the depression, were not stigmatized. Rather, the condition they were in was redefined and federal funds and the state emergency assistance (Michigan, for instance, were combined to give relief to them (Michigan State University 1990: 98). As Kweit and Kweit 1999: 404) correctly observed, "when the middle class faced poverty, the issue was refined and moved from the local to the national agenda." The reason for the elevation of the support level was motivated by the fact that local government was incapable of raising the necessary resources to handle the relief effort. Kweit and Kweit (1999) see the change in the definition of poverty in power terms. They argued that:

> Widespread unemployment meant that not only the lazy were out of work. A large group of unemployed middle class presented a political force that could not be ignored. As relief was losing its negative connotations, the formulations proposed were no longer punitive.

But this was not the case with the problems single mother parents faced. The mothers were dubbed lazy, as personally weak as well as without incentives to merit any government support (Seccombe 1999, Kweit and Kweit 1999: 401; Edin and Lein 1997).

Although number constitutes power, this attribute the poor possessed was little used because they have been usually unable to organize and put up credible resistance and win concessions from the state. This weakness has it source in the fact that the poor are

simply unable to be politically active since they devote their time in the pursuit of activities that they need to survive (Kweit and Kweit 1999: 403). Besides, the poor do not have the organization and communication skills as well as the resource to defray the cost of seeking the services of others to fight on their behalf (Ibid.). Single mothers have to contend with all these problems in their attempt to get the state's attention to secure survival resources for themselves and their children. Their plights are ignored.

The mothers and/or SMPs' political weakness should have been compensated with their fundamental contributions to society. The young boys and girls on whom mothers spend countless hours in raising, feeding, caring and schooling ultimately become fighters in wars and participate in the work force—services that society always needs. The contribution and/or the loss is greater on the side of mothers compared with that of the state and/or society in the ultimate sense. They are denied rights that the better off among society gain in many ways in such areas as subsidies for mortgages, tax relief, construction of infrastructures that the state provides with the sacrifice of social resources. This is what Marger characterized as 'up-side' down welfare or 'wealthfare' as Marger (1999: 166-7; see also Katz 1989) put it. This support to the wealthy takes different forms and shapes.

5. Poverty and Other Better-off Citizens: No One is Immune from its Sweep

No segment of society could then escape the net spread over them in this regard either directly or indirectly as the dependence of large numbers of well-off members of the American society on government 'hand outs' showed during the 1929 depression and its effects. Tax cuts that were made reference to above and capital gains that is not at all

subjected to tax are examples of these shelters or benefits that could be interpreted as upward welfare programs. All categories of populations, should, as a rule, benefit from society or its overarching institutions — the state, in particular. They need to help one another also

The question of what people owe one another was raised above. This needs to be seen in light of the celebration of individual freedom and responsibility to the self. The 'self' separated from another 'self' or 'selves' is not capable of maintaining itself as Levine 1997, in his book: '*Self-Seeking and the Pursuit of Justice*' puts it so well:

> ...many communities seek to place others outside (p. 11).... We can, and often do, live together (socially) without much recognition that we live with persons different, and in any meaningful sense separate, from ourselves (p. 5). ... Repeated violation of self-boundaries, whether physical or psychological, fosters insecurity, and undermines the development of the unit status that comes with a little understanding of where 'I' ends and 'other' begins. Because of this, insecurity entails not only a failure to integrate the self, but also the parallel failure to appreciate, and thus respect, the self-hood of others (p. 14).

The message of this quote has three dimensions. First, some segments of the citizenry are considered outsiders in virtue of the behavior(s) defined by those who exclude them. The behaviors of laziness, shiftlessness, and extravagancy heaped upon the poor or SMPs makes these particular populations separate from those who are accorded the qualities of industriousness, thriftiness and wisdom that money brings with it and puts them in an advantageous position.

Second, those who are better off in terms of resources, fail to recognize the fact that there are citizens who live amongst them that are not that much blessed with resources

and they find this status ground enough to see them as separate from themselves. This is in spite of the fact that these 'others' do not choose their status or situation.

Third, a failure to recognize the unenviable situation poor/SMPs are in or happen to be at a point in time on the part of those who have the wherewithal to live better leads to an insecurity of the self and denial of care for others. The demand of mutuality between the self and the other in the context of society leads to a failure to see the common interest of the well off and those whose income is on the lower end of the scale.

The point Kenneth Gergen, in his book, "The Saturated Self..." (1991), makes with regard to actions in society and the components of this action is instructive. The message here is a disjointed action, action taken individually, without a backing from a group/community or societal action, has less impact in terms of benefits to all parties. Gergen says that individual "actions are nonsensical until coordinated with actions of others" (1991: 242). He explicates his point more in the following words:

> If I extend my hand and smile, the gesture hovers at the edge of absurdity until reciprocated by another. My words do not become "communication" until others treat them as intelligible. And as deftly portrayed in Jerzy Kosiniski's 'Being There', even the language of an idiot can be profound in consequence if others treat it thusly (Ibid.).

Those with the means do not, it seems, think that the poor and/or SMPs have anything to talk about let alone voice their concerns. The one-sided discourse that tilts toward those with more resources dictates values and, more importantly, policy to which the 'other' has to accede. SMPs, a large majority of them at least, who are on welfare are stigmatized. This stigmatization does not preclude those single mothers who qualify but do not receive public assistance — their number is not that small — are also subjected to the stereotypes that apply to those whose are on welfare.

But the fact remains that poor/SMPs have their own minds and outlooks about their everyday lives on which they may, more or less, be considered an authority. Rachel's (interview transcript January 29, 2004, Transcript, January 29, 2004) advice that the concrete problems that envelop single mothers need to be observed by welfare office officials and assistance payment or social workers before important decisions affecting their benefits are made does show a degree of soundness in judgment. This is all the more reason to encourage SMPs to talk more and express their views. This is one way of capacitating them so they can manage their lives better. That is why the social capital route of development into which SMPs could bring themselves together and brainstorm with each other, strategize and unleash their common energies and resources is advocated. This is seen as one possible option of controlling poverty that this dissertation advocates should be tried, given the transitory nature of the support usually provided to SMPs in particular. What does need to be done to change this situation of destitution of SMPs? What can others support them with? What can they do themselves?

6. Organization of the Poor/SMPS and Government Support

Why is this polarization and sufferance of those at the lower end of society allowed to be a common feature? Are there ways of controlling these differences to increase the level of social harmony and to remedy the prevailing social injustice?

The immediate answer that comes to mind in relation to these questions is that governments should take a series of steps that produce equality for those left out as a consequence of an ideology that celebrates individualism and above all else. This means society should support equality, see to it those educational and cultural opportunities

necessary for competition are equally available to all without distinction. Any discussion of a meaningful solution to the poverty problem and single mother parents' hurdles' in America should take organization, skewed power distribution, viz, the exclusion of many Americans for electoral politics and participation in the political process. Social inequality among groups, power, and discourse are also important issues that need to be discussed and addressed in order to begin to improve the lives of single mother parents and their children. The responsibility of the state in laying down the infrastructure for a smooth development of these factors in general and enabling single mothers to be self-reliant, as was seen earlier, has not produced the desired level of outcome owing to the government's concerns about the financial implications. Even during the New Deal days (see Kweit and Kweit 1999, Ferguson 1999) pressures from vested interests and a benign neglect of the problem on the part of the government pinned down efforts to initiate wider and bigger programs. The seriousness of the problem in the 1930s did not sway the architect of the social programs, President F. D. Roosevelt, to push the noble idea of extending a public hand to the poor further than he thought was adequate for the time. No period other than a time of national crisis makes it possible for the state or a group to implement programs that address the problems of the poor and/or SMPs to some degree. The cause of the poor and the destitute did result in a great moment of action in the 1930s. But the President Roosevelt's' programs did not go far enough as this leader felt that if he pushed more in the direction of helping the poor, his actions would be opposed by those in the class of the rich.

This gap, of necessity, then requires organization of the poor, articulation of their needs and demands through their own activism and action (Huber et al in Etzioni-

Halevy, 1997; Kweit and Kweit 1999) as well as their supporters and advocates. This route has it own set of problems also. As Buechler (2000: 73) notes shortage of material resources and the fragmented and heterogeneous nature of the poor makes it difficult for them to make headway along this line. Thus there is a need for the population to seek the assistance of and work with other groups that have grievances and those others that, as a matter of solidarity and principle, are willing to stand by and for the poor.

Urban social movements' activities are relevant in this regard (Lowe 1986, Buechler 2000). Lowe (1986), basing his conceptions on the Work of Manuel Castella (The Urban Question), describes social movements as "organizations standing outside the formal party system." Urban movements, for him, are institutions that should "... bring people together to defend or challenge the provision of urban public services...". Following Castela, Lowe notes that urban social movements have the potential of creating an inter-class political alliance. Giddens (1990: 160-61) sees social movements as vehicles of engaging the forces of dominance in society and as a means of effecting change. For Hurst (1995) social movements serve as means of dealing with problems of social and economic inequality.

There must be some sort of grievance among a group(s) in order for a social movement(s) to arise (Giddens 1990; Buechler 2000; Hurst 1995). Both Hurst and Buechler, however, posit that grievances alone would not pave the way for the emergence and continuation of social movements. Buechler (2000) specifies the preconditions for social activism. He says that the group(s) seeking some positive outcome from activism need to 'define a situation as unjust', to trust or become convinced that 'change is possible', and to believe in the 'efficacy of action' (Ibid.). These preconditions, though

basically necessary, need to be strengthened by external factors. The availability of material resources and organization are essential energizing factors. But by themselves, they are unlikely to lead to success. For both Hurst and Buechler material resources create economic and political opportunities that would further give strength to any social movement.

Even as these requirements are fulfilled though, the need for the formation of a coalition with other groups is determinant for any substantial achievement. As Giddens puts it so well, the realization of a social activism involving the poor, among others, is contingent upon the 'intervention of the agencies of the privileged (1990: 162). Some sort of coalition of a broader group of citizens including the subjects, liberal individuals and groups, scholars and others, gives the activism of the poor the agency with which it can make a difference. This is particularly important given that the American society, as Buechler (2000: 73), following Durkheim argues, has experienced 'break-down in its traditional family system, fragmentation in its social fabrics and rise in anomie and alienation'.

Excepting the rich, all other segments in society do not have a secure life though equality for all is guaranteed in the U. S. Constitution Rank 2004: 132). Other than their incomes, the rich may face little difficulty as the may live off their interests, bonds in insurance companies and the like. The middle class is shaky and it has been continually shrinking during the past few decades (Hurst 1995, Beaty in Marger 1996: 47, 56). In fact it has shrunk within 25 percent of the median income in recent years (Hurst 1995). Workers and the working poor are in precarious positions. The poor who are dependent

on public assistance to a large degree are in unenviable conditions of life. Why is this so? What can be done about it?

In what follows I should like to discuss the skewed power distribution situation in the American society in order to get some insight into the problem? The potentials of those unprivileged to change this imbalance and what role justice-minded people/groups can play and can contribute in the context of social movements is also discussed.

7. Distribution of Power and Participation in Political Activities by the Poor

In concrete terms, the distribution of power in their senses of participation in socio-economic and political processes, voting and office holding rights are reviewed. As a logical sequel of this distribution and/or measure of power, the paper goes into the conceptual definitions of power and discourse and how various possibilities may play out to correct the gross inequality that is a feature of the U.S. socio-economic and political system.

Primarily, the exclusion of many Americans from participatory and electoral politics as well as holding of political office needs reviewing. These variables or measures of power distribution constitute some of the critical explanations of why poverty continues to exist in the country.

Participation of many citizens including segments of the poor in the American political process is rather low (Powell Bingham quoted in Hurst 1995: 125, Piven 1977). The lack of connection with political parties (Powell, quoted in Hurst, Ibid.) prevents the poor from framing and raising issues personal to the individual/group interests and to put them on the agenda for discussions by decision-makers. Participation is described as a

potent force to which leaders—politicians, bureaucrats as well as businessmen/capitalists—respond to promptly. As Verba and Nie (1972: 336, cited in Hurst 1995: 123) note, those people who actively participate in the political life of their country are better listened to. As an example of participation it would be quite fitting here to mention the fact that a 50,000-strong demonstration in South Carolina in mid-January 1999 led to a serious discourse on a divisive social issue. The removal of the Confederate flag, a symbol of slavery for a segment of citizens and a symbol of heritage for others, from the Capitol to another place on the grounds of the state house, began to be addressed by the people and their politicians. Participation in politics, a protest action in this case, thus did have a positive outcome.

The homeless in Lansing put up a stiff protest through the symbolic Tent City on the Capitol grounds for over a period of three months in 1992. This was yet another example of a group's resistance and public awareness drive that attempted to reinstate the General Assistance (GA) transfers payment to the poor in Michigan. The protest called for the recall of the Governor who the participants identified as a politician who did 'violence' to their rights by eliminating the state's support to the disadvantaged.

The show of resistance by the poor here drew the attention of many supporters—advocacy groups, activists and liberal individuals who not only supported their cause but also provided them with critical maintenance resources to tide them over the duration of the protest. Small as their numbers were, and limited as their participation in the overall political process was, the homeless-poor seemed to have counted on the support of activists, advocacy groups and others to translate the recall of the Governor into action. The support sought in this instance shows the fragmented and fragile nature of the

homeless-poor, who, unlike the Black electorate, do not have a solid constituency defined in terms of electoral districts. But the creation of a coalition within the homeless-poor categories, short of achieving electoral district status and sending representatives to the higher political offices as well as holding public offices at lower echelons of government, helps in a lot of ways. Lower class people in the U.S. have only a small history of participation in holding offices.

After all, 90 percent of the corporate officials and 66 percent of the cabinet officers between 1890 and 1973 were members drawn from the upper class (Hurst 1995: 128). Women Congress members constituted only 10 percent of the total membership of the institution as recently as 1992 (Ibid.). If wealthy upper class members can hold political offices and congressional seats, there is no earthly reason why citizens in the lower classes who have equal political rights as them, cannot do the same at the federal, state, county and municipal levels. The factor that enables the rich to assume office is, however, their wealth. They employ their wealth to practically buy the public offices they hold. The issues of campaign finance reform that have become central to the discussion of American politics these days in part, evidence this. As they say, money talks and enables one/some to achieve the impossible.

This issue goes to the old question of the inequality of citizens, which in the main remains an irresolvable problem. It continues to block the way for addressing the social ill of poverty the characteristics of which changed radically after capitalism took root. Just like working people can end up being dependent, without adequate participation, people would not have command over agenda setting processes that can help them resolve issues that are important to their livelihood.

As much as money assists the rich to hold public office, the poor can also use their numbers as a critical source of strength, for forming coalitions within their sub-class. This can help in two ways. First, it enables the poor to vote in blocks for a party candidate who may give them voice in the political institutions deciding national socio-economic issues including those affecting coalition members one way or another. Secondly, they can form global (national) coalitions of the type of social movements that do make a difference in industrial democracies.

Participation of the poor in activities that are planned for their benefit is surely not enough. As critiques of the participation theory argue so well, it (participation) paves the groundwork for the treatment of subjects as 'passive and incapable' as well as tools for 'co-opting them to the reformist vision of change' (Piven 1977). Finding ways of encouraging the poor so they can have their own input in figuring out, assessing and taking action to manage their peculiar problems, is one option that may be further tried.

When participation goes beyond a mere passive role and becomes a means of control and self-determination, it tends to produce positive results. This then begins to enable the subjects involved to be self-reliant (Ferguson and Dickens, 1999: 87). Empowering the poor so that they can decide matters relating to their problems is an alternative that has indeed no parallel.

Many people including the poor do not vote for their leaders who they ordinarily expect to speak on their behalf in expediting, for instance, income and wealth distribution, all critical factors in addressing the poverty problem. Powel (1986, quoted in Hurst 1995: 125) sees the problem in terms of the weakness in the electoral system that makes voter registration optional. This means that voting should be mandatory rather

than voluntary in order to empower citizens including the poor to have a degree of control over their leaders.

A classical example of voter decline was registered among trade unions beginning the 1980s following the accession of Reagan to power. Attacks on trade unions by the state which clearly came out in support of capital, de-industrialization and the fear of job loss by many labor unions, national union and the local leadership's weaknesses and corruption were some of the factors that discouraged participation of many Americans in elections. Capital's campaigns against existing trade union activity and the blockage of the creation of new ones had also a negative impact for labor union voting (see Kincheloe 1999: 331-332). In fact, consulting firms who have specialized in busting unions were hired and corporations spent hundreds of millions of dollars on such projects (Ibid.).

African American voting was very high in the years following the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Hurst 1995). It declined in the interim to rise again a bit in the 1990s (see Hurst 1995). The winning of rights does encourage voting. But as Rhonda Levine (1998: 255-58) remarks, low status that the intersection of class, gender and race imposes and the stress from barrages of stigmatization from family value crusaders (Coontz in Goshgarian 1998: 434), poor women's/SMP's participation in political life is effectively impeded.

8. Why Are Power and Resources Skewed Toward the Rich?

Why is the distribution of power and resources among politically equal citizens skewed toward the upper classes, and to a degree toward the middle class, in society? How can this be undone so the poor can also have a slice of the social product? Social scientists and anthropologists including Wallerstein (1990) give us some insights into

how these two major questions can possibly be addressed. According to Wallerestein (1990: 14) the better part of the profit garnered from production are apportioned to those with capital. Wallerstein (1990:16) believes that the retention of the "surplus created ... or an increase in the price of labor or the price of the sale of the product/service by the direct producers constitute two ways out of the problem." But the alliance of those with wealth and the state preempts such a move.

For Gaventa (in Gaventa et al 1980: 90) larger incomes received from owning businesses, manufacturing ones for example, automatically put an individual or a group in a position of power. Such incomes, assets and abundance in investable resources, among others, by classes of owners of capital, according to Gaventa (Ibid.) place these fortunate group in a position of determining questions of creating or eliminating jobs, reducing wages of workers, dismissing or laying off workers, choosing less costly environments for investment and closing factories and other measures at will. While this is a concrete look at the basis of power, a historical-analytical look at the concept draws us to its origins.

Adams (in Fogelson et al 1977: 396-397) sees the imbalance in power as a situation that develops when power is transferred by a group/community to a leadership (group) to accomplish tasks on their behalf. Such an invested power is lost when the leadership begins to dictate values and even goes further to shape conceptions of subjects contrary to the initial contractual frames in which the relationships created are understood to hold. Weber says that, those vested with power introduce changes to 'realize their own will in communal action despite the resistance of others including those who vested them with power' (Gerth and Mills 1962: 180, 183, cited in Hurst 1995: 115). For Adams (1977:

404-405) power is a capacity/ability lent to the bearer to act in accordance with implicit and explicit wishes of the giver and one that can be withdrawn at any time that trust is violated. But again, this has problems of implementation. Wallerstein (1990) is surprised that such a trust does not produce the desired objectives, given that the "people" (meaning also the poor) can take power, theoretically at least, and are quite capable of "forging their own destiny." This is a 'mystery' for him and perhaps one of the reasons for the continued existence of poverty. Could this be explained by the assertion and/or assumption relating to capitalist social relations in which, it is claimed: "... effective power over the social distribution of life chances rests in the hands of a very tiny and exclusive minority?" as was cogently put, following Levitas, by Dean et al (1999:32).

Wallerstein suggests that a sustained political activity outside the 'tried and false' or to use his own term, 'classical' ways of effecting change should be taken up in earnest by those whose rights are trespassed. By this he means that the struggle should continue outside the institutional/governmental structures to bear some results. He anchors on the point that surpluses retained by producers should be redistributed fairly. Greater equality and democratic participation constitute ways out of the gross inequality that grips the less advantaged sectors of society (Walerstein 1990:16).

What Giddens also calls 'emancipatory politics' as well as 'life politics', undertaken by those disadvantaged, are mechanisms used by such people to be heard by the powers that are. But he emphasizes that for any program such a response to poverty or the "plight of the underdog," to use his pertinent term again, requires the "goodwill and intervention of the agencies of the privileged."

Hurst (1995: 343) says that there are times, such as the need for not alienating minorities and/or the poor whose voting block during elections can make a difference for politicians who seek offices. He further introduces a broader array of factors that are important to attract positive responses that are important to the disadvantaged. First, an appropriate moment that favors the aggrieved group's claim of a right; a perception that the top leader is sympathetic with the cause, and landmark political acts (the Wagner Act, the 19th Amendment, the Civil Right Act of 1964), among others, paved the way for action. Actions based on the calculation of these factors is most appropriate and a proactive means of getting to the roots of the problem on the part of those who struggle for their rights (see Hurst 1995: 342-344). All these discussions lead in the direction of social movements.

Two things are important for this to get off the ground. First, organization of the fragmented poor is the initial step to address the problem of poverty. Second, the creation of a coalition of these groups at the local and national levels is another measure that begins to empower, as it were, the disadvantaged as a whole. The social movements which, as discussed in the anthropology section of this dissertation, (see Chapter 2, section 2 (2), can challenge the powerful who usually show little interest in addressing the problem of inequality can then be launched as a graduated level of activity. The realization of degrees of equality is then contingent upon the identification of the problem, a united demand and action through challenging the status quo. Power is an important element in the interplay of these factors.

9. Power: Distribution and discourse

Distribution of power assumes a binary division in the sense that power resides at one pole and not at another. This clear-cut division of society was expressed and/or written about by many social scientists including mainly Marx and Weber who I like to identify as the doyen thinkers in the area. For Marx, ruling classes at each stage of his evolutionary theory of development of society were the uncontested power groups. Weber, a theorist, whom I like to identify as a pre-post-modern thinker, viewed power in the context of a super-ordinate-subordinate relationship between individual(s) group(s) in society. In these senses, therefore, a certain group or class possesses power and other(s) are bereft of it. In other words there is a dominant and dominated class of people in society.

The question of how power ended up locating itself at certain levels or fell in the hands of a select group(s) has been dealt with by many including the above two theorists. For Marx, control of the productive forces lent a hand to the ruling classes at any one of the societal development stages he constructed. For Weber, power is a 'chance' earned by an individual and/or a group to "realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action" (see Hurst 1995: 115).

For a group of more recent thinkers like Adams (1977) power is a thing lent to another (groups) by society and one that can be withdrawn when the tacit understanding between the 'lender' and the 'receiver' is violated. This is not so for Gaventa (1980) who argues that, once elected also through the votes of the poor, those in the saddle may use power to their advantage. Once assumed, power is manipulated by those entrusted with its care. Instead of working legally and/or in tacitly understood frameworks and as per

the assumed consultative mode of working, the receivers of the trust shape and impose values on the giver(s). In Weber's term leadership seeks compliance from the giver in order to impose their values and will to achieve their own interests.

Given the ability and capacity of the grantor to withdraw the exercise of power from the leadership's control, this option has usually been not winnable (Wallerstein 1990). For Giddens (1990) the return of power to what he called the 'underdog', the rightful owner of power, is an impossible project without the assistance of those privileged with power.

Postmodernist thinkers like Foucault who threw new insights into the dilemma of where power resides and how and by whom it is exercised, alert us to the fact that power has neither a fixed place of abode nor a definitive group exercising it. With his penetrating concept of power, Foucault (Chambon et al 1999; Leigh 2000, Etzioni Halevey 1997, and Merquior 1985/1991: 114-118), see also Buechler 2000, underlines that power is not only 'productive, but it is also distributive'. By this he meant that power resides at all levels of society and that it is exercised by all as a matter of course although this process is not perceivable so easily. What he called 'capillary' power (Marquior 1985/1991: 114) merges to drive society in the everyday processes of life.

This Foucauldian perspective clearly goes beyond Scott's theory of resistance. For Scott (1990) those in the subordinate classes of society resist the unbounded and harmful actions of the powerful at every instance and everyday to do justice to their own interests through (in)direct resistance. Scott's everyday resistance, however, works within the dominant-dominated frame of reference while Foucault's 'capillary' power frees it from its circumscribed and limited possibilities within the skewed framework of relationships

between the two—the powerful and the weak. This means that power which resides in the people predominates that of a group, and to be specific, that of the state.

Relationships of domination of one group/party over another is also seen in terms of discourse—that is, in what Fairclough (1995: 1-10; 96-102) sees as "asymmetries between participants in discourse events. This is also seen in terms of unequal capacity to control how texts are produced, distributed and consumed (and hence the shapes of texts) in particular socio-cultural contexts." Control over discourse events thus enables a group to extend their power over another to maximize their interests in the process of accomplishing the duties entrusted to their care, but that which they corrupt in their favor.

Discourse, and any specific example of discourse practice, is seen in the context of language, interpretation, and socio-cultural practice (see Fairclough 1995:96-102). Discourses involving individual(s) and/or group(s) in specific institutional (family), wider institutional (organizational) as well as societal levels merge within a socio-cultural practice. In terms of poverty and welfare, the three elements translate into: first, scholars, conservative's and liberals too, who freely create concepts and languages such as 'welfare mothers/queens', 'feckless', 'lazy' and 'irresponsible' persons all of whom they attach to segments of the poor, who they describe as dependents on those working. Secondly, the poor are depicted as obstacles to a further growth of the economy. Thirdly, the socio-cultural practice put in place for the conduct of discourse generally excludes the poor from adequate participation. In fact, for Fairclough, as for Foucault, control of these factors by the dominant classes is the key to the exercise of effective power at all levels of society. Through discourse mechanisms, or dominance of knowledge/language, groups/classes in society have been able to discard physical power in favor of consent.

The discursive practices which embody ideological and cultural elements and meanings within them, seek to control behavior and action through self-disciplining practices as workfare instead of welfare payments or through consent instead of through an action of 'breaking skulls' as Fairclough (1995: 219) quite fittingly put it. Here consent is a derivative of the hegemony theory expounded by Gramici (see Etzioni-Halevy 1997:12-17).

The identification of the appropriate place of power and who (can) exercise(s) it is helpful in understanding the capacities and potentials of social movements. What filters out from the preceding conceptual and theoretical discussions is that the disadvantaged do embody power within their ranks and that they can do justice to their causes if they work in unison. The necessity of creating alliances between the fragmented groups of the poor as a first step to change the imbalance in the equation of power relationships in society then becomes an important step as a partial remedy to the problem. The support of the privileged, among which are the elite, both of liberal and/or conservative extraction straddled across classes, can work for the creation of a fairly just and harmonious society. This may help to address the problem of poverty in a meaningful way.

10. Social Movements and Coalitions and Poverty

Social movements can realize their programs better if their organizations are informed by the redefinition of power, which is linked to post-modernism as represented by particularly Foucault. The 'capillary' power concept he espoused into the meaning of the language of power enhances the possibility that the disadvantaged have the requisite

power that they can use to their advantage especially if they work in the context of coalitions.

A coalition of the three important sub-classes — the middle class, the working poor and those dependent on public assistance — with the support of intellectuals and liberals -- can have a positive impact on policy-making and implementation. Without such a coalition and the activism of these groups, change is difficult to visualize let alone institute. Without this coalition, the actions of which can translate into power, thus making a firm demand for change and/or reform, the lot of the disfranchised will remain fragile. Such a formidable group of cooperating groups within the social movement can even go beyond reform. It can table a demand for a radical change in the institutional arrangements of society and even go as far as requiring a change of government (see Buechler 2000, for more discussion).

The role social science, and particularly anthropology, has played, is playing and may profitably play in the continuing discourse of poverty and welfare is interwoven with the discussion of the major issues raised in this chapter. The argument that anthropology's theoretical and ethnographic methodology could have been of assistance in both the general discourse relating to the problem and the search for policy inputs was evaluated in Chapter two above. A dispassionate review of the multiple and complex problems faced by the poor was indeed wanting in the general poverty and welfare discourse during the last two decades of the 20th Century. Only a handful of social scientists discussed welfare's social and economic consequences and its resource implications for the various classes and groups in the American society.

11. An Assessment of the Major Points of the Chapter

This chapter has reviewed the problems single mothers encounter in their bid to put together enough resources to make ends meet. It has focused on the numerous hurdles that the mothers encounter under conditions of poverty. It posed the question as to whether or not society has been able to address the problems poverty brings with it consistent with the American fundamental political and moral values. Although the state, the non-profit community and the general public have by and large showed a great deal of effort and compassion, the problem has defied permanent solutions. The reasons for this outcome may be looked at from the point of view of the research done for this dissertation, that is, the approaches used to solve the problem and the lack of agency on the part of the poor. This research attempted to give some voice to single mothers who find it difficult to make ends meet. It joins those works that allay the concerns of researchers like Timmer et al (1994) who make the insightful observation that studies on poverty was based little on observing and talking with the poor/single mothers, homeless persons and others. To quote sociologists David Snow and Leon Anderson (1993), the studies in the 1980s used survey research, which were directed at service providers and homeless caretakers and were focused at the demographics or disabilities of those studied.

This research is more of what Geertz (1983) called 'experience-distant' in contrast to 'experience-near', a representation and understanding of subjects, single mother parents some whom were also made homeless as a consequence of the elimination or severe cut backs on public assistance to the poor. The welfare or public assistance approach, now as

before typically uses, seeks/sought temporary relief as in food and other emergency support offered. The agencies used to ameliorate the situation are the state or the non-profit community with the subject playing a very little independent role. Katz's (1995: 56) pertinent observation that some 'social actions may have unintended consequences' can apply to this situation. Indeed, like Katz argues, the avenues chosen to deal with the problem may be the very culprits that have inhibited any meaningful solutions.

The little changing perspective that poverty is self-inflicted and that it can be remedied only by those who put themselves in that situation has affected the search for an appropriate institutional response to a hyphenated social-individual problem, at that, through the agency of the state. The most vocal opinion, prevailing now among those opposed to social programs is that the state, by transferring scarce public resource to 'undeserving' segments of society, has not only compromised social harmony and stability, but it has also worsened the problem for the poor themselves. The solution to the problem, in their view, is to force those 'unfairly assisted' to go back to work. Many of these people may go back to work, work that does not pay enough and one that pushes them to seek assistance of, for instance, the Mid-Michigan Chapter of the American Red Cross in Lansing as the HAW Report, American Red cross 1999, indicates. Fred Kammer, President of Catholic Charities USA (1997), put the problem in perspective when he declared that none of the voluntary organizations, including his, did have the resources to engage in 'long-term support of poor or needy families.'

But, as concrete and realistic as this solution seems, there is one major problem that the proponents of the idea have not been able to appreciate. And this is the lack of good jobs that could enable single mothers to spend and pay their monthly bills and survive.

Affordable housing is another problem that they have to contend with. Simply put, these mothers who are at the lower end of the scale or other needy persons cannot find jobs that can help them make ends meet somehow.

The reasons for the poverty of these mothers need a lot of rethinking both in the policy and practice domains. Ignoring the problem of poverty and leaving the matter for the market to solve it or transferring this major component of service to charities in difficult times will not move its solution forward. As Lipsky and Smith (quoted in Curtis (1995: 128) correctly observed, a response to the problem of poverty in terms of emergencies and providing relief funding for the poor will only sustain the condition indefinitely. In so doing, the state and other interested parties will miss an opportunity to define and understand the fundamental causes of the problem (Ibid). Such a practice will make the state rely on emergency and/or temporary solutions and thus put itself in a situation where it will refrain from seeking solid responses in addition to relief options, according to Curtis. Employment generation and wage increases are among the priority measures that need to be taken in this regard, adds Curtis (see Wilson 1987 as well).

Beyond all this paternal approach to addressing the problem, however, a way of helping the poor better needs to be thought about. Empowering the poor so they can have their own input in both assessing and responding to their problems is one option that can be given a try.

The reference made to the AFDC mothers who, through their own initiative and sheer hard work established a venture through cooperation that they later turned into a clearinghouse of information and eventually into a service agency (Gilbert in Jonas and Wilson 1999: 100-102) is an example awaiting emulation. Another category of the poor,

the homeless-poor, get involved in what Timmer et al (1994: 47-48) called 'shadow work' including panhandling, begging, scavenging, retrieving food from dumpsters and perhaps doing drugs, getting involved in theft, blood-selling for banks and pop can collection

The poor, who go through a particular lived in experiences, are the best judges of what needs to be done for themselves and they should be empowered to address their problem, not through the 'sole' agency of the wealthy and the powerful. The rich and the powerful should not think of themselves as stewards for the interests of the communities or the poor as a whole (Ferguson and Dickens 1999: 86). As R. Holman (1978, see also Alcock 1997: 206) has also rightly said, the "nature of their (the poor persons') problem should be determined not by politicians, academicians or others... but by those who know through experience what they need", that is, the poor themselves.

Experiences of the New Deal (1930s) and the Great Society/War on Poverty (1960s) programs should teach policy-makers as well as designers, planners and implementation personnel that beneficiaries of public assistance should be empowered to use resources allocated for the alleviation of their poverty. The resources pumped into the two programs, crisis abetting and elimination of poverty, in that order, were unintentionally and intentionally side-tracked by special interests, and businesses (who controlled even more of the social resources), in league with the state bureaucracy in particular (see Ferguson et al 1999, Kweit and Kweit 1999: 321). As Kweit and Kweit cogently put it, the dominance of thinking in terms of economic concerns/growth should not hamper programs for the poor and beyond this the critical redistributive policies that are usually put off the agenda, particularly at the local level, need revisiting and rethinking. Peter

Berger (in Cromartie, *Gaining Ground,* August 1985: 73) also argues that the goal of such a humanitarian policy, which provides essential services, needs to protect and to expand the control that recipients have "over their own lives." Those other citizens' sympathies and inputs, for sure, can supplement and reinforce the efforts of the subjects who can effectively deal with the social problem that has become perennial to their situation. But for this to happen, the poor need to be empowered and provided with resources, which they may also possibly pay back with some sort of arrangement when they make it. This, in a sense, means that access to resources by the poor capacitates them to partially deal with their situation. The intervention of the state is thus one factor that makes this a possibility, for the short-run, at least.

These, as it were, supply us with temporary or semi-permanent solutions. Lasting remedies need going into the roots of the problems. These constitute, among others, broader definitions and processes of change, power and discourse issues. The poor can make it if resources that help them to become self-sufficient are generously provided; if they are allowed not only to participate in decisions that particularly affect their interests, but also if they decide on their own and become partisans in ongoing policy decisions that affect their lives.

CHAPTER 6

SECTION 1: OPTIONS TO ESCAPING WELFARE DEPENDENCY AND POVERTY

1. Overview

Given the current situation of resistance toward public support, what steps are necessary to reduce the plight of single mothers? Should assessing and reevaluating the conditions and needs of single mothers take center stage? Is social capital an alternative model of development in the reduction of single mother parents' poverty conditions? What can the American society do to help poor single mothers? This chapter will provide some possible answers to these critical questions.

The insufficiency of resources, incomes from both work and assistance sources, is one of the major reasons for single mother parents' undue dependence on public support system or welfare programs. A substantial number of SMPs are among the very poor of America. They are below the poverty line in terms of income. The smallness of their earnings emanates from, at least, three major sources of poverty – lack of viable jobs, absence of a well-built cultural capital (education, for instance) and ballooned engagements that the mothers are confronted with in their every day activities.

2. Lack of Jobs, Low Educational Achievement, Multiple Daily Engagements Open Borders

The lack of jobs has been the major determinant of poverty as broadly discussed in the various chapters above. This problem has been further complicated by the factors of low education, open borders and multiple engagements of the mothers in their daily activities.

Shortage of jobs in the U. S. has been a major problem for those in the category of the poor. This is mainly exhibited by the high unemployment rate nationally and in Michigan in particular. The general lack of jobs is explained by unlivable jobs/low hourly rates. Unviable jobs and/or wages are in part responsible for the inability of SMPs to earn decent incomes and be able to cover the mothers' basic needs expenses. These factors are in turn explained by three interconnected sub-factors – the minimum wage, a downward shift of work hours and disappearance of low wage work in bumper job areas.

The minimum wage rate is in part responsible for this outcome – the inability of the single mothers to cover their daily necessities. About 19 percent of the SMPs who responded to the question on their hourly payment rate made less than $7.00 (see Table 15, Survey Q34, p. 236). An equal percent of respondents were paid between seven and $11.00. Only 18 percent were fortunate enough to make an hourly rate ranging between $11.00 and $15. Most of the SMPs who participated in this survey research thus made less than $11.00. The response to Q-34, 'earnings outside home per hour' included, all categories of SMPs who worked close to 40 hours at the time the survey was conducted.

Some 24 of the 74 single mothers who participated in the survey worked and earned some income (see Table 20, Survey Table Q26, p. 244). Nine of the SMPs worked over 40 hours. Six of them, however, worked under 40 hours each week. Both categories of mothers should be rewarded and or provided with adequate amounts of checks and other categories of support in order to improve their livelihood more in a significantly less period of time.

For example, some 10 single mothers said they worked more hours; but they did not provide accurate responses as to whether or not these were over and above the regular 40-

hour work they did (see Table 50, Survey Q26-d, Appendix 1). Some four mothers who indicated that they worked more hours ('other' category, Table 51, Q26-DT, see Appendix 1) did not show that these hours were over and above the regular/standard 40-hour week.

Survey questions 22, 23, 26 in particular on the number of hours the mothers worked were not filled out by many of the respondents. The construction of the questionnaire may in part be responsible for the problem.

Participants in the survey were asked to evaluate the level of effort they put in whatever work they were involved in, in comparison with fully employed mothers. Eleven said physical inability (see Survey Q 35 below) was an obstacle to their wish to work more. A rather big number of single mother parents, that is, 49 out of 63 or 61 percent, who marked Survey Q 27 said that SMPs worked as hard as any mother they knew was employed (see Table 35, Survey Q-27 below).

In an assessment of the efforts they made to work, single mothers also said they worked more hours than those in the general population. This shows that they gave a rather higher rating for themselves vis-à-vis other mothers in the general population. Out of the 74 of those who responded to Survey Q 32, 53 or 66% said they worked more hours than other mothers who were employed and worked 40 hours a week in the labor market (see Table 52, Survey Q 32, Appendix 1).

Table 35: Survey Table Q27: Rating of self in relation to others who work full time

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 as hard working as other people	49	61.3	77.8	77.8
	2 not as hard working as other	1	1.3	1.6	79.4
	3 physical ability is a limitation for me	11	13.8	17.5	96.8
	4 bad luck pulls me down	1	1.3	1.6	98.4
	5 other	1	1.3	1.6	100.0
	Total	63	78.8	100.0	
Missing	9 missing	17	21.3		
Total		80	100.0		

Source: This dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

The types of jobs the SMPs marked show that most of them belong to the service sector category. Manufacturing jobs in particular that used to pay good wages and salaries in the past and have been since replaced mainly by fast growing service sector jobs. Forty-four out of the total of 80 respondents or 35 % related their jobs to the service sector and 25 marked the 'other' option, but did not specify what it was that they did (refer to Table 36 below on the types of jobs held by SMPs).

Table 36: Survey Table Q24: Types of jobs held by survey research participant SMPs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 Nurse's aid	6	7.5	13.6	13.6
	3 Restaurant worker	3	3.8	6.8	20.5
	4 Cleaner	5	6.3	11.4	31.8
	5 Office assistant	1	1.3	2.3	34.1
	9 Cashier	4	5.0	9.1	43.2
	10 Other	25	31.3	56.8	100.0
	Total	44	55.0	100.0	
Missing	99 missing	36	45.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Source: This dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

The second sub-factor explaining poverty was the downward shift in work hours, meaning the downward movement of work hours given to lower and/or entry and/or low level job laborers. These workers do get enough hours in an eight-hour day. But when business slow down they are kindly asked by the employer to go home.

The disappearance of jobs in low-wage areas accounts for the third-sub factor. Many good-paying jobs are exported abroad or low wage areas nationally (refer to discussion of these same issue on pp. 62-65, Chapter 1, and p. 121, Chapter 2).

The second major factor explaining poverty is lack of an adequate level of education. Only less than a third of the respondents in the survey were above high school (see Table 22, Survey Table Q-6, p. 249). This factor is, in a sense, a hindrance to an upward movement of the mothers, theoretically, at least. Finishing a certain level of school though may not be the answer to the problem as the survey data for this dissertation indicated (refer to the discussion on the issue on pp. 247-250, Chapter 3).

Requirements placed on SMPs to train, complete GED level or high school, take college credits, attend seminars, job search familiarization sessions, filling out of all sorts of forms and contracts (interview with Rachel, Transcript, January 29, 2004) is a horrendous task that makes their daily lives breathtakingly full of activities. These unnecessarily compel them to stretch themselves throughout the day.

The third source of this problem is single mothers' complex engagements in their daily activities that require so much effort and time to sort out and respond to. The inordinate number of activities that they (SMPs) have to be involved in each day scatters their efforts far and wide and this situation blocks their capacity to be independent.

horrendous task that makes their daily lives breathtakingly full of activities. These unnecessarily compel them to stretch themselves throughout the day.

The third factor explaining poverty among SMPs is the complex engagements that weave their daily lives. These require much effort and time to sort out and respond to. The multiple activities that they (SMPs) have to be involved in each day scatter their efforts far and wide and hence they severely block their capacities to be independent.

Gergen's (1991: 48-53) use of the concept of 'social saturation,' in the context of the postmodern condition, may be turned around to explain the webs of relationships that SMPs have to thread through and be engaged in to survive. Poor SMPs have, of necessity, to link themselves to an array of primary sources of support (family, friends etc.) and secondary sources (institutions like charities or voluntary agencies and government offices) in order to put together resources that they need every day. Basic needs such as food, rent and deposit, utility expense 'chip ins', healthcare services, clothing that constitute some of the basic needs of the mothers and their children can only be made available through these networked relations.

Added to these, of course, are the routine daily activities of cooking, feeding, sheltering, and providing emotional support to their children, among others, that they have perforce to accomplish at home. Escorting young children to school and getting them back to their homes or taking them to health care centers and hospitals if the children happen to get sick or nursing them at home takes a gargantuan effort and a good deal of time each day. As these activities increase or become extreme, single mother parents 'reach a state of social saturation' (Gergen 1991: 61) that exhausts their energies

and leaves no room for quality time, thinking and strategizing ways of improving their abilities to better support themselves.

Open borders, the fourth factor explaining poverty that hoodwinks workers from foreign lands, also indirectly affected jobs that could potentially absorb low-income local workers including single mothers. Would-be workers in this category may, in some cases, affect both the availability of positions and the possibility of choosing workers (these work for substantially low wages) from the migrant pool rather than domestic employees. Immigrants from Mexico, according to some observers in the U.S., add to the problem of the shortage of jobs. The real impact of this factor on the shrinkage of the job pool is, however, not easily verifiable unless many more empirical studies are undertaken.

But close observers provide conceptually interesting insights about its negative effects. Hornberger (May 1998, in www.fff.org/freedom), for example, notes that it is the extreme right of the 'libertarian controllers' that warn off the negative impacts of open borders that they claim expose Americans to more serious shortages of jobs. Open borders, according to them, pave the way for the squeezing out of jobs that unskilled Americans could fill. In the views of the 'libertarian controllers' and their 'right wing extremist' allies', Hornberger (May 1998) reveals, these border crashers also pollute American culture and, moreover, they tend to append themselves to the welfare rolls thus creating havoc to the national economy But others do not see the problem of open borders in these contexts.

Border Zar Gonzalez Cruz, a former President of Mexico's National Chambers of Commerce, on the contrary, reflects the view that there should be no border between

Mexico and the United States (Seper, *The Washington Times*, September 27, 2004: PA01). In fact, he likes to see:

> a border similar to the one that Europe has right now ... where they have common, very common objectives. They have a common economy. They have policies that transcend their borders where they work with them to get it." Travel across national borders in the European Union is unregulated, and citizens of EU member nations traverse borders as freely and easily as Americans cross state lines.

Importation of more guest workers or migrants, according to some other writers, is a boon to the American economy. The workers benefit the American economy. Benjamin Powell, quoting a 1997 study by the National Academy of Sciences, (refer to www.imdiverisity.com, see full URL in the bibliography), argues that "migrants benefit the economy (the U.S. economy) more than they take in social services." He notes that they "add, at least $22 billion each year" to the American economy.

Shortages of farm workers, on the other hand, hurt the American economy. According to Laufer (Nov.14, 2004), the 'labor shortage' that Arizona faced last year is an example of what could happen to the American farm. He fortifies his argument by the fact that because of the lack of workers in Arizona "huge quantities of lettuce went unpicked in 2004." Given this problem, Powell stressed: "...immigrants benefit the U.S. economy, but their potential remains hindered by current laws" that limit their (Mexican migrants) entry and mobility in the U.S. Many U. S. citizen groups bordering Mexico have even voluntarily taken measures to curb the endless flow of Mexican 'guest workers' claiming that the authorities have done little to give lasting solutions to the problem. Mullan (undated), however, advises: "economic foundations of immigration (wage levels, economic development strategies) and the social foundations of immigration (networks and information exchange) are inextricably intertwined and that migration policies and associated regulations should be based on an understanding of

those shared foundations." Issuing regulations without examining these interrelated issues would further complicate the problem for both the U. S. and Mexico.

The three major factors — the minimum wage received in relation to school completed, the number of hours worked or made available, the types of jobs held and the minimum pay rate associated with them — discussed above -- are subjects that merit a hard look by all concerned benefactors as well as recipients. They should evoke serious discussions in the context of what Bourdieu calls 'habitus' or what Ortner (1990: 63) identifies as 'schema' where struggles for social and economic interests play out. Such spaces and discourses provide opportunities for mothers to articulate their needs and be partners in the search for the means for satisfying them with relatively less difficult conditions. In other words, they should not be disinterested on-lookers or passive observers in matters involving their own lives.

Other than taking the available help, the poor SMPs have no way of making decisions about what they require at a particular moment of need. For example, where some mothers' needs are for wheat bread consumption due to health reasons, the shortage and/or unavailability of the item in pantries forces them to replace it with white bread that was not suitable for their health condition. Some mothers this researcher talked to during pantry food pick up days left without bread for this very reason. The needs of such mothers and others should be taken into account if services provided to them are to affect their connection to public welfare. The mothers' inputs in decisions involving the stocking of pantries would help in addressing these types of problems of segments of recipients. Discursive practices, once put in place, enable SMPs and their benefactors alike to work out priorities and choices that are in tune with their expressed needs.

3. Turning Neighborhood Centers Into Service Points

SMPs are everywhere and apparently nowhere each day. Can the multiple activities that engage them be reduced so single mothers can budget their time and resources optimally and focus on fewer activities at a time? Who could facilitate this process? Could a cooperating group at the SMP or primary social unit (family) level as well as charity and governmental levels help in this work? SMPs can be spared a lot of trouble if the services they need are, for instance, integrated at the neighborhood level that is proximate to their residences. This measure of putting service centers in proximate locations enables SMPs save time that they can put to alternative uses. Recipients who were asked the question: 'what means of transportation they used to go to the service spots, said that they combined means that were readily available for them; some 16 SMPs said they walked to the charity or service point that they go to secure food and other supplies. The highest used transportation means, according to the survey data is the bus or public transportation system — 26 out of 61 respondents or about 26% (refer to Tables 54-60 for Survey Q 37 in Appendix 1) used the bus for the purpose. One respondent that the researcher helped transport bags full of supplies to her home had to walk three miles, or more than one and a half hours one way, to collect her supplies at a church on the west side of Lansing. The difficulties SMPs face to go to the service centers they interact with necessitates that the services they need should be located within their neighborhoods.

Food and other immediate and critical supplies are distributed in the neighborhood in some parts of Lansing. A case in point is the South West Neighborhood Center that works from a school base in the city. The center provides some immediately needed supplies on a daily basis, training, and counseling, among others services, to make good

the shortage of resources and logistical problems that limit its activities to a big once a month food distribution day (Interview with Mellon, South West Neighborhood Center, January 8, 2004). Armies of volunteers, among whom are former and current welfare recipient mothers and others members of the general public, serve the needy on this monthly event. Food Movers, an organization that which collects food and other items from food, stores across town, supplies the food that is distributed at the neighborhood center each month (Interview with Mellon, Jan 8, 2004). Around 85 families show up during the distribution day each month to pick up their shares of supplies. The neighborhood center coordinates its activities with other government and private-based institutions in order to enable the needy supplement what it offers them with those available at other centers of assistance.

The center has institutionalized mechanism of information exchange both with its consumers and other agencies that extend similar services. The center's newsletter and interpersonal communication within and outside the agency is used to share information on new resources that are available elsewhere. According to Mellon, this system has benefited consumers who are immediately made aware of existing resources and supplements the center's efforts to provide temporary assistance (food and other consumables) and other bridging resources that overlie the foundation for longer-term needs (training and counseling services).

This model of distributing services to the needy could be replicated for city areas where they do not exist. They are cost effective in the sense that they are at close proximity to the needy population's residences and simplify the logistics for making them available at central distribution locations without much difficulty. To the question: 'who

should facilitate the transition to this model, the obvious answer calls for a coordinated effort of public institution and private agencies that are at the forefront of the services now. If such a model is found out to be useful, it is in the best interest of the state and the general public (the donating public in particular) to think in terms of making use of it. Especially the state, that carries the major responsibility of seeing to it that the welfare of each member of society is enhanced, should make a decision to use this alternative of reaching out and helping the needy more. This does not, however, mean that the burden should not be shared by other private non-profit agencies. As the Catholic Relief Services have rightly said, the effort to assist the poor should be a 'joint project' as the poor, to use the charity's ringing concept of 'the poor belong to us all' (Brown and McKeown 1997: 197). In fact, the multiple agency approach and 'sharing of resources to help the mothers' that is advocated by Herrick et al (2002) fits this model.

4. Redefining Terms and Making Children the Focus of Assistance

A move toward a still better alternative of serving SMPs should also be explored. This takes us to the central theme of the dissertation. Many ways of helping the poor, SMPs included, have been engineered both before and after the New Deal days, the time public provisioning was launched in a massive way. Some of the programs have been found useful and rationalized as the only means of reducing poverty for segments of the poor. The elderly and the 'deserving poor' (the blind, the physically and mentally handicapped) constitute the population that is considered deserving of the public's assistance.

SMPs who should normally be seen as the purveyors for their children's needs are put in the category of those who are not deserving of any public assistance. The reason for this re-categorization from dependent children to 'able-bodied' mothers deserves some treatment and redefinition at this juncture. SMPs were at the background when the program of Assistance to Dependent Children was launched during the period of the New Deal. The name of the program was re-Christened to Assistance to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) to bring children in the same household as a unit to be supported under an umbrella term. It seems that this change in the title of the program brought mothers from a background to a foreground position. In the process the original intention of helping the children lost focus and mothers who fitted the definition of able-bodied persons changed both the sense and the meaning of the original concept of 'dependent children' that apparently would have avoided all the ensuing controversy.

The number of children in poverty in single mother parent households is considerably high. The Green Book by the Committee on Ways and Means, U. S. House of Representatives, in 1995 showed that of the 13.6 individuals on welfare, 9.3 million were children (Seccombe 1999: 14). The majority who receive welfare in families are children (Seccombe: 15). But this number is downplayed and welfare recipiency is considered a problem of women or single mothers who conspire not to work and instead bleed the public coffer intentionally.

A lot has been said about SMPs in the preceding chapters, particularly chapters 1-3, of this dissertation. Here, I should like to make some suggestions that may be considered as one alternative of dealing with the problem to a small extent. SMPs have been subjected to a series of stereotypes and in some cases labeled as bums (see Katz's

descriptions and analysis above). They were described as lazy and ones who have no interest to unhook themselves from public assistance programs. This type of categorization and definition in behavioral terms is too sweeping. This particular definition may not be limited only to the SMP population. It fails to see the complex factors that need to be considered to arrive at any sound conclusion. As such, I would simply lay it to rest in this section and proceed to the discussion of possibly what works.

The AFDC was, from its inception, made a means-tested program when old age benefits under the Social Security Act were made an entitlement. Initially when SMPs were provided monthly checks in the form of widow survivor allowances, the cost to the state was pretty small. But when the states' services were expanded to include all types of children in need, pressure on the public coffers began to slowly build up. It was not the need to help children in poor families that motivated anger and actions that gathered moss to limit welfare and eventually eliminate it.

Single mother parents had to be made scapegoats for the increasing cost of supporting children in poor families. To put a stop to this climbing cost of paying for the program any attempt to bring children to the forefront of discussion has to be pre-empted. As able-bodied recipients, SMPs had to be focused upon and asked to go out of the home and find jobs that could earn them incomes with which they can support their children like other mothers in the general population. But we have heard in the statements made by SMPs as well as charity and government bureau specialists that the problem is not the unwillingness of the SMPs to hold jobs and retain them. The problem is rather lack of jobs, the very low wages, and the variability of the number of hours secured for work and the dwindling size of the 'take home income' every pay period.

Now this problem seems to be central to the whole issue of attacks and counter-attacks between those who advocate for public support to the poor and those who oppose the whole idea. SMPs have little say in the discourse and in the decisions made to assist them or not. Now, the question becomes: what can SMPs do to help themselves in order to ease their continuing everyday crisis. It is the suggestion of this dissertation that they should be encouraged to create their own jobs privately and/or by using a model that embodies cooperation amongst themselves. They need to be assisted in the creation of such small businesses that they can run from their own individual and/or private homes or school and/or community/neighborhood centers.

5. The Social Capital Route to Escaping Poverty

The social capital concept in which SMPs with common problems could be brought together and find solutions to them is one way out of a morass of poverty. Such SMPs can actually start with services that they themselves need most at the beginning and move to other types later on. Childcare, transportation, small food and grocery stores, established on a cooperating group model or in a social capital format, would enable them to create jobs for themselves and open up centers (service as well as commercial) that cater for their needs. An example of this type of small business is one that was started in Worcester, in the state of Massachusetts (Gilbert cited by Melissa, in Jonas and Wilson 1999); and Carol Stack's research site, 'The Flats' (1974). Informal mutual help among SMPs is also cited in the literature. Shirk and Wadia (2002: 151-152), in their book: *Kitchen Table Entrepreneurs* show that individually and with the help of some institutional support in terms of micro credit, for instance, welfare recipients, the authors

say, are making it. Seccombe's (1999) interviews for her book also show that arrangements for childcare service exchange do exist, though very informally.

To the survey question (Q48-BC1), statement as to whether or not 'cooperation would enable recipients to organize and create a mutual support system,' some 12.5 percent (total respondents, 55) marked the 'very much true' and another 25 percent chose the 'true' options, respectively, (see Table 37 below). Another 25 percent had 'no idea.'

Table 37: Survey Table Q48-BC1 Cooperating groups: Creating mutual support systems

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 very much true	10	12.5	18.2	18.2
	2 true	20	25.0	36.4	54.5
	3 no idea	20	25.0	36.4	90.9
	4 untrue	2	2.5	3.6	94.5
	5 very much untrue	3	3.8	5.5	100.0
	Total	55	68.8	100.0	
Missing	9 missing	25	31.3		
Total		80	100.0		

Source: This dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

Asked if they belonged to childcare mutual support groups, a very small number or about 15 per cent, said they do (see Table 38 below). Some 38 % do not definitely belong to any mutual support group for childcare. This shows that although some of the mothers realize the value of childcare support groups (refer to Table 37 above), they do not come together, create them and get some benefit out of them (see Table 38 below).

Only 10 percent of the participants said they pooled resources for the mutual support group they use for various services (refer to Table 39 below). This percentage though shows that the possibility of popularizing the idea among more single mothers is there.

On the other hand, to the question as to whether or not they would like to belong to groups that would pool resources and lend them to members, 10 out of 55 (N=80) respondents (options 1 and 2 put together in the Lickert Scale) who completed Q48-BC3 said the idea is agreeable to them (see Table 61 Q48-BC4 in Appendix 1). Some 36 per cent of the respondents of the 55 who marked the question, however, like to belong to such a group (see Table 62 Q48-BC5 in Appendix 1)

Table 38: Survey Table Q48-BC2: SMPs' links with mutual help groups that took turns to watch children

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 very much true	7	8.8	13.0	13.0
	2 true	5	6.3	9.3	22.2
	3 no idea	12	15.0	22.2	44.4
	4 untrue	18	22.5	33.3	77.8
	5 very much untrue	12	15.0	22.2	100.0
	Total	54	67.5	100.0	
Missing	9 missing	26	32.5		
Total		80	100.0		

Source: This dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

Table 39: Survey Table Q48-BC3: SMPs' associations with mutual help groups that pooled resources

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 very much true	2	2.5	3.9	3.9
	2 true	6	7.5	11.8	15.7
	3 no idea	16	20.0	31.4	47.1
	4 untrue	16	20.0	31.4	78.4
	5 very much untrue	11	13.8	21.6	100.0
	Total	51	63.8	100.0	
Missing	9 missing	29	36.3		
Total		80	100.0		

Source: This dissertation's survey data collected August 2002 to July 2004.

SMPs in the survey do not use the cooperation avenue very much. But formalizing of whatever there is in the way of the informal at the neighborhood level fills the critical need gap for the SMPs. Private agencies and public institutions have a stake in this. They surely want to see poor SMPs permanently away from public assistance that has been full of controversies. They should take the lead role in these programs of self-sufficiency (durable solutions). This venture is as important, if not more, as providing SMPs with temporary assistance. The problems single mother parents face should also be seen from the point of view of responsibility of a community to its members.

6. What Americans Owe Each Other: The Responsibility to Help the Poor as Citizens with Rights

As members of the same society, what do Americans owe each other? Should they not see the problems SMPs face from all possible angles? Do not SMPs contribute to society in many ways? Do they not give birth to children, the future producers in the continually growing economy of the U. S.? Do they not pay taxes from their meager

income? Sheq'uitta's and Rachel's definitions of poverty in which they explained that 'they are not poor' but are only marginal income receivers from low-wage work should convince those who oppose government support for single mothers to rethink the views they dearly hold.

Debates relating to this question have been going on relentlessly. But powerful interests set the issues aside even when those who are better off in the society happen to be indirect beneficiaries from tax breaks, subsidies, loans and other reverse welfare measures (refer to Marger 1999:176-178). Marger (1999: 176) finds the reference made to this measure as "wealthfare" that creates conditions for big businesses to avoid tax payment responsibilities through the use of loopholes provided by corporate tax laws. This challenges the prevailing definition of poverty linked to the concept of the behavior of actors who do not want to work and improve their livelihood.

As members of the same community and/or as citizens of the same country, people have stakes in the maintenance of the sovereignty of their nation or any possible threats to it. All mothers and/or SMPs play indirect, if not direct, role in supplying the manpower that society needs for both its security and productivity. People fought in major local (the American Civil War) and international wars (First, Second World Wars, Korean, Vietnam, the ongoing Middle East Wars, and so forth). Persons, from all classes and more particularly from those in the bottom hierarchies in the social structure did/do more of the fighting and gave/give their lives in these wars.

The contributions of mothers, single mother parents included, in terms of soldiery in defense of the nation's security or the threat of it is true. The state expresses its gratitude to those dead and alive participants and their families now as in the past (reference can be

made to President Bush's gratitude on particular occasions to armed forces members for the 'sacrifices they made in the war against terrorism' during the past two years). The contributions mothers make in connection with the needed supply of workers is also notable. Without the supply of labor that growing up children of SMPs as well, the workforce needed to do the jobs in factories, firms and service sectors would not be there.

Given this, it is only reasonable and legitimate to point out that single mother parents constitute a fragile population that needs the utmost care in order to overcome their poverty. As Robert Rhoads, in his book, *Community Service and Higher Learning: Explorations of the Caring Self* (1997: 50-51), has rightly observed: "caring" for single mothers should go much beyond providing temporary assistance. Their benefactors should instead "feel" with them, the meaning of caring that Rhoads uses, following Nel Noddings' (1984: 14) conception, the forlorn situation they are in. Single mother parents have to be supported for two reasons. First, it is to alleviate the single mothers' and their children's sufferance. Second, it is to reduce the state's responsibility to assist them time and again through the supply of contingent or relief resources. The mothers and their children deserve resources that would liberate them from dependence on public welfare as well.

7. Some Points on the Results, Discussion and Implications of this Study

Single mother parents in Lansing attempt to provide food, shelter and care for their children by combining resources from work, from various support sources including public welfare. But the resources from all these sources do not satisfy the needs of many of the mothers interviewed. Some of the mothers have to make good the deficiencies in

resources to the extent this option is available by borrowing from family and friends in the main.

Results

Some of the mothers interviewed worked as hard as any mother in the general population. Some of them worked over 40 hours each week. But the incomes they raised from work did not cover the bills that the many were responsible for each month. True, some mothers may, as close observers of their behaviors (voluntary agency specialists and administrators, in particular) indicate, spend their money less wisely (in the views of Tracie/Linda of Christo Rey); but a significant number of them also devote their incomes to pay their rent, buy food and other basic items that they and their children need most.

In fact, fifty percent of those who participated in the survey indicated that their incomes were much less than their expenditure levels. Food, rent and transportation consumed 69 per cent of the 'disposable' incomes of many participant SMPs (see Table 40(1) below).

Table 40(1): Categories of expenditures that eat up the incomes of SMPs

Expenditure Type	Monthly Expenditure	% of Total Expenditure
Food	$ 202.17	29%
Rent	$ 239.22	34%
Transportation	$ 42.54	6%
Child Care	$ 64.46	9%
Other	$ 148.29	21%
Total Expenditure	$ 696.68	100%

Source: Calculated from the data collected by this dissertation's survey.

Table 40(2): Major sources of income (average) for the SMPs who participated in the survey

Source of Income	Monthly average amount	% of Total Income
Employment	$ 380.26	44%
Family support	$ 102.76	12%
State	$ 77.52	9%
FIA	$ 162.22	19%
Other	$ 148.30	17%
Total Income	$ 871.07	100%

Source: Calculated from the data collected by this dissertation's survey.

The hourly average pay many of the mothers got was less than $7.00. But the cost of living in Lansing is such that, if one does not earn above $11.00, one may not be able to pay for their basic needs. The mainly service sector jobs that they find employment in structurally fall in the category of low-paying jobs. The manufactory jobs that paid higher wages in the past are fizzling out of the market slowly in spite of their job creation attributes. These good-paying jobs migrate to low labor cost regions within and outside the United States where the profit margin is highly rewarding to capital.

While return to capital makes life easier to the owners, the low return to labor in such a situation creates suffering for workers, in which category single mother parents find themselves. Unless the structural problem of creating good-paying jobs is resolved, single mothers and other workers would not be able to do fairly well without support systems that are external to them. The state, the major social institution that stands for the well being of citizens, needs to provide the resources that those in poverty need or alternatively it should create the groundwork for an upward swing of jobs that pay living wages.

Discussion

Education is credited as a means of liberating individuals from the shackles of poverty. When it comes to the education of single mothers who are below poverty, the plan has been to help them finish high school and make their way to higher education programs. A large majority of those who participated in the survey research for this dissertation did (46.3 percent) completed high school. Also 21.3 percent and 7.5 percent have made it through two-year and four-year college programs, respectively, (refer to Table 22, Survey Table Q-6, p. 249).

But this attribute did not help them much to improve their wage rates. Those whose educational achievement was beyond high school did not make much in the way of a living wage either. The relationship between education and finding good–paying jobs was not statistically significant at alpha 0.05 level. So was the relationship between education and stay on welfare and number of children (the lesser the number of children, it is assumed), the easier it is to generally pursue one's education further.

Among the main questions raised with regard to finding oneself in poverty and seeking welfare support from public sources and consequently getting out of the dependency loop was finding jobs and working hard. But scarcity of jobs as reflected by the unemployment rate that is all too often manifested itself in the loss of jobs, indicates that the problem was not the unwillingness of the unemployed to hook themselves up with some jobs. The problem was manly the failure of the market system that is prone to sending jobs where the cost of labor does not cut into the larger returns sought by investors who are mainly concerned with "maximizing shareholder profits," Nina Bernstein quoted in Karger and Stoesz 1997: 297).

The remedy to this stumbling block is to reexamine the contribution of the factor of profit motive and the loss of jobs, good-paying jobs at that. This dissertation has shown that less recognized factors like SMPs' willingness to educate themselves and to work and earn their living should earn them a degree of credit in an environment where they are often rapped. Some of the SMPs who participated in the in-depth interviews, have shown great interest in furthering their education. Some of the barriers that they face are, however, connected with childcare, and transportation to an extent.

Other than the behavioral problems that the detractors of poor single mothers stereotypically stick on them, the benefit the state provided in the areas of childcare and transportation, inter alia, has been one factor that earned, though indirectly, SMPs the label 'mothers who do not want to work, but instead like to live on resources that others who work pay in the form of taxes.' But these critics disregard the fact that public assistance in the 1960s and 1970s reduced the rate of poverty in many areas of the U. S. and that it also provided some mothers with the ability to capture the opportunity to push ahead in their higher and specialized education.

Multivariate Analysis of Some Predictors

The survey data, useful as it was to see if there were some association between variables of interest to the dissertation, did not help us to establish a credible relationship that was significant at alpha 0.05 or 0.01 levels. For instance, return to welfare rolls after exiting the system was subjected to a multivariate test using the variables: age of the recipient, income, education and number of children. The independent variables

identified above show inconclusive relationships with the dependent variable when they are subjected to a multivariate analysis test.

A logistic regression analysis to determine factors associated with "ever get(ting) back on welfare" (Q 63) was performed to see a possible relationship between the dependent variable "stay on welfare" and the independent variables associated with age, education, extent of stay on welfare that lingered over unspecified number of years and incomes the mothers drew from their work and other sources. There was no statistically significant association between the dependent variable -- stay on welfare -- and any of the independent variables. This could be because the sample size was small.

Table 41: Relationships between the dependent variable (going back to welfare) and the independent variables (age, level of school completed, number of times stayed on welfare rolls and income) compared using the logistic regression model

Parameters	Odds Ratio	95% Confidence Interval	
		Lower 95%	Upper 95%
Age group (30-45 vs < 30)	3.0	0.53	16.9
Age group (> 45 vs < 30)t	6.5	0.40	106.7
Education (More than high school vs high school or less)	1.0	0.19	5.1
Number of times on Welfare (More than 3 times vs Less than 3 times)	4.0	0.78	21.2
Income	1.0	0.90	1.1

Source: Calculated from the data collected by this dissertation's survey

The regression analysis does not tell us much about the attributes of the selected variables as good predictors of the possible relationships between the dependent (going back on welfare) and the independent variables of age, income, number of children and education. As the data clearly show, being above high school or below high school, for

instance, did not make a difference in the SMPs' decisions to reapply for benefits and as such it was not a good predictor. This means returning to the welfare rolls is not affected by level of schooling. Similarly, age of recipients, number of children in SMPs' homes and income levels did not hold back the mothers from making decisions to go back on welfare when the need arose. Some other variables need to be tested in follow-up surveys as they may possibly explain the dependent variable(s) in question.

As the data from this dissertation survey is drawn from a convenient sample, its power of determination is very much limited. At this juncture, it is only fair to say that the study would not give us the liberty to conclude that the independent variables chosen explain the dependent variable(s). The power of the statistics as read in the data is not so strong after all in explaining the relationships between the variables. This is because of the low response rate, that is, smaller sample size mainly.

It was initially anticipated that some 250 single mother parents would participate in the survey. But despite a lot of effort to achieve this target, fewer numbers of SMPs came forward to participate. This number would have given the researcher a 90 per cent power of precision with at least a 90 percent confidence interval.

The independent and dependent variables have thus no relationship of significance that one can speak of with confidence. However, we can infer from the outcome of the test(s) performed that a huge intervention by the state and possibly by voluntary agencies need to be mounted so that the need for coming back to the rolls time and again is obviated. This result augurs well with the main thesis advanced in the dissertation – the thesis that an enduring solution whose objectives are the deployment of significant amounts of resources is necessary to effectively combat the ills of poverty. This should

be taken to heart so recipient single mother parents can achieve an enormous degree of independence from the public support system that significantly lured them to its bosoms or attracted them in ways that would make them intimately linked to it for longer than is necessary.

Implications of the Dissertation's Research for Practice

The central discussion point of this dissertation is that while much as the public assistance provided to single mothers was helpful in supplementing their low incomes and helping some of them in improving their educational levels, it fell short of the main purpose of making the mothers independent and self-sufficient. One of the reasons for this state of affairs was the systemic failure to create the connection between contingency assistance that the mothers needed in times of unemployment and, when employed, the link between jobs and their opportunity to obtain a living wage. Too many mothers were customarily defined as lazy and ones who like to depend on public assistance for their living. Some of the mothers who participated in the survey research for this dissertation, as shown above, work more than 40, 40 or less hours a week in the formal and/or informal labor markets. They combine their incomes with the welfare checks they obtain in order to defray the costs they incur to satisfy their basic needs.

These mothers need more support from all sources including their own effort at helping themselves through joining hands under mutual help umbrellas. They need financial, organizational and management assistance to possibly make this joint project under the rubric of social capital. A lot of the research participant SMPs like the idea, seek support in this area and make the point that they should like to be self-supportive.

Small business ventures like childcare and means and cost of transportation, happen to touch their greatest need areas. These lines of business activity may bring about some sort of relief to their complex lives. More ethnographic research that Guedman (2001: 1) described as one methodology that flashes on 'less recognized processes' gives valuable insights into facts of life as those of SMPs; makes sense here and should be resorted to.

Despite a more or less universal lack of recognition and denigration of women's labor contributions to the family and hence their association with dependency, single mothers' adeptness to creativity and ability to hold their own against overwhelming odds embedded in every day life invites more research. The single mothers who participated in the survey for this dissertation and those interviewed use all kinds of resources (childcare and transportation, for instance) that they are able to draw upon or receive from work, families, friends to provide for themselves and their children. When a substantial number of mothers fail to find work with enough hours and livable wages and/or when these sources thin out or they are exhausted or dry up, they opt for primary and secondary sources of assistance -- charities/NGOs and the state, to manage their precarious and complex lives each day. Below, I will briefly put the effort that SMPs expend on their welfare in the context of some of the thoughts and perspectives of scholars and writers on poverty and resource needs as reflected in the dissertation.

The claim that SMPs do not work and that they depend on welfare, a characterization that may be true of some mothers, cannot apply to all. The survey research data indicates that of the 51 (N=80) participants, 17 or some 21 per cent of the single mother parent respondents were unable to 'find jobs' (refer to Table 45-51, Survey Table Q 26a-d and

26_DT; see also Tables 20, p. 244, and Tables 45 and 46, Appendix 1). One grandmother, an in-depth interview participant for this research, also worked.

The other major assumption that SMPs are spendthrift is questionable. In fact, the bills they get weigh heavily on them so much so that luxury is beyond their reach. This fully explains the hardship many who participated in the in-depth interviews and the survey research have to undergo. Actually, rent, food, childcare, transportation 34; 29; 9, and 6 percent, in that order, consumed the disposable income of the survey research participants. Rent comes as the highest expenditure category for the SMPs households (refer to Table 40(1), page 335). These are all critical categories of expenditure for the SMPs. What may be considered as a 'luxury' category of spending at the poor mother's level, 'eat out,' (option Q42-J) was marked by a mere 15 percent of the survey participants; 'allowances for movies' and 'travel expenses,' took minimal percentages in the choices the question contained. This data should not, however, suggest that that some mothers do not spend their resources on unnecessary items. In effect, the descriptor that takes all mothers as extravagant women shies any meaningful augmentation.

Most of the single mothers thus work to make ends meet. But as Bourdieu and Sen (1984: 315-24) demonstrated lack of command over enough resources and deficiency in terms of capabilities constitute the stumbling blocks in the ability of the single mothers to manage or search for ways of achieving independence. They thus stick to the 'forced' choice of seeking assistance from both primary and secondary sources.

SMPs' political position and/or political resources, despite their potential, again *a la* Bourdieu, place them in a situation where they are not able to represent their interests. The elimination of the safety net that they were able to garner with the support of society

was effected without an iota of input from affected mothers. Political institutions at the helm of society — the president and the Congress — made the decision for the mothers as well. Paden and Page (2003: 1, in 'apr.sagepub.com,' (refer to full URL in the Bibliography) show that congressional visitation of public opinion on issues of welfare reform was found to be insignificant. Congresspersons' references, according to Paden and Page, to the views of categories people like SMPs, were quite infrequent and vague. In some cases they were significantly misleading" (Ibid).

Although single mothers were the biggest losers as a result of the stringent decision to scrap public welfare, they were simply unable to make a case for themselves as they have been scattered/divided, and as Skocpol (2000: 97) argues well, unlike in the case of seniors, they (SMPs) were not able to come together to vote against politicians who may not be enthusiastic to support social programs for the poor. But as Foucault also rightly argues, SMPs' power remains only at the potential level. Discourse on lifeline issues as basic needs do not involve the subjects, single mothers, in the case of this dissertation, or the losers in the demand for the provision of food as well as decent levels of shelter and care. Media discussions of these issues are often limited to anecdotal examples.

The mothers are neither organized nor do they have the political clout that the senior citizens of the nation, for instance, possess for political election outcomes (see Skocpol 2000: 52-54). While seniors' organized status was feared and the prescription drug benefits that they badly needed was, at least, recognized and acted upon without much ado, the cause of single mother parents and their poor children was left untouched and ignored. Attempts to break the senior block's political power in elections was a subject of

discussion as this was expected to limit the ability of the seniors to join hands in opposing plans to slash public assistance programs (Skocpol 2000: 97).

Statements that are made in relation to the poor/single mother parents' behaviors, need to take such facts into consideration when, especially, this is in regards to the loss of rights. More studies about the situations single mothers find themselves in need to be made and the outcome should be used as a basis of critical decisions (like the elimination the public safety net) of such magnitude that involve loss of rights and benefits.

Oscar Lewis' argument that the poor (unable to access market resources) use their requisite goodwill to protect and help one another, is consistent with the dissertation's main argument: that the 'social capital route to getting out of poverty is particularly relevant'. He sees this as a positive quality that can help the mothers support each other in group contexts even though he sees the 'culture of poverty' that is a feature of the poor in some groups across the world (see Lewis, in Gmelch et al, 1996: 401-404) as a hindrance to their emancipation from conditions of hopelessness. Like the migrants who come to urban areas and set up friendly societies to replace the kin system in order to fairly meet the vagaries of urban life, and contend with the strange, yet complex urban environment, SMPs can also take the social capital route to help one another.

Many mothers help one another in terms of child care. Shaqu'etta and Rubie have used the exchange system to their advantage. Though mothers like Rachel at one point lacked a fuller understanding of the value of childcare exchange, they see some positive qualities in some sort of mutual service set up by single mother parents themselves.

The survey data indicates that some 31 percent of the respondents want to use the social capital model to overcome their poverty (see Table 61: Survey Table Q48-BC4,

Appendix 1). About 36 percent also indicated that they want to belong to a social capital group that pools resources and gives loans at low interest rates unlike commercial banks (refer to Table 62, Survey Table Q48-BC5, Appendix 1). Having data such as these makes sense as those concerned with poverty can make use of it as a basis for crafting policies and implementing programs for addressing problems of destitution among women.

The implication of the research, therefore, is that more data about single mothers needs to flow from concrete ethnographic studies that make mothers talk or empowers them to talk. This prevents a resort to assumptions that are based on mere anecdotes and generalizations woven from singular or anecdotal data captured in the processes of casual exchanges and a consequent miscomprehension or misattribution of ideas put forward in the discourse on the issue of poverty and dependence.

Learning from the lived in experiences of the mothers and from talks with them — the anthropological line of drawing data from the "subjects' point of view," a modified term from the "native's view," a phrase commonly used in anthropology, is crucial for making policies on the issue of poverty. Any meaningful remedy to single mother parents' problems should start from a study of the(ir) daily lives (see Gudeman 2001) of the SMPs, their concerns, and above all the deficit in resources that they experience. The data collected for this dissertation and the analysis made point toward the need to conduct and probe more into the deeper causes of poverty among single mother parents.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Poverty, resistance, the ingenuity of survivors, the self-sacrifice of women, the unending search of a better life—these things are not new in the world. With urbanization and 'modernization/ people meet new forms of poverty—the drug dealer and the gun, addictions and violence, in the favela and the barrio as well as the public-housing schemes of North America and Europe.

These give a new urgency to the search for a common global solidarity between poor people in their search, not for riches, but for security and sufficiency. These simple aims have been smothered everywhere by the economic imperative of constant growth, and the compulsion of 'more', rather than what constitutes enough for daily needs.

Jeremy Seabrooke, *The No-Nonsense Guide to World Poverty,*
Oxford, London, Verso, 2003: 7-8.

1. Preamble

Single mother parents' unrecognized efforts to make ends meet and survive in a world where incomes limp far behind household expenditures requires a serious study and a dispassionate analysis of the true nature of the fundamental problem of poverty.

Many single mother parents' households' incomes in the United States fall far short of their basic need satisfaction targets even after state support (Katz 1989, Bianchi and Chafel (1993), Seccombe 1999). The inordinately low minimum wage is one of the root causes of the problem.

This chapter evaluates the nature of the laissez-faire system under capitalism, the living wage issue, the insufficiency of welfare transfers and attempts to shed some light on one possible option of addressing the perennial problem of poverty and dependency. An efficient use of resources that the mothers themselves have at their disposal, for instance, their social capital, may serve as one possible way out of the quagmire.

Existing government intervention that mainly focuses on temporary measures may need to be critically assessed in order to evaluate the outcome of previous policies and adjust the types and levels of inputs to fit the needs of the people beyond relief. This apparently constitutes only a partial input toward responding to the perennial problem.

The conclusion of this dissertation pulls together the chain reaction job scarcity and displacement of workers has on those that are on the margins, SMPs among other poor persons. The place of transfers to those in need under capitalism and the attempts made to help address the problem of poverty, a factor that continues to affect many more people, is also discussed in this chapter. The chapter also makes suggestions for policy and implementation changes with regard to the transfer of public and private voluntary agency resources to mitigate the persisting poverty and dependence situation that has particularly become a common feature in urban settings in the U. S. A reflection on what is new that the dissertation has dealt with and what may be done in the future to reduce the poverty of single mothers is also taken up as a point of discussion.

The laissez-faire economic approach to the solution of the social inequality and chronic poverty problems in the U. S. has not generated workable solutions to the problems of poor single mothers despite the promise that the market in and of itself would serve as a cure for their plights. Government intervention as per the Keynesian welfare state model did reduce poverty at times without providing much of the enduring solutions that the persistent social ill in particular required.

The numbers of the poor, in the nation at various time periods decreased following government interventions aimed at alleviating the problem in the 1960s and 1970s in particular. For instance, in 1959, 22 percent of the population of the United States was

poor. Following also the distributive measures by the state, the population in poverty hovered around 12%, in fact, less than 12% in the 1960s and 1970s (see O'Hare, *A New Look at Poverty in America* 1996: 14-15; James E. Anderson et al, *Public Policy and Politics in America* 1984: 152, 161. Refer also to Table 10, on p. 92 and Table 42 in Appendix 1, p. 374, as well as Figures 10.1 and 10.2 and accompanying table, p. 406).

2. Views of Single Mothers on Alternative Ways of Dealing With Poverty

The views single mothers shared with this researcher on alternative ways to respond to the problem need some careful appraisal as the points the participants have made emerge out of lived in experiences. Not only do their (SMPs') perspectives have close affinities to concrete realities in their lives, but they also constitute an endorsement of their assessments for the beginning steps in the processes of their empowerment and eventually in their escape from poverty. This they must do, not only, as Marion Orr, in Hula et al 2000: 152) argues, through the agency of a network of active citizens who come together to build a power base to combat poverty, but also through their own agency, meaning a network of single mothers, among whom we find extraordinary individuals, who are an out-and-out front line initiators of their elevation to a higher standard of living.

Empowerment would put the mothers, whose lives, in the words of Amartya Sen (in Pelagedis et al, 2000), "...are most battered by over-frequent bearing and rearing of children," in a position of obtaining or deciding on the allocation of resources that most of them combine to work in their best interests. The job of poverty reduction is better handled with more participation from the subjects themselves who go through varied

experiences that involve huge challenges. As Bourdieu (in Richardson 1986) argues, this makes sense because the individual person, given an effective support, knows how to deal with the difficulties (s)he is engulfed with. Transitory assistance packages do not have many powerful and positive impacts that lead to the self-sufficiency of those in poverty. They represent only minute portions of the overall response/journey to stop the problem.

There seems to be a wide divergence between the perspectives adhered to by the various schools of thought on the alleviation of poverty and the reality on the ground. There are two options that present themselves for dealing with the problem. The first is to go on with the current modality of providing transitory assistance packages and carry over the problem endlessly. Situations involving conflicts may arise as a consequence of this choice and the problem would linger and hence keep the suffering of single mother parents and the poor in general afloat for longer than is necessary.

The other alternative, which seems to be the better of the two is, of course, providing enduring support to those in need, in addition to the relief aspect, and bringing about a just and stable social condition for all disadvantaged groups and eventually to society itself. A discussion of the alternative solutions has been the objective and central point of this dissertation. The inclusion of those who are poor single-mother parents in the decision-making processes that affect their very lives seems to be the way to go.

But within the framework of the enduring solution packages, a mechanism of addressing the problem of poverty needs to be devised. The mutual support, or specifically, the social capital group approach of dealing with the problem, is a viable alternative.

Both recipients of welfare, SMPs, and charities that support them seem to agree on the considerable potential this format has in store for many. But while they give a quick ascent to the possibility, they caution that careful planning needs to go into the process. This, they argue, is necessary because of the complexity and hard work that needs to go into the effort if this model were selected. What SMPs have done along this line in some localities/cases though can give some insights into the possibility of achieving success.

SMPs Shaq'uitta (interview, December 31, 2003) and Rachel (interview, January 6, 2004)) did express their experiences in this regard and what they anticipate from cooperation. Shaq'uitta had the taste of it when she exchanged childcare services with her friend. She likes the arrangement made by a freely associating circle of friends—old and new. A similar experience was that of Rubie (interview, May 15, 2004), a former single mother who put the childcare resource at her disposal to an advantage. Rubie was able to complete her undergraduate education as a result of making a heavy use of this resource.

Rachel, at first, said that she was not for the idea of passing the problems her kids sustain(ed) to (an)other mother(s). But a little bit further discussion into the issues during the key informant interview with her made her review her earlier position. She later came to the conclusion that giving the cooperation a business-like character may address the problem quite well. But she thought the organization of such a cooperating group would entail huge resources.

Charity (Baverly, Haho head; Sharon, Social Services Head in Voam; Sweeny, Saar, Social Services Head) and government officials' (Janet, Social Services Department Head, Fainag; Stein, Cilahurede Head, and Stacey, Incohedep Head) agreed that the idea was pretty good. But they said that it required significant efforts and commitment on the

part of SMPs and those who would support them in this endeavor. To them such a job would require a transfer of huge amounts of resources. "But what project', they raise the rhetorical question, "can be accomplished without a great deal of effort and transfer of resources of such magnitude?"

The data in this dissertation suggests that such an approach is worth trying. As SMPs and charity/government officials alike see, the strategy of empowering and providing for those in need require lots of efforts. They reiterate: " What poverty reduction attempt has not challenged the subjects, government administrations and charities in all their attempts to control/eradicate poverty?" Beyond the relief and intermediate means (education and training, for example) of dealing with poverty among SMPs, other longer-term strategies should be given a shot in the arm. Where this was tried in over a dozen advanced countries in Europe, Australia and North America, government:

> policies reduced poverty rates among families with children from a few to several percentage points. In some countries with high levels of pre-tax-and transfer poverty, government policies reduced poverty for families very dramatically: from 22.5 to 6 percent in France, for example, and from 15.4 percent to 3.6 percent in Belgium. The extraordinarily high post-tax-and-transfer poverty rate in the United States reflects both high rates of market-generated poverty (pre-tax-and –transfer) and the fact that the United States stands out as the only country in which government taxes and transfers actually made families with young children poorer, increasing poverty by nearly twenty percentage points (Meyers and Gornick, in Hirschmann and Liebert, 2001: 227-228).

Another means of decreasing poverty in the U. S. is thus necessary. The creation of social capital or mutual support groups of SMPs is not a luxury that should be ignored. It is a must considering the outcry relating to the oft-repeated lack of resources, particularly

public, that have been found to be in short supply since the 1930s following the Great Depression. The socioeconomic crises of the era of the Great Depression that also knocked at the doors of those who thought they were immune from poverty should provide society a lesson on how to systematically deal with a perennial problem that makes its recurrent, yet dramatic, come back when policies and programs become out of joint with reality.

More research needs to be done about social inequalities and differentiation, the root causes of poverty for a significant majority of the poor, specifically single mother parents with children in the U. S. Social science research, particularly, anthropology, should do its level best to come up with alternative modalities of responding to the problem. As Gottschalk, in Kanter and Zurcher (1973: 233) also put it cogently, social problems like poverty can be addressed:

> Not by offering palliative solutions to existing social problems, but by positing and institutionalizing new normative and cognitive elements does an alternative institution begin ... In challenging inherited assumptions and myths, it becomes necessary not to simply devise new solutions but to redefine old problems.

Gottschalk, amplifying his definition of alternative institutions, says that the concept of social problems does not only entail the integration of new techniques as factors of change, but also the institution of alternative thought structures. The stigma and disrespect for the poor need to be scraped off before any meaningful solution to the enduring problem is attempted. This should be followed by an effort to transfer resources to those deserving of society's support.

3. Transfer of Resources to Those in Need Under Capitalism

In industrialized economies, as well as in emerging/developing ones, the need for transfer of resources to vulnerable groups casts itself all the time. In fact, the capitalist development system is marred with recessions that require adjustments for gaining profits. In these circumstances, labor experiences incisions or wholesale lays-off/reduction of workers who have no other means but to turn to the state in order to survive. Job losers have to depend on unemployment compensation payments the sources of which are government transfers.

Transfers to single mothers, among other poor groups of people in the category, evoke the strongest of opposition from the business elite, middle class members and other working persons. These categories of people are opposed to welfare payments because of the claim that such unjustifiable transfers for the 'non-work' make people lazy and lead to an exploitation of the system. The opposition is based on the assumption that the mothers deliberately stay on the rolls longer than they need to be and that they do not search for jobs because they are satisfied with the welfare income that they receive from the state.

Single mother parents, however, do work. They work at home and outside the home. They fall in the category of what Kweit and Kweit (1999) call the '57-60 hour week' toilers on two or more jobs. They may also be put, according to John Danahue, administrator of the Chicago Homeless Coalition, in the category of the '98ers' (those who need to work 98 hours per week) in order to be able to pay their monthly bills in order to remain afloat in the Chicago Area (Lecture to Integrative Studies in Social

Science class, November 28, 2000, refer to video cassette, deposited with the ISS, College of Social Science, MSU). The 'never filling up flour container in a traditional mill despite a great deal of labor input of the miller' parallels the situation of poor single mother parents' efforts to earn incomes that would enable them to live decent lives. Yet, this effort takes them nowhere near their needs. The wages and/or the incomes that the mothers earn are inadequate most of the time. Quite a number of single mothers who participated in the survey research for this dissertation borrow money from family and friends to meet some of their needs. A sizable number of SMPs of necessity stretch both their meager resources and resourcefulness for survival to the limit (Seccombe 1999, Eitzen and Smith 2003). Quoting statistical sources, Collins (1996: 41, 22) makes the point that some 18 percent of the poor who worked full time in 1992 received incomes that were "less than the poverty level for a family of four." Collins adds: "this figure represented a 50% rise within a space of 13 years before 1992" (Ibid.). This rate of poverty has shown little change around the new millennium (see Figure 11 in Appendix 2 for a cross reference).

The issue and cause of poverty is much more complex than is ordinarily understood by most people in the U. S. The experiences of those that suffer from the problem need an objective assessment and a careful examination by the growing scholarly work on the topic. Such work would definitely pave the way for a helpful reassessment of the problem.

Arguments advanced in relation to the dependence of SMPs seem convincing on the surface. But for all that is known, whatever support single mothers receive in the form of welfare checks is mostly based on genuine needs. All this help though only puts them

either below the poverty line, an income threshold that does not enable the families to pay for all their needs, or some times a little above it. Welfare incomes, for that matter, constitute mainly temporary or relief support. The long-term needs of the families are unlikely to be addressed through the agency of these transfers. Giddens (1994: 18) handy concepts of autonomy, and personal and collective responsibility may need to be applied in the search for the solution to the problem of poverty. Poverty cannot be addressed by welfare provision by the state alone. His suggestion that "mobilizing life political measures, aimed once more at connecting autonomy with personal and collective responsibilities" (Giddens 1994: 18.), meaning, bringing SMPs into the picture, is the way to go. Giddens further advises that short- and long-term measures put in place by the state, among others, are key factors that may help take care of the poverty problem.

Several attempts were made in the U. S. to address the problem of poverty not only for the short-term but also for the longer-term. One of the major attempts to provide enduring solutions to the problem was started through the War on Poverty initiative. Under this program, what were known as local community development corporations were created and mobilized to address the problems that the poverty condition sustained. But other national priorities intercepted the effort.

4. Development Coalitions in the Context of the "War on Poverty"

The War on Poverty Program in the 1970s was expected to do much in the way of alleviating poverty. But conflicts that arose between local government officials and community activists within the new development coalitions in relation to making decisions held back progress. The scarcity of resources became an additional hindrance to

a smooth growth of the project of local community development. Other national and state priorities such as the Vietnam War placed even more urgent commitments that demanded huge transfers of government budgets at the expense of public assistance programs and projects.

Part of the resources for funding government programs to the poor had their source on public tax revenues that many payers saw as high and as limiting potential business investments. The opposition to more tax impositions by the state for social programs emerged out of these arguments.

But other than government transfers, assistance provided by what I earlier called significant others (primary) and charities and NGOs (secondary) sources, have been inadequate to satisfy the basic needs of those mothers in distress. Even the transfers from the state have not often been enough to lift welfare recipients from their 'below poverty line' levels. Single mothers among the poor were, therefore, caught in what I like to see as 'vicious circles of destitution' as the relief or contingent support was usually not adequate enough to cross them over the poverty line.

5. The Need For Policy Changes

The move to enable single mothers to go over the poverty line requires a change of perspectives and the definition of poverty especially as this relates to the stigmas stuck on the poor and the responsibilities that the SMPs are expected to shoulder. Without the enduring and critical resources that the mothers need to upgrade their capabilities, requiring welfare recipient SMPs to be self-sufficient is simply an exercise in futility. This out look should be revised or reevaluated. Welfare/relief provision and longer-term

assistance packages need to be seen as mutually reinforcing measures that should enable many of the recipients escape their conditions of poverty. A new arrangement is needed. This new arrangement is one that embodies empowerment within it. It should constitute a system that allows the subjects/single mothers to participate in their own growth and improvement through an empowered status of decision-makers.

6. What the Research Suggests To Voluntary Agency, Charity and NGO Groups

The non-profit sector or voluntary agencies constitute an important group of players in the alleviation of poverty. Though this sector's ability to make a difference in the area of longer-term needs of single mothers is limited, it can provide a critical range of resources that could prepare or create the groundwork for initiating durable or longer-term development initiatives that would contribute to the overall solution to the persisting poverty conundrum.

Many of the agencies often raise the issues of shortage of resources and spaces to house those single mothers who are side-tracked from their normal lives because of a loss of economic power or because they are forced to take refuge from abusive homes, among other reasons. But other agencies also limit their services because they are unwilling to draw on resources, particularly from the state, which they are afraid would create troubles connected mainly with controlling their activities because of the financial support it extends to their operations. Accounting for the money that is provided to them, in the views of these organizations, places a series of controls and constitute obstacles to freely help the poor expeditiously. The control also emerges in other lines of activity.

Prayers that charities (some Catholic relief shelters), for instance, invoked as a condition for receiving service by those in need, conflict with federal government guidelines that do not permit the inclusion of this private program item along with the package of assistance that the shelters/homes and soup kitchens that the churches run. The argument that the government makes in this regard is that as much as the churches like to see their recipients embrace or respect the 'givers' religion through standard prayers, so would recipients who profess faiths different from those of their benefactors like to be given the freedom to choose or not to choose an activity. They would, it is argued, feel comfortable maintaining their own religious identities even as they are provided with relief by such support institutions.

Voluntary agencies need to campaign for funds and other means of support vigorously and expand their services once they are in the trade. Carrying the label of voluntary agency with only a capacity similar to an average family would not be symmetric with the rationale for their establishment and does not bode well with their calling.

They also need to pressure the state to make good on its promises of transfer of government funds that has been publicized in connection with faith-based initiatives that were harped upon during the last two presidential campaigns and that particularly underlined by President Bush. The elimination of the entitlement of public welfare to the poor was supported with the understanding that the voluntary sector would assume the burden of helping the poor with out any difficulty whatsoever. Resources allocated for the support of the needy through public institutions was credited for its substantial contributions to the alleviation of poverty among the poor in past efforts. Voluntary

agencies would likewise provide a remedy to the problem if adequate resources are put at their disposal. This argument is made consistent with the view that state would transfer resources to voluntary agencies on the understanding that they would do the job better than the state as they have been in the business for a longer period of time.

Charities should, as a matter of fact, capitalize on the promises the state made. They should make the promise an agenda for public discussions and its enforcement, if need be, through the court system as it is also a rights issue for those citizens impoverished by social structural and economic faults arising from institutional missteps as well as human errors. Charities and NGOs should also try to create neighborhood support groups and family mutual support groups involving women to work together under the rubric of the social capital model of development. With these grass-roots organizations, they may possibly make a significant difference in combating poverty.

7. What is New in the Dissertation?

The study of single mother parents under the welfare regime has not been given enough attention in the literature. This study has tried to join the efforts of the few that have attempted to create awareness and attention to an effort that is geared toward addressing the specific population's (single mother parents') needs and everyday struggles to come out from their fragile lives. It has attempted to link the efforts single mothers make to support their families (micro level activities) and the link between these and the policy and program outcomes (in the context of macro processes) in the over all effort to reduce and control poverty.

One distinctive contribution of this dissertation is its use of both qualitative and quantitative methodology. Data from a survey research and in-depth interviews are combined to analyze the nearly intractable problems single mothers face. It also uses the participant observation methodology to a degree. This dissertation thus constitutes one study that combines multiple methodologies for an important aspect of poverty and dependency that single mothers and their children encounter every day. Anthropology has been criticized for neglecting the linkages between these processes as they apply to poverty. It was also rapped for confining its research to case studies in selected areas of social issues such as migration and focused aspects of poverty, viz, in urban environments.

8. Anthropology's Place in the Discussion of Social Inequality, Poverty, Welfare and Workfare Studies, and What It is Capable of Doing for the Future

Anthropology, as a discipline that distinctively goes into the details of cultural practices and human relationships, among others, has generally been quiet when conservative theorists and politicians, in particular, have been hammering away at the personal defect explanations of poverty within the United States. This silence has inevitably stymied the discipline from playing a role that could have made a more objective study of the whole gamut of the problem in times of incriminations and recriminations between debating groups within the social sciences. In a sense, the quietude on the part of the discipline has given a free run to biases or outright stigmatization against the poor in policy circles and among sectors of the general public.

A segment of officials and the general public continue to be persuaded more by theories that emphasize 'personal weakness' characteristics as causal factors explaining

poverty (see Berrick 1995, Chapter 2; Marger 1999: 282-83, Hurst 1995: 88-92, Dean and Melrose 1999: 34-37, Bluestone in Whelan 1996: 174-176). It is true that anthropologists have been trying to "create a growing literature on human rights," as Messer (1993: 8) rightly reveals. But this literature, she adds, "does not specifically use the label" in connection with poverty. It is important that researchers in the discipline should give serious thought to this major point.

An attempt has been made here to an extent to put the problem in a proper context based on some of the concrete hurdles poor SMPs face on a day-to-day basis and the stories that emerge out of these complex experiences. The dead-end perspectives, constructed to pigeonhole the problem in terms of pathological behavior, seem to be the unfortunate outcome of the discourse that has by and large been left to those who were actively pursuing the issue during the three final decades of the 20th century. The salient problems that are commonly relegated to the background need to be examined by anthropologists working on urban issues in the United States. Other social scientists who have the theoretical ammunitions and the tools to view and measure the problems in depth should also come to the fore in order to deal with this entrenched problem empirically. Ensminger's (2002: x-xi) declaration that economic anthropology is savvy in shedding "light on the underlying causes in the disparity of economic performance" of various groups in society, is worth mentioning at this juncture.

9. The Dissertation's Contributions to Anthropology

This dissertation constitutes one modest contribution to a subject that anthropology has given little focus. It is an instance of an empirical study that breaks off the tradition

of mainly concentrating more on simple society studies by the discipline as Kaplan and Manners (1986: 129-130) have shown. In other words, it helps to review the sometimes self-imposed limitation of anthropology to the study of small-scale societies and the need for the discipline to venture into problem areas, like poverty of single mothers with children, who have been denied the opportunity of being investigated holistically. It also demonstrates one more attempt to involve anthropology in urban area studies (Kaplan and Manners 1986: 201) relating to, for instance, poverty and social inequalities.

As Susser (1996: 411) also reveals, the discipline has rarely focused on issues relating to poverty and the growing immiseration of the poor and the American worker in the 'midst of corporate wealth.' While recognizing challenging issues like 'identities, perceptions, tourism, shifting worlds and cyberspace' -- present in relation to the theorizing of advanced capitalism -- anthropologists seem not to have found the incidence of poverty deserving of much of their attention (Susser 1996: 212). Their studies on identities, hostilities in neighborhoods, racial discrimination, poverty among men and women were confined to case studies, according to Susser. No attempt at theorizing was made in order to seek broader perspectives involving the problem. Curtis puts the issue in context (1999: 105) when he points out that the failure of anthropologists to establish the "vertical links that connect social groups that they (anthropologists) study" with macro processes created gaps in their understanding of the critical issues involved in poverty and social inequality discourses.

This dissertation has attempted to provide a tiny bit of movement toward closing some of the gaps created in this regard. The micro-and macro-processes contributing to the problem are studied in the context of an urban environment: Lansing, the Mid-

Michigan City that is the capital of the state, and the geographic location of this study. This constitutes a small contribution to the study of social inequalities or specifically to poverty, welfare and workfare (a sub-component of anthropology of work).

In terms of the methodology used in this dissertation, anthropological questions are asked in a survey research format and the data generated is used to compare some of the sub-groups within the larger poverty stricken and welfare recipient population. Ethnography's contributions to such studies are also (re)evaluated as a limited number of SMPs are involved in key informant interviewing. The study has in a way brought out the voices of single mothers and created the opportunity for them to speak out, and in the process suggest(ed) some solutions to their problems. Unlike many other anthropological studies that are mainly based on qualitative studies, this research combines both qualitative and quantitative data to analyze the obstacles encountered by mainly SMPs using their own definitions and perspectives.

10. The Major Views Recipients Reflect in the Dissertation

The dissertation has found out that many of the single mothers know very well the reasons for their poverty. Their assessment varies from a fair knowledge of the major causes of poverty, a critical assessment of the dimensions of poverty, a lack of knowledge on the part of some benefactors of everyday lives of recipients and the remedies for them. This assessment concurs well with Kozol's (2000:100) observation that these mothers are not "...inert submissive stones. They see and understand these things" (the 'lives' and 'entitlements' of the rich for some of whom the mothers work as domestics).

Some single mothers feel that their suggestions on the handling of the problems they are confronted with do not mean any thing to the authorities, both at the charity and state government levels. They are looked at as individuals and their views viewed as personal experiences that are too narrow to be universalized to larger recipient groups' problems. The huge demands on the time of a working mother who is required to appear in court because of her children's inappropriate actions and untoward behaviors that conflict with both school rules and the criminal justice system; the requirement that a single mother should be at school to discuss issues relating to her children's learning and workplace requirements that she should be on her job all the time conflict with each other and they constitute serious challenges. Mothers do not get childcare allowances for their children, ages 12-15, from the welfare state despite the fact that the mothers are expected to work, on two jobs at times, and are thus unable to devote time to watch them. According to Lisa, one single mother in Lansing, who has to work on two jobs and is expected to attend training given by Michigan Works at the same time in order to earn welfare benefits, described her life as immensely depressing (interview with the researcher, March 22, 2004). She said: If a child gets involved in some thing bad that goes against the criminal justice system or fails to go to school because of lack of adequate time, attention and care, the mother is expected to attend the court hearing and should be present during counseling at the school." If the mother does not go to school regularly or fails to attend the hearings in the court," she explained, "the judge orders the parent to jail for 30 days, no matter what."

Such problems turn out to be part of the cause for all kinds of frustrations that eat into her/their time and affect(s) her/their psychological stability. The mothers do know

the magnitudes of such problems and the partial ways out, but the structural arrangements do not enable them to discuss these outside the confines of their own individual problems.

The creation of support groups for such mothers is not encouraged. Lack of time and resources do not place the mothers in a position to be creative and bring about change. They are locked into cycles of frustrations and routine and basic need fulfillment activities that limit any proactive measures by which they can cultivate appropriate responses and take concrete initiatives that directly impact their lives from a position of organization.

For example, education that is key to the single mothers' growth is hampered by lack of support groups that can take care of some children while their mothers go to school. Most of the single mothers interviewed indicate that they want to further their educations, as it is a critical factor that allows movement up the economic hierarchy. Rubie earned her B.A. after a long journey of 27 years of going through college classes. Rachel and Sheq'uitta express their keen interest in going to school and bettering their chances of drawing higher incomes. Anabelle wants to see her children, rather than herself, to go to college and break the cycle of poverty and in her family. She wanted to get her daughter and her son to go to one of the best high schools in the area, East Lansing, when the shelter she was in at the time of the interview was in Lansing. The reason for her choice of this particular high school was to protect her children from a 'bad environment' (of an inner city school) and facilitate their smooth passage though the system. But the family was denied placement because their residence was not

located in the school district they chose. This decision by the school went against the McKenley Act that disallows discrimination against any child who wants to enroll in schools of his/her choice.

In a sense this is a production and institution of a hierarchical system of education. In much the same way as Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb, in their book: *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (1972: 261) argue about the damaging effects of introducing hierarchies for the relationships between people, the policy that this particular school has put in place with regard to the admittance of students from neighboring districts, hurts many potentially good students. These authors' concept of the 'hierarchy of talents' befits the experiences of Anabelle's family. The denial of admission for Anabelle's kids to one of the best schools in the Lansing/East Lansing area obviously deprives the kids from gaining the best of education that they could hope to get and relegates them to the lower rated schools that in all probability may not enable them to break the cycle of poverty that may possibly condemn them to stay put for yet another generation. As Sennett, et al emphasize, a rich nation like the U.S. can apportion larger amounts of resources to produce better-equipped students from poorer households and raise the standard of living for more Americans.

Secondary institutions of support (state and nonprofit agencies) can make use of the creative capacities of recipients by empowering and enabling them to go beyond their basic need/relief satisfaction preoccupations including raising their talents to a higher level. More research in this area could be a helpful addition to the overall effort of policy-making that aims at constructing durable solutions to the myriad of problems of SMPs.

Single mothers themselves can see to it that networking and organizing mutual support groups that in time can be extended to the creation of social capital groups provide a possible way out of poverty. As it stands, some mothers cooperate in areas such as childcare provision. Some also hang out with their intimate friends. The seeds for sprouting mutual support groups in the form of social capital groups are there. But turning these into actual mutual help groups and strengthening them becomes an interest that eventually fulfils the common objective of controlling and preventing poverty on the part of the four groups involved in the work – SMPs, significant others, charities and NGOs and the state. The state and NGOs though, should play a major role initially in the overall effort, as they are the social institutions that have a greater degree of command over social resources.

11. New Issues for Further Research

This dissertation is a modest contribution to the study of single mothers in Lansing and the conditions of poverty that they face. There are issues that it has not addressed. Such issues include a broader and a deeper study of public welfare support users (welfare check and food stamp recipients), Medicaid-only insurance user mothers, and disability welfare recipients. These groups' levels of dependency on a specific benefit that they are offered and their use of other community resources to supplement their overall resource needs may be compared and the general need level for all welfare recipients may be assessed for designing an optimum package of support that reflects their actual needs.

Studying single mothers who quit the welfare rolls when their incomes improve and reenter the system when their earnings go down constitutes an area of research that

deserves serious attention. This kind of research requires a substantial amount of funds and devotion of a lot of time by professionals. The product of such a research would create more awareness and appreciation of a problem that has been boggling to recipients and their benefactors alike. It would provide a realistic insight into the whole issue of single motherhood and the resource needs and possibly provide an insight into some better ideas or alternative ways of intervening on their behalf, as well as putting in place programs that would assist and enhance their efforts to achieve self-sufficiency.

12. Summary

I like to tie in the dissertation to some of the arguments made about the relationship between the individual and society as reflected by Gergen (1991), Etzioni (1996), and Rhoads (1997). Gergen (1991: 97), who, following anthropologists' and historians' notes that individualism is strongly entrenched in Western values so much so that 'self-determination' is celebrated and what one may identify as 'social determination' is relegated to the back burner. In connection with the value placed on individualism, Gergen argues:

> It is the spirit ... to which the culture pays tribute for economic prosperity, military victories and a strong democracy. Yet...this same cultural value has many shortcomings. In particular, it invites people to think of themselves as fundamentally isolated, alone to ponder and create their own fate. Because cooperating with others means 'sacrificing one's own desire' to the will of others, individualism also discourages cooperation and the development of community. A me first attitude is also invited, because if we are all isolated individuals, then self-gain is to be preferred to the gain of others. Indeed...if individualism remains the dominant value, the future well-being of the planet is jeopardized. We now possess the means for annihilating all human life, and values that stress

> independence, self-determination, and self-gain (sic) (that) militate against cooperation for the good of all. They foster a context for destructive conflict. (Gergen 1991: 98-99).

The welfare reform legislation passed in 1996 expects single mothers parents to find ways of getting out of their poverty through individual effort and to fend for themselves. This fits very well with the perspective reflected by Gergen above. The high premium placed on individualism in some industrialized countries, and particularly the United States, militates against mutual support that single mothers seek, as in childcare exchange, in order to use the time the SMPs save to work more hours or go to school. The tendency to ignore this important effort defeats the objectives of the welfare reform itself that gives a high value to education as a means of deliverance from dependence on public assistance.

Etzioni's (1996: 36) perspective that striking a balance between 'autonomy' and (in this research's sense independence of single mothers from state support), and 'order' that anchors on shared values emerging out of learned behaviors support the argument for the creation of balance between individual and social need(s). Such values, according to Etzioni, may be "questioned, challenged or rebelled against to a point where they eventually serve all members of a group." As Etzioni points out, providing cash resources/welfare to all single mothers, irrespective of need, would evoke 'opposition' against the overtures of the state that at times knew no bounds in its generosities to those in need. It is this oxymoronic generosity/stingy behavior that destabilizes the balance that Etzioni sees as crucial for social harmony (Etzioni, 1996: 36-37).

This kind of overture, giving on the part of the state, in other words, would be looked at as imposed duties on the public. In contrast, 'atomizing formations' that would go against the 'shared purposes' of protecting individual members of society, that is, single mother parents here, who more or less rely on the 'community for their basic needs' (shelter, food, care) becomes harmful and eventually leads to misunderstandings and conflict (Ibid.)

Rhoads' (1997: 174-176) ties it all together when he argues that the 'individual' versus 'social' and the 'autonomy' versus 'order,' divisions that seem to embody contradictory values, could be turned around into mutually reinforcing mechanisms of caring for one another. Rhoads' draws our attention to his concept of 'ethic of car(e)(ing)' that embodies values of mutual support and joint action by a diverse set of people to help one another.

Though single mothers, as a group, differ from others in the American society, they also exhibit a great deal of commonality with other groups in the fact that many, if not all, strive to be independent and self-supportive. On this count, they are similar to most members of the general working population and thus need to be consistently helped in their hours of need. Through extending care for them, as Rhoads (1997: 176) says, a sense of community would be further embedded and the goals of society that translate into 'community-building' would consequently be achieved. As Fukuyama also argues so well, capitalism, as a system, can do well if it assumes more responsibility to help those in need by fostering reciprocity, trust moral obligation and a sense of community that is

based on values of mutuality rather than rational calculations (August 14, 1995: 43).

Following also Etzioni, one of the exponents of the communitarian school of thought that espouses the idea of 'respect for all persons and peaceful resolution' of problems through sharing of national resources, policies need to reemphasize the rebuilding of single mother parents lives more now than at any other time given that poverty in the U.S. and across the world is increasing rather than decreasing. Giving and receiving, in other words, needs to be re-energized as cardinal values of any social system. Single mothers with children would be the direct and immediate beneficiaries of such an elevated value system and the consequent social arrangement of mutual help. Ultimately society would also benefit as assistance cases would be made self-reliant and the need for endless contingency support would be made unnecessary. For Rhoads (1997: 176), this can be realized better when we cultivate the 'ability and desire to care for one another.' For him, the existence of a culture dominated by individualism would hamper society's effort at making:

> "someone care for someone else. We can, however, create educational structures and opportunities in which caring may be fostered."

In the context of the discussion of the issues pertaining to single mothers in this dissertation, the element of discourse is conspicuously lacking and needs a greater degree of attention. Given the tendency to sideline the issue of what I like to call 'poverty of income' and 'poverty of employment' opportunities, on the part of the wealthy and the better off that is amply demonstrated by the elimination and/or the thinning out of the safety net, dialogue between the SMPs and the appropriate social institutions of America

is a necessity of the first order. Without such a reinforced discourse many single mothers and their children will continue to suffer and the sense of community in America, celebrated and embedded in solid statements such as "we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor...to form a more perfect union..." as Etzioni's (1996: 38) quotes, would be reduced to an empty rhetoric and become mere words on paper.

Balancing the needs of the individual and society should be a primary preoccupation of those invested with the authority to implement and oversee the maintenance of obligations and rights of all members of the society. It is also their responsibility to see to it that individuals who have missed social opportunities because of structural failures, to a degree, and certainly because of their own faults, in some cases, must be helped. Providing resources that would help them catch up with the rest of society is absolutely essential. The provision of adequate resources beyond relief support would thus eventually help the poor to find enduring solutions to their every day problems of poverty on their own. This could be achieved not by rushing to eliminate discretionary spending on social services by the states in order to get the federal government "out of the business of supporting low-income working families," as Waller (November 14, 2004) notes, but by truly enabling SMPs to get organized and form their own social capital groups and being there for them all the time while they attempt to achieve independence.

In conclusion, this study suggests that SMPs be given enduring support so they can escape poverty without being locked into temporary packages of public assistance that has mainly played a fire-fighting role, a role that has shunned the rebuilding of what the fire has partly destroyed. The goal of welfare should, in the end, be self-sufficiency.

APPENDIX 1

Table 42: U. S. population in poverty for selected years

U.S. population in poverty between 1959 and 1995	
Year	% of Population that was poor
1959	22
1969	12
1973	11.1*
1979	11.7**
1988	15.2
1995	13.8***

- *When the value of food stamp received is added, the percentage goes down to 6.8%.
- ** 1970s – Under 12%
- *** 10.3, after transfers are factored in).

Sources: Anderson et al 1984; O'Hare 1996, and Kweit et al 1999.

Table 43: Distribution of Respondent Residence Locations within Area Code of the City of Lansing

Area codes	Number of respondents' in each area code	Percentage
48823	1	1.3
48883	1	1.3
48901	1	1.3
48903	2	2.5
48906	8	10.0
48910	11	13.8
48911	20	25.0
48912	5	6.3
48915	9	11.3
48917	2	2.5
48933	3	3.8
48864	1	1.3
9 (Missing value)	16	20.0
Total	80	100.0

Map (Digital) of Greater Lansing illustrating concentration of supportive services in downtown area (south of Oakland Ave., north of Hillsdale St., east of Pennsylvania Ave., west of Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.), where access is often difficult for SMPs.

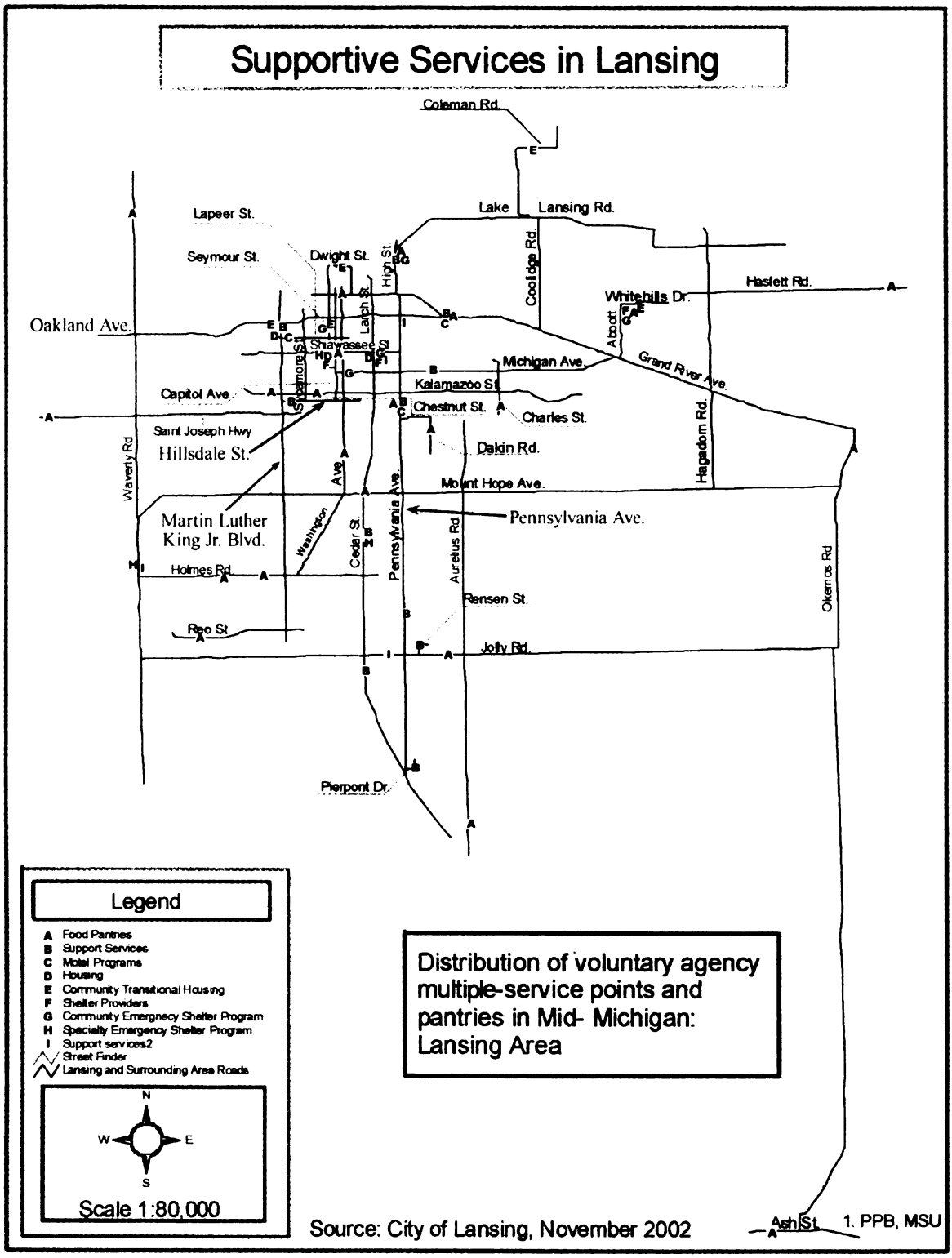


Table 44: A comparison of education level and employment status (cross-tab)

			Q6A recoded education level			Total
			High school and under	Above high school	Other	
Q22 Currently employed	No	Count	33	7	6	46
		% of Total	47.1%	10.0%	8.6%	65.7%
	Yes	Count	6	15	3	24
		% of Total	8.6%	21.4%	4.3%	34.3%
Total		Count	39	22	9	70
		% of Total	55.7%	31.4%	12.9%	100.0%

Source: Data from this dissertation's survey; currently employed (Q22) SMPs and Q6 (recoded education level) compared in cross-tabulation

Table 45: Reason for not finding jobs as per response to Q23-a: ' I could not find a job,' either because of their unavailability or other reasons

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	34	42.5	66.7	66.7
	Yes	17	21.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	51	63.8	100.0	
Missing	Missing	29	36.3		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 46: Q23-b: Response relating to transportation difficulties in terms of finding jobs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	35	43.8	71.4	71.4
	Yes	14	17.5	28.6	100.0
	Total	49	61.3	100.0	
Missing	9	31	38.8		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 47: Q26-a: SMPs working on regular jobs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	10	12.5	41.7	41.7
	Yes	14	17.5	58.3	100.0
	Total	24	30.0	100.0	
Missing	9 missing	56	70.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 48: Q26-b: Number of SMPs who worked from home

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	21	26.3	87.5	87.5
	Yes	3	3.8	12.5	100.0
	Total	24	30.0	100.0	
Missing	Missing	56	70.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 49: Q26-c: Workfare jobs and SMPs' association with them

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	No	24	30.0	100.0	100.0
Missing	Missing	56	70.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 50: Q26-d (0ther option): Unexplained work category marked by SMP when asked if they worked on a regular, casual and 'other' categories of work.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	14	17.5	58.3	58.3
	Yes	10	12.5	41.7	100.0
	Total	24	30.0	100.0	
Missing	Missing	56	70.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 51: Q26_DT: Other work hours per week

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	1.3	25.0	25.0
	5	1	1.3	25.0	50.0
	15	1	1.3	25.0	75.0
	20	1	1.3	25.0	100.0
	Total	4	5.0	100.0	
Missing	Missing	76	95.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 52: Survey Q32: Single mothers worked 'more' than other mothers in the general population

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	21	26.3	28.4	28.4
	Yes	53	66.3	71.6	100.0
	Total	74	92.5	100.0	
Missing	Missing	6	7.5		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 53: Q35-I 8 (The 'other' option): Income from sources other than work

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	$50.00	1	1.3	7.7	7.7
	$139.00	1	1.3	7.7	15.4
	$177.00	1	1.3	7.7	23.1
	$250.00	1	1.3	7.7	30.8
	$262.00	1	1.3	7.7	38.5
	$298.00	1	1.3	7.7	46.2
	$444.00	1	1.3	7.7	53.8
	$564.00	2	2.5	15.4	69.2
	$689.00	2	2.5	15.4	84.6
	$724.00	1	1.3	7.7	92.3
	$1,972.00	1	1.3	7.7	100.0
	Total	13	16.3	100.0	
Missing	$.00 Missing	67	83.8		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 54: Q37-a: Walk: SMPs' use of 'alternative modes of transportation to work and service agency locations.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	41	51.3	67.2	67.2
	Yes	20	25.0	32.8	100.0
	Total	61	76.3	100.0	
Missing	9	17	21.3		
	System	2	2.5		
	Total	19	23.8		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 55: Q37-b: Drive own car to go to work and service agencies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	36	45.0	59.0	59.0
	Yes	25	31.3	41.0	100.0
	Total	61	76.3	100.0	
Missing	Missing	19	23.8		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 56: Q37-c: Drive borrowed car to work and service agency locations

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	56	70.0	91.8	91.8
	Yes	5	6.3	8.2	100.0
	Total	61	76.3	100.0	
Missing	Missing	19	23.8		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 57: Q37-d: Ask for ride to go to work and service agency locations

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	49	61.3	80.3	80.3
	Yes	12	15.0	19.7	100.0
	Total	61	76.3	100.0	
Missing	Missing	16	20.0		
	System	3	3.8		
	Total	19	23.8		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 58: Q37-e: Bike to go to work and service agency locations

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	54	67.5	93.1	93.1
	Yes	4	5.0	6.9	100.0
	Total	58	72.5	100.0	
Missing	Missing	21	26.3		
	System	1	1.3		
	Total	22	27.5		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 59: Q37-f: Use bus system to go to work and service agency locations

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	35	43.8	57.4	57.4
	Yes	26	32.5	42.6	100.0
	Total	61	76.3	100.0	
Missing	Missing	19	23.8		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 60: Q37-g: Use of 'other' means of transportation to go to work and service agency locations

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	55	68.8	93.2	93.2
	Yes	4	5.0	6.8	100.0
	Total	59	73.8	100.0	
Missing	Missing	21	26.3		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 61: Q48-BC4: Does the SMP belong to a cooperating group that pools money for loans?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very much true	14	17.5	26.4	26.4
	True	11	13.8	20.8	47.2
	No idea	15	18.8	28.3	75.5
	Untrue	8	10.0	15.1	90.6
	Very much untrue	5	6.3	9.4	100.0
	Total	53	66.3	100.0	
Missing	Missing	27	33.8		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 62: Q48-BC5: Does the SMP have a liking for a cooperating group that pools money to lend to members at low cost interest rate?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very much true	15	18.8	27.3	27.3
	True	14	17.5	25.5	52.7
	No idea	16	20.0	29.1	81.8
	Untrue	5	6.3	9.1	90.9
	Very much untrue	5	6.3	9.1	100.0
	Total	55	68.8	100.0	
Missing	Missing	25	31.3		
Total		80	100.0		

Note: Tables 42 through 62 make up cross-tabulations and frequency tables representing specific survey questions the data of which was used in the text and referenced wherever and whenever relevant.

Tables 63 to 91 consist of frequency tables that are made reference to indirectly and sometimes directly in the various chapters of the dissertation. Their source is the data for the survey for this dissertation conducted between August 2002 and July 2004.

Table 63: Q3: Hours taken to complete house chores

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-3 hours	44	55.0	57.1	57.1
	3-6 hours	21	26.3	27.3	84.4
	6-8 hours	5	6.3	6.5	90.9
	Other	7	8.8	9.1	100.0
	Total	77	96.3	100.0	
Missing	Missing	3	3.8		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 64: Q4: House chores taking most of the time

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Meal preparation	19	23.8	25.0	25.0
	Cleaning	40	50.0	52.6	77.6
	Childcare	7	8.8	9.2	86.8
	Taking children to school	3	3.8	3.9	90.8
	Other	7	8.8	9.2	100.0
	Total	76	95.0	100.0	
Missing	Missing	4	5.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 65: Q5: Respondent age

Age of survey participant mothers		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	17	2	2.5	2.7	2.7
	18	2	2.5	2.7	5.5
	19	2	2.5	2.7	8.2
	20	2	2.5	2.7	11.0
	21	3	3.8	4.1	15.1
	22	2	2.5	2.7	17.8
	24	4	5.0	5.5	23.3
	25	2	2.5	2.7	26.0
	26	3	3.8	4.1	30.1
	27	3	3.8	4.1	34.2
	28	3	3.8	4.1	38.4
	29	3	3.8	4.1	42.5
	30	2	2.5	2.7	45.2
	31	3	3.8	4.1	49.3
	32	3	3.8	4.1	53.4
	33	2	2.5	2.7	56.2
	34	1	1.3	1.4	57.5
	35	2	2.5	2.7	60.3
	36	5	6.3	6.8	67.1
	37	2	2.5	2.7	69.9
	38	1	1.3	1.4	71.2
	39	2	2.5	2.7	74.0
	40	5	6.3	6.8	80.8
	41	1	1.3	1.4	82.2
	42	1	1.3	1.4	83.6
	43	1	1.3	1.4	84.9
	44	1	1.3	1.4	86.3
	46	1	1.3	1.4	87.7
	47	2	2.5	2.7	90.4
	48	1	1.3	1.4	91.8
	50	3	3.8	4.1	95.9
	51	2	2.5	2.7	98.6
	53	1	1.3	1.4	100.0
	Total	73	91.3	100.0	
Missing	Missing	7	8.8		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 66: Q7: Ethnic/racial groups

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	White	17	21.3	23.3	23.3
	Black	41	51.3	56.2	79.5
	Hispanic	10	12.5	13.7	93.2
	Asia	1	1.3	1.4	94.5
	Other	4	5.0	5.5	100.0
	Total	73	91.3	100.0	
Missing	Missing	7	8.8		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 67: Q8: Religion

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Protestant	8	10.0	12.3	12.3
	Catholic	7	8.8	10.8	23.1
	Other christian denomination	25	31.3	38.5	61.5
	Islam	1	1.3	1.5	63.1
	None	19	23.8	29.2	92.3
	Other	5	6.3	7.7	100.0
	Total	65	81.3	100.0	
Missing	Missing	15	18.8		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 68: Q9: Number of children

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
	1	11	13.8	14.7	16.0
	2	30	37.5	40.0	56.0
	3	10	12.5	13.3	69.3
	4	10	12.5	13.3	82.7
	5	8	10.0	10.7	93.3
	6	4	5.0	5.3	98.7
	8	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	75	93.8	100.0	
Missing	Missing	5	6.3		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 69: Q10_a: Children under one year

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	62	77.5	80.5	80.5
	Yes	15	18.8	19.5	100.0
	Total	77	96.3	100.0	
Missing	Missing	3	3.8		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 70: Q10_b: Children between 1-5 years

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	37	46.3	48.7	48.7
	Yes	39	48.8	51.3	100.0
	Total	76	95.0	100.0	
Missing	Missing	4	5.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 71: Q10_c: Children between 6-10 years

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	46	57.5	59.7	59.7
	Yes	31	38.8	40.3	100.0
	Total	77	96.3	100.0	
Missing	Missing	3	3.8		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 72: Q10_d: Children between 11-18 years

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	42	52.5	54.5	54.5
	Yes	35	43.8	45.5	100.0
	Total	77	96.3	100.0	
Missing	Missing	3	3.8		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 73: Q10_e: Other

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	57	71.3	77.0	77.0
	Yes	17	21.3	23.0	100.0
	Total	74	92.5	100.0	
Missing	9	6	7.5		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 74- Q11_a: Children grade level, kindergarten

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	50	62.5	76.9	76.9
	Yes	15	18.8	23.1	100.0
	Total	65	81.3	100.0	
Missing	9	15	18.8		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 75: Q11_b: Children, grade level 1-6

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	35	43.8	53.8	53.8
	Yes	30	37.5	46.2	100.0
	Total	65	81.3	100.0	
Missing	Missing	15	18.8		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 76: Q11_e: Children in other grade levels

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	44	55.0	68.8	68.8
	Yes	20	25.0	31.3	100.0
	Total	64	80.0	100.0	
Missing	Missing	16	20.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 77: Q12: Children needing childcare

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	25	31.3	35.7	35.7
	1	21	26.3	30.0	65.7
	2	14	17.5	20.0	85.7
	3	5	6.3	7.1	92.9
	4	2	2.5	2.9	95.7
	5	3	3.8	4.3	100.0
	Total	70	87.5	100.0	
Missing	Missing	10	12.5		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 78: Q13_a: Childcare by self (SMP)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	44	55.0	62.9	62.9
	Yes	26	32.5	37.1	100.0
	Total	70	87.5	100.0	
Missing	Missing	10	12.5		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 79: Q13_: Childcare through the service of relatives

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	37	46.3	52.9	52.9
	Yes	33	41.3	47.1	100.0
	Total	70	87.5	100.0	
Missing	Missing	10	12.5		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 80: Q13_c: Childcare through the service of friends

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	59	73.8	84.3	84.3
	Yes	11	13.8	15.7	100.0
	Total	70	87.5	100.0	
Missing	Missing	10	12.5		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 81: Q13_d: Childcare through the service of others

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	58	72.5	82.9	82.9
	Yes	12	15.0	17.1	100.0
	Total	70	87.5	100.0	
Missing	Missing	10	12.5		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 82: Q14: Children needing care while mother is at work

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	37	46.3	48.7	48.7
	Yes	39	48.8	51.3	100.0
	Total	76	95.0	100.0	
Missing	Missing	4	5.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 83: Q16: Hours needed for childcare per week

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	21	26.3	38.9	38.9
	1	1	1.3	1.9	40.7
	4	1	1.3	1.9	42.6
	8	3	3.8	5.6	48.1
	9	1	1.3	1.9	50.0
	10	2	2.5	3.7	53.7
	20	1	1.3	1.9	55.6
	25	1	1.3	1.9	57.4
	30	1	1.3	1.9	59.3
	35	1	1.3	1.9	61.1
	36	1	1.3	1.9	63.0
	40	16	20.0	29.6	92.6
	50	2	2.5	3.7	96.3
	60	1	1.3	1.9	98.1
	65	1	1.3	1.9	100.0
	Total	54	67.5	100.0	
Missing	Missing	26	32.5		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 84: Q17_a1: Monthly benefit in the form of cash

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	38	47.5	61.3	61.3
	Yes	24	30.0	38.7	100.0
	Total	62	77.5	100.0	
Missing	Missing	18	22.5		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 85: Q17_a2: Monthly benefit in the form of cash ($ amounts) (Five mothers did not show the amount they received).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	$123.00	1	1.3	5.3	5.3
	$140.00	1	1.3	5.3	10.5
	$300.00	2	2.5	10.5	21.1
	$305.00	1	1.3	5.3	26.3
	$311.00	1	1.3	5.3	31.6
	$401.00	1	1.3	5.3	36.8
	$406.00	1	1.3	5.3	42.1
	$412.00	1	1.3	5.3	47.4
	$460.00	1	1.3	5.3	52.6
	$468.00	1	1.3	5.3	57.9
	$489.00	3	3.8	15.8	73.7
	$498.00	1	1.3	5.3	78.9
	$500.00	1	1.3	5.3	84.2
	$569.00	1	1.3	5.3	89.5
	$689.00	2	2.5	10.5	100.0
	Total	19	23.8	100.0	
Missing	Missing	61	76.3		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 86: Q17_b: Disability benefit

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	52	65.0	85.2	85.2
	Yes	9	11.3	14.8	100.0
	Total	61	76.3	100.0	
Missing	Missing	19	23.8		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 87: Q17_c: Medicaid for children and self

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	26	32.5	43.3	43.3
	Yes	34	42.5	56.7	100.0
	Total	60	75.0	100.0	
Missing	Missing	20	25.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 89: Q17_e: Other

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	38	47.5	63.3	63.3
	Yes	22	27.5	36.7	100.0
	Total	60	75.0	100.0	
Missing	Missing	20	25.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 90: Q17_b ($) Disability benefit

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	$365.00	1	1.3	14.3	14.3
	$500.00	1	1.3	14.3	28.6
	$564.00	2	2.5	28.6	57.1
	$565.00	1	1.3	14.3	71.4
	$581.00	1	1.3	14.3	85.7
	$1,180.00	1	1.3	14.3	100.0
	Total	7	8.8	100.0	
Missing	Missing	73	91.3		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 91: Q17_e ($) Other

		Frequenc y	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	$105.00	1	1.3	7.1	7.1
	$130.00	2	2.5	14.3	21.4
	$139.00	1	1.3	7.1	28.6
	$140.00	1	1.3	7.1	35.7
	$189.00	3	3.8	21.4	57.1
	$276.00	1	1.3	7.1	64.3
	$302.00	1	1.3	7.1	71.4
	$371.00	1	1.3	7.1	78.6
	$471.00	1	1.3	7.1	85.7
	$518.00	1	1.3	7.1	92.9
	$689.00	1	1.3	7.1	100.0
	Total	14	17.5	100.0	
Missing	Missing	66	82.5		
Total		80	100.0		

A partial list of voluntary agencies, charities providing different services to the homeless, SMPs and other low-income persons in Lansing on a daily, weekly/yearly basis. Where question marks show in the slots, data was not made available despite repeated requests.

Table 92a: History, service type and capacity of Charities and voluntary agencies in Lansing

		Organization, Establishment, Shelters and Populations Served, Capacity Limitation					
S. N.	Name of Organization	Type of Service	Established	Number of Shelters	Currently Served Population	Maximum Capacity	Turned Away
1	Advent House	Serve the Homeless	1982	3	1500	20	7
2	Harvest House	Homeless Previously Served	1996	?	435		
3	Crossroads Shelter	Transitional Living	1970	1	?	16	
4	National council on Alcoholism	Substance Abuse Treatment	1960	2	24	28	
5	Balentines Stepping Stones	Training House	1994		41		
6	Haven House	Family Shelter Program	1983	1	?	28	
7	Capital Area Community	Assist Low Income Persons	?	?	900		
8	MI Dept of Employment Services	Veteran Services	?	?	?		
9	Loaves and Fishes	Emergency Shelter	1982	3	23	23-25	15
10	Lansing Area Aids Network	Case Manageme nt	1985				
11	City Rescue Mission	Family Center					
12	Volunteers of America	Emergency Shelter	1896	1	?	92	

Source: Data assembled from questionnaire filled out by agency heads or representatives, Greater Lansing Homeless resolution Network (GLHRN), November 18, 2002

Table 92b: Types of population; single mothers and family members

		Types of People Served					
S. N.	Name of Organization	Single Mother Parents	Single Females	Males	Youth and Children	Wife and Husband	Other
1	Advent House						
2	Harvest House	31	30	15	20	60	
3	Crossroads Shelter	2				NA	NA
4	National council on Alcoholism	5	7	14	-	-	-
5	Balenstines Stepping Stones	16			OK	NA	
6	Haven House	16			2	2	
7	Capital Area Community						
8	MI Dept of Employment Services						
9	Loaves and Fishes	3	4	9	9		
10	Lansing Area Aids Network	15					
11	City Rescue Mission	9					
12	Volunteers of America	3	20	57		4	26 Veterans

Source: Data assembled from GLHRN, November 18, 2002, as in Table above.

Table 92c: Meals provided by some of Lansing's agencies at different hours/days

		Meal Days, Meals and Other Services provided							
S. N.	Name of Organization	Meals a Day	Soup/ Meals	Food	Housing	Training	Employ ment	Transporta tion	Unspecified
1	Advent House	Weekends	OK		OK	OK	OK		Tutor Children
2	Harvest House	M-F	OK		OK	OK	OK	OK	?
3	Crossroads Shelter		OK		OK	OK	OK	OK	Varies
4	National council on Alcoholism	7 days	-	-	OK	OK	OK	OK	Resident Programs
5	Balentines Stepping Stones			OK	OK				?
6	Haven House								?
7	Capital Area Community				OK	OK			?
8	MI Dept of Employment Services						OK	OK	?
9	Loaves and Fishes	7 days	Break-fast & dinner	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK	?
10	Lansing Area Aids Network								
11	City Rescue Mission								
12	Volunteers of America	7 days	3 meals						

Source: Data assembled from GLHRN, November 18, 2002, as in Table above.

APPENDIX 2

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Family Independence Agency Program Average Monthly Cases for Fiscal Years 1992-2001

Caseload figures for fiscal year 2000 and 2001 were projections. Beginning fiscal year 1998, the monthly FIA cases included the former, State Family Assistance cases. The recipients consisted of 2,100 two-parent or grandparent households. The balance represented single-mother households.

Number of Cases	Year
217,949	*1991*
225,359	1992
229,349	1993
223,658	1994
201,336	1995
177,648	1996
151,338	1997
123,450	1998
90,890	1999
74,000	2000
63,400	2001

Sources: Programs Descriptions: FI 2001, Policy Analysis and Program Evaluation Division (PAPED), State of Michigan Family Independence Agency, Nov., 1995:5, and MFIA Information Packet, PAPED, April 1999:14.

Table 2: Percentages of Children Among the Poor from 1980 to 2000: The National picture

Year	Percentage of Young Children
1980	14.7%
1990	18.7%
2000	17.4%

Source: Profile of Michigan: Michigan Manual 2003-2004, Legislative Council of MI, 2004.

Table 3: Population in Poverty (below twice the poverty level) in the Capital Area Community in 1989 (1990 Census).

County	Percent of total population
Ingham	29.3
Eaton	20.3
Clinton	19.3

Source: Capital Area United Way, The Capital Area Community Fall 2000:42.

Figure 1: Unemployment Rate in Thousands from 1986 to 2000



Year	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Unemployment in thousands	386	389	345	325	350	427	417	336	285	258	239	210	194	203	222
Unemployment rate	8.8%	8.2%	7.6%	7.1%	7.6%	9.3%	8.9%	7.1%	5.9%	5.3%	4.9%	4.2%	3.9%	4.0%	4.3%

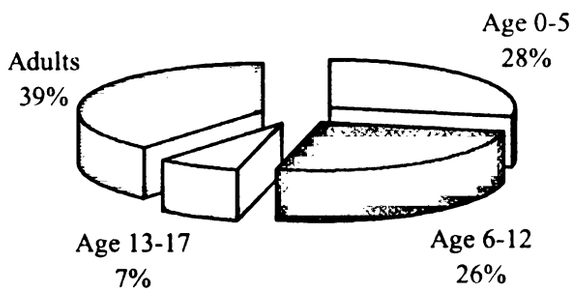
Source: MFIA Information Packet April 1999.

Figure 2: Racial Background

Roughly one in four children was racial/ethnic minority in Michigan in 1997.

Racial Background	Percent
White Non Hispanic	76%
African American	17%
American Indian	1%
Asian	2%
Hispanic	4%

Figure 2: Racial Background



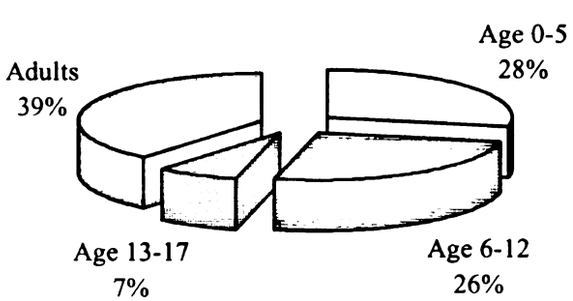
Source: U.S. Census Bureau & 1999 Kids Count in Michigan.

Figure 3: Children Receiving Cash Assistance

Roughly three of five people receiving cash assistance in Michigan are children.

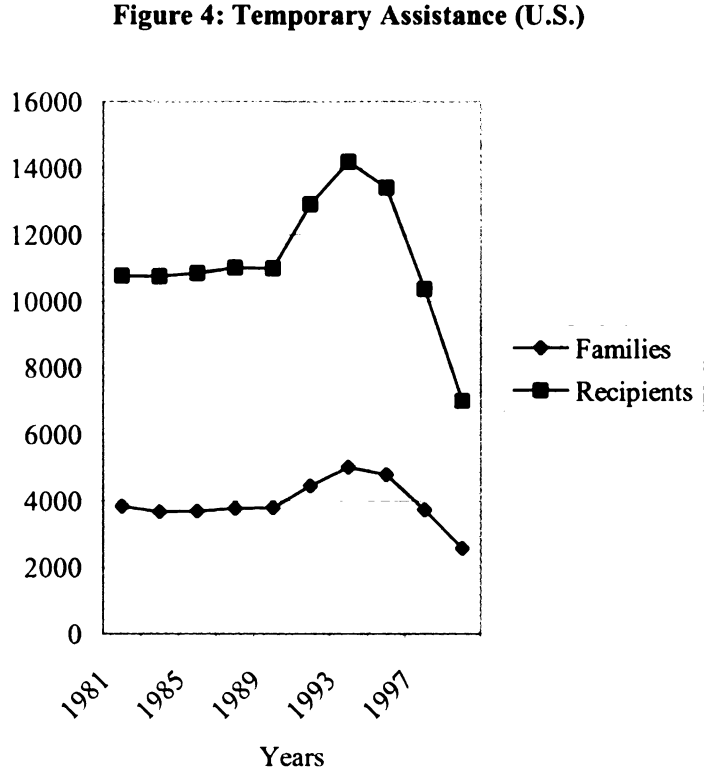
Ages	Percent
Age 0-5	28%
Age 6-12	26%
Age 13-17	7%
Adults	39%

Figure 3: Children Receiving Cash Assistance



Source: MFIA & 1999 Kids Count in Michigan.

Figure 4: Temporary Assistance (U.S.)

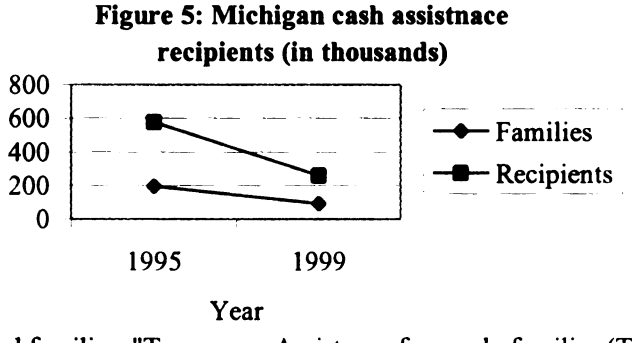


TEMPORARY CASH ASSISTANCE (U.S., IN '000)										
	1981	1983	1985	1987	1989	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999
Families	3835	3686	3701	3776	3799	4467	5012	4791	3734	2582
Recipients	10774	10761	10855	10027	10993	12930	14205	13418	10381	7018

Source: U.S Administration for children and families, "Temporary Assistance for needy families (TANF) 1936-1999". Http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/stats/3697.htm

Figure 5: Michigan Cash Assistance Recipients:

	1995	1999
Families	195	92
Recipients	578	257



Source: U.S Administration for children and families, "Temporary Assistance for needy families (TANF) 1936-1999". Http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/stats/3697.htm

Figure 6: Selected Characteristics of Food Stamp Households and Participants

Figure 6-1: Selected Characteristics of Food Stamp Households and Participants

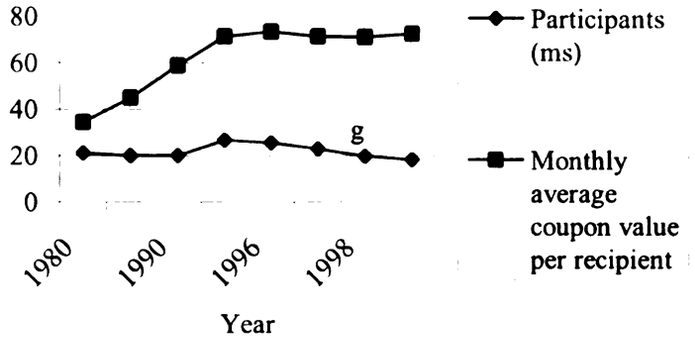
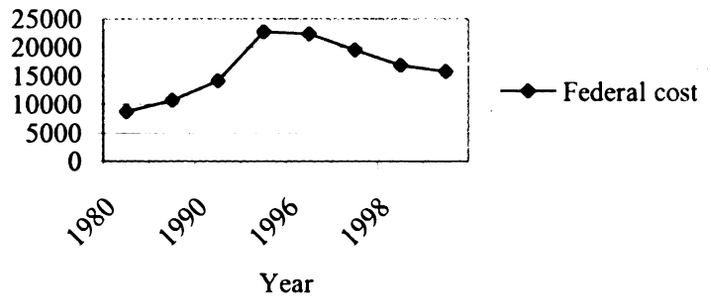


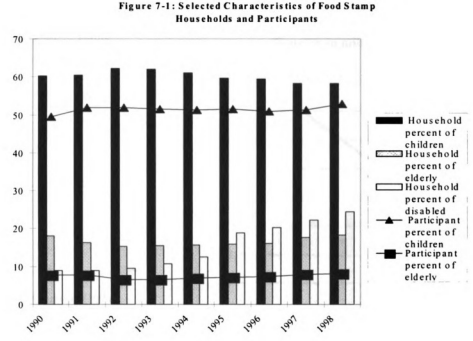
Figure 6-2: Federal Cost of Food Stamps (in thousands)

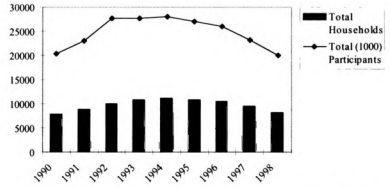


	Participants (ms)	Monthly Average Coupon Value Per Recipient	Federal Cost (in thousands)
1980	21.1	34.47	8721
1985	19.9	44.99	10744
1990	20.1	58.92	14187
1995	26.6	71.27	22767
1996	25.5	73.21	22440
1997	22.9	71.27	19550
1998	19.8	71.12	16889
1999	18.2	72.33	15782

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Food and nutrition service in "Annual Historical Review and FNS programs" and unpublished data.

Figure 7: Selected Characteristics of Food Stamp Households and Participants





SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF FOOD STAMP, HOUSEHOLDS AND PARTICIPANTS							
	Households	**Percent of total**			**Participants**	**Percent total**	
	Total	**W/t child'n**	**W/t elderly**	**W/t disabled**	**Total (1000)**	**Children**	**Elderly**
1990	7803	60.3	18.1	8.9	20411	49.6	7.7
1991	8855	60.4	16.4	9	22963	52	7.7
1992	10049	62.2	15.4	9.5	27743	51.9	6.6
1993	10791	62.1	15.5	10.7	27595	51.5	6.6
1994	11091	61.1	15.8	12.5	28009	51.4	7
1995	10883	59.7	16	18.9	26955	51.5	7.1
1996	10555	59.5	16.2	20.2	25926	51	7.3
1997	9452	58.3	17.6	22.3	23117	51.4	7.9
1998	8246	58.3	18.2	24.4	19969	52.8	8.2

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Food and nutrition service in "Annual Historical Review and FNS programs" and unpublished data.

Figure 8: Federal Food Stamp Programs in Michigan, 1995 and 1999

Figure 8-1: Federal food stamp programs in M: 1995 and 1999 (Persons in 1000)

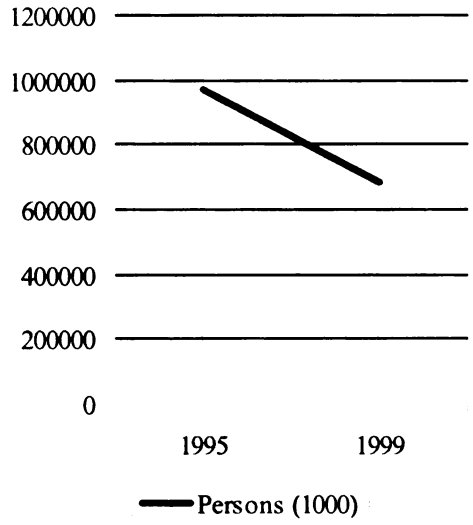
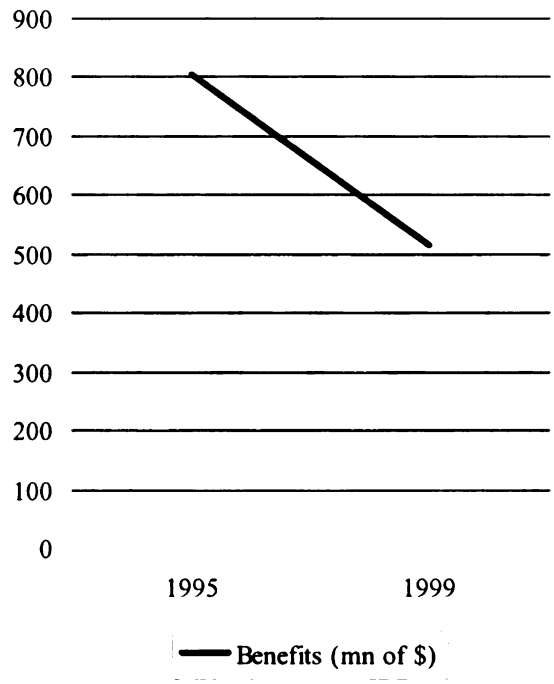


Figure 8-2: Federal food stamp programs in MI: 1995 and 1999 (Benefits in millions of $)



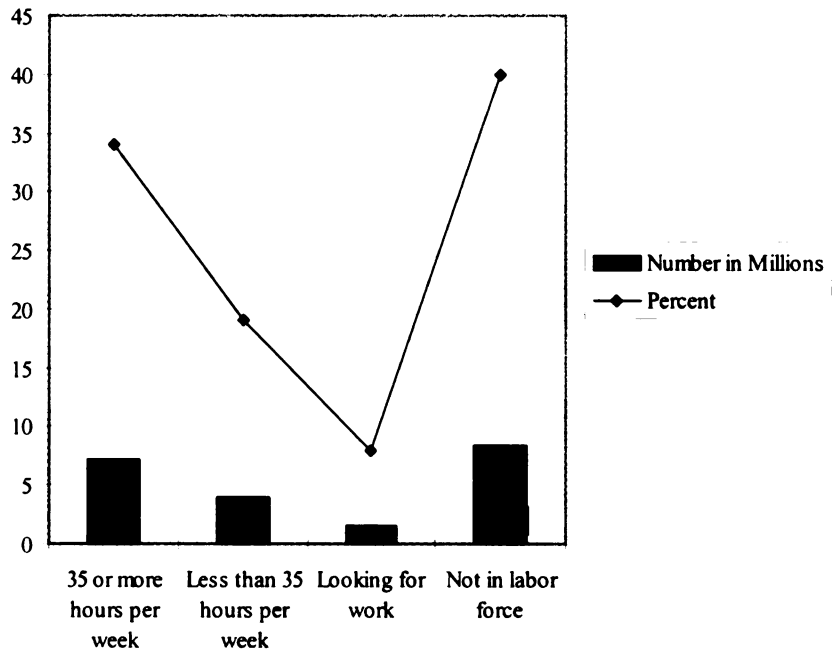
FEDERAL FOOD STAMP PROGRAMS IN MICHIGAN: 1995 AND 1999		
	Persons (000s)	**Benefits (millions of $)**
1995	971	806
1999	683	515

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Food and nutrition service in "Annual Historical Review and FNS programs" and unpublished data.

Figure 9: Mothers' Employment Status:

Mothers' employment status drawn from table on regular childcare arrangements for children under 6 years old by type of arrangement, 1995.

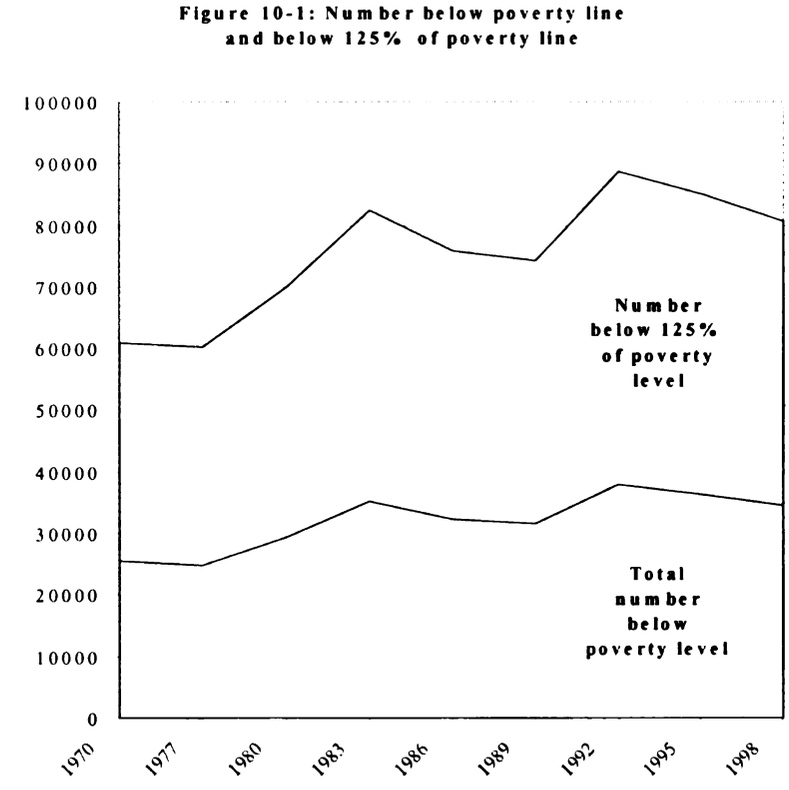
Figure 9: Mothers' Employment Status

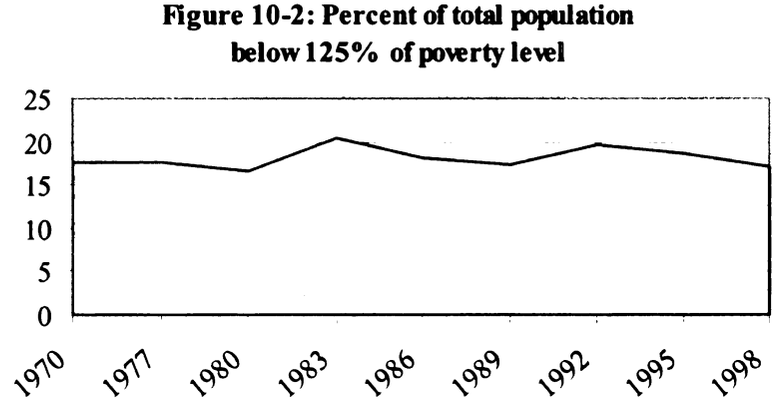


	Number in Millions	Percent
35 or more hours per week	7.1	34
Less than 35 hours per week	4	19
Looking for work	1.6	8
Not in labor force	8.4	40

Source: National Center for Education Statistics.

Figure 10: Poverty Rates



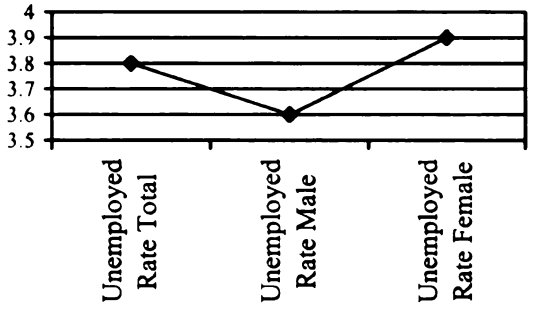


	Number below poverty level	Below 125% of poverty level	
	Total	Number	Percent of total pop.
1970	25420	35624	17.6
1977	24720	35659	17.6
1980	29272	40658	16.7
1983	35303	47150	20.3
1986	32370	43486	18.2
1989	31528	42653	17.3
1992	38014	50592	19.7
1995	36425	48761	18.5
1998	34476	46036	17

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current population Reports pp. 60-207.

Figure 11: Unemployment Rates

Figure 11-1: Unemployed Rates: Total, Male and Female



CHARACTERISTICS OF CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE IN MICHIGAN IN 1999	
Total Number	5136
Total Female	2344
Employed total	4942
Employed female	2252
Employed population ratio	66
Unemployed total number	194,000
Unemployed total female	92,000
Unemployed rate total	3.8
Unemployed rate male	3.6
Unemployed rate female	3.9
Male employ % of T. pop	76.3
Fem employ % of T. pop	61.2

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Geographic Profile" Internet site http://stats.bls.gov./lauhome.htm, formerly, now /gps/home.htm; doc't url now is: /lau/table 12 full 99.pdf

Figure 11-2: Employed pop. ratio, Employed total female, Employed total number, Participation rate, male and female

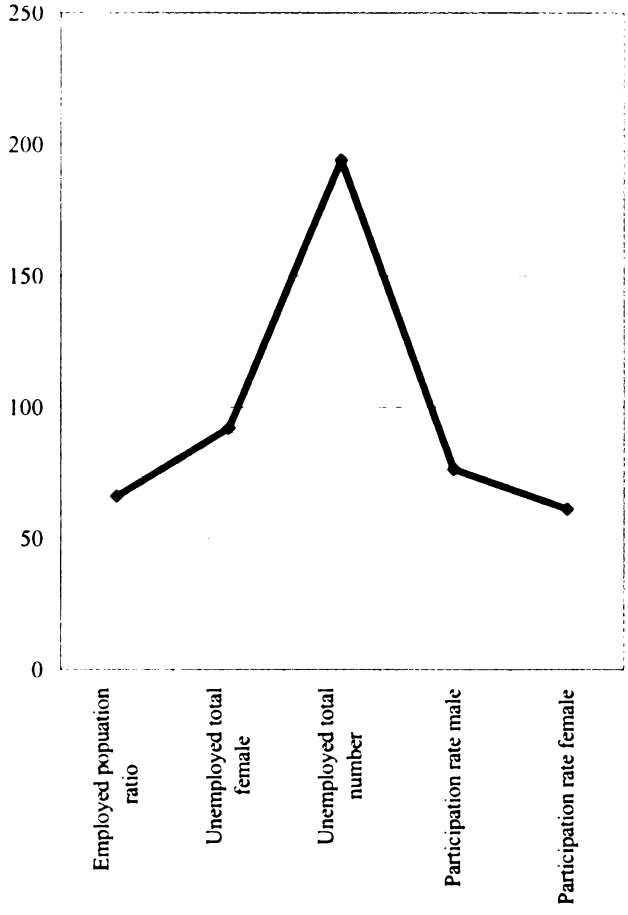


Figure 11-3: Total Number, Total female, Employed Total and Employed Female

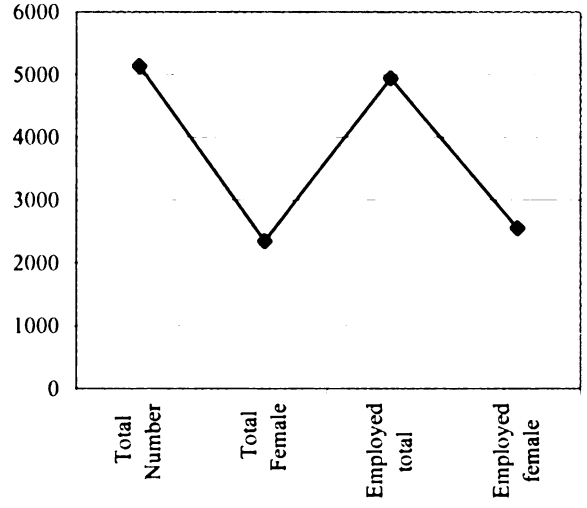
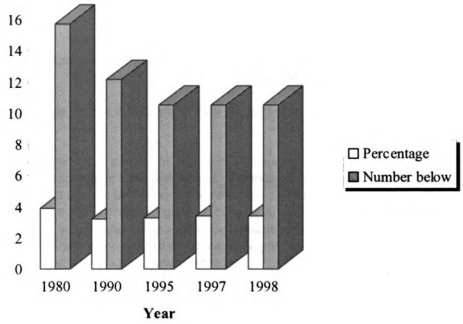


Figure 12: Persons 65 Years Old and Over Below Poverty Level

Figure 12: Persons 65 years old and over below poverty level 1980-1998



PERSONS 65 YEARS OLD AND OVER/BELOW POVERTY LEVEL 1980-1998		
	Percentage	Number below (1000s)
1980	3.9	15.7
r1990	3.2	12.2
1995	3.3	10.5
1997	3.4	10.5
1998	3.4	10.5

Source: U.S. Bureau of lab statistics, unpublished data.

APPENDIX 3

QUESIONNAIRE SCHEDULE FOR THE SURVEY OF THE DISSERTATION

Date: _____

Questionnaire schedule for single mother parents (SMPs)
on welfare and off welfare in a Mid-Michigan City

Questions for the collection of data for a doctoral dissertation at MSU

Instructions:

The following questions investigate about the various aspects of single mother parents' day-to-day lives as they experience critical shortages of resources and the many ways they employ to fetch money or obtain commodities in order to cover their household needs. Please fill in the spaces given or follow the instructions given in each of the sections to answer the questions to the best of your abilities and as thoroughly as you can. Please also make corrections by drawing two lines on the word/s if you want to make any changes to your answers. Print or write in all capital letters where there are answers that require write ins.

This survey is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or not to answer any specific question or section that is not applicable to you. You may skip any question you are not comfortable answering.

Do not write your name if you do not want it to appear on the questionnaire. The researcher would not mind seeing your name, your first and/or last name, on the questionnaire. At this point, the researcher assures you that no one will ever have access to the questionnaire you complete here. Alternatively, an identification number the researcher and you would agree on or your first name may be used to show that you participated in the project.

The data you share for the research and the results of the work will be reported to you in a two-page summary when the writing is completed. The dissertation may hopefully enhance some policy changes favoring those citizens with critical resources need to better manage their day-to-day lives.

Thank you for taking the time and making the effort to complete the questionnaire. I appreciate your willingness and participation in this survey research that carries with it sensitive but important issues deserving of all our serious discussions.

Teshome Tadesse

Doctoral candidate
Department of Anthropology
College of Social Science
Michigan State University.

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E-mail: tadesset@msu.edu

Questionnaire for SMPs

Respondent's first name or given ID # (give last four digits of your social security # please): _____

Or

Respondent's last and first name (optional) _____

Area of respondent's residence _____
City _____
Township _____
County _____
Zip code _____
Phone (optional) _____
E-mail (optional) _____

I. Daily activities: The questions in this set relate to the time of the day when your at home, what time your daily regular work starts and what you do for your own home only.

1. What time do you usually start the activities you must accomplish at home?
   a. Between 6 and 8 a.m.
   b. Between 8 and 11 a.m.
   c. Between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.
   d. After 2 p. m.
   e. Changes all the time

2. In what order do you do your household's chores on any regular day? (Check all that apply in order of importance, 1 to 6).
   a. Cook. _____
   b. Feed the children. _____
   c. Take the children to school. _____
   d. Wash clothes _____
   e. Do house cleaning _____
   f. Other(s). _____ (Specify please).

3. How many hours do you spend to complete your own house chores at home?
   a. 1 - 3 hours
   b. 3 - 6 hours
   c. 6 - 8 hours
   d. Other _____ (Specify lease)

4. What house chore does take most of your time?
   a. Meal preparation
   b. Cleaning
   c. Child care/ baby-sitting

d. Taking the children to school and getting them back
e. Other _____ (Specify please)

II. The following relate to some personal questions about yourself and your children.

5. What is your age? _____ years.

6. What level of education have you completed so far?
   a. Primary school
   b. Middle school
   c. High school
   d. Two years of college
   e. Four years of college
   f. Other _____ (Specify please).

7. What is your ethnic/racial group? _____ (Write in please).

8. What is your religion? _____ (Write in please).

9. How many child/ren do you have? _____ (Put a number in the space given).

10. How old are they? They are (write in their ages in the spaces given):
    a. Under one year _____.
    b. Between 1 and 5 years _____
    c. Between 6 and 10 years _____.
    d. Between 11 and 18 years _____.
    e. Other _____ (Specify please).

11. How many of your child/ren do go to school (show the number for each grade)?
    a. Kindergarten _____
    b. Grades 1- 6 _____
    c. Grades 7- 8 _____
    d. Grades 9-12_____
    e. Other _____ (specify please).

12. How many of your children need child care? _____.

13. Who baby-sits your child/ren at no pay?
    a. Myself
    b. Relatives
    c. Friends
    d. Others _____ (specify please).

14. Do any of your child/ren need to be given to childcare services while you work?
    a. Yes
    b. No.

15. Do any of your child/ren need to be given to childcare services while you go to school?

a. Yes
b. No

16. If yes, how many hours of childcare services do you need? ____ hours each week or ___ hours each month.
    a. Yes
    b. No

17. What type of benefit(s), if any, do you currently receive from the welfare office? (Please mark all that apply to you).
    a. A monthly benefit in the form of cash $_____
    b. A disability benefit $_____
    c. Medicaid for my children and myself $ _____
    d. Medicaid for my children only $_____
    e. Other _____ (specify please) $_____

18. Does the SSI or disability payment (see question 17 b above) enable recipients to pay all bills including childcare and more?
    a. Yes
    b. No

III. The following questions ask about the assets (things that you own, have value and that they could readily be turned into money) you may own, the incomes you earn and/or you obtain from other sources. Please identify your sources of income such as from work or from primary assistance sources, for instance, (father(s) of you children, relatives and friends), and from secondary sources (charities or churches, city, county, state and federal government(s). Please carefully read the following questions and mark the most appropriate ones that go with your situation.

19. Do you own some or any assets?
    a. Yes
    b. No

20. If yes, in what form are these valuables available?
    a. In gold and other precious materials
    b. Musical instruments
    c. Equipment for building/construction work
    d. A house
    e. A car
    f. Others _____ (Specify please)

21. What do you use your assets for? _____ (Explain please).

22. Do you have a job now?
    a. Yes
    b. No

23. If no, why?
    a. I could not find a job
    b. Transportation is difficult to find in order to be able to go to work

c. I get welfare checks from the government and I do not need work
d. Other _____ (Specify please).

24. If you are working outside your home, what is your job?

a. Nurse's aid
b. Nursing home worker
c. Restaurant worker
d. Cleaner
e. Office assistant
f. Messenger
g. Insurance clerk
h. Department store sales person
i. Cashier
j. Other _____ (Specify please)

25. If you are working from home for pay what kind of work do you do?

Type of work	$ charge or pay rate per hour
a. Cleaner of private homes	_____
b. Messenger	_____
c. Tailor (hemming of pants, mending clothes).	_____
d. Advertisement leaflets packer	_____
e. Baby sitter	_____
f. Embroider	_____
g. Other _____(Specify please)	_____

26. If you are working on more than one job, how many hours do you work on each of these jobs? (Please mark all choices given below if they apply in your case).
a. Regular job _____ hours per week
b. Work from home _____ hours per week
c. Workfare job _____ hours per week
d. Other _____ (Specify please).

27. How do you rate yourself in relation to people you know and who work?
a. I am as hard working as any of them
b. I do not make the effort to help myself like others do
c. Physical disability blocks my attempts to work harder
d. My bad luck pulls me down
e. Other _____ (Specify please).

28. Did you at any one time decide not to work?
a. Yes
b. No.

29. If your answer is yes, what is/was the reason for declining the job?
    a. I am/was not interested in working
    b. I have some means to live on without working
    c. I get help from family members and I do not need to work
    d. I get public welfare and I do not need to work
    e. I get a disability allowance
    f. Other _____ (Specify please)

30. Did you at any one time refuse to take a job?
    a. Yes, then go to question 32
    b. No, then go to question 33

31. Why did you not want to take the job?
    a. I did not at all like the job I got
    b. It was a job that was not consistent with the experiences I had
    c. It paid only a fraction of the income I made from other work
    d. Since I was getting some welfare benefit, it did not matter if I took the job or did not
    e. Other reason _____ (Specify please).

32. Do you think that single mother parents work more hours than other mothers in the general population do?
    a. Yes
    b. No

33. If your answer is yes, what do single mother parents do? (Mark all that apply to you).
    a. They have to cook at home
    b. Take their children to childcare services
    c. Take their children to school
    d. Help their children with homework
    e. Attend classes for themselves
    f. Work on their jobs
    g. Other _____ (Specify please).

34. How much do you earn per hour for your work outside the home?
    a. Under $5.00
    b. Between $5.00 and $7.00
    c. Between $7.01 and $9.00
    d. Between $9.01 and $11.00
    e. Between $11.01 and $13.00
    f. Between $13.01 and $15.00
    g. Above $15.00

IV. In the following table please show the incomes you obtain from all sources other than from your job(s), that is, cash income, food and supplies from all assistance/support sources.

35. If you receive any money from sources other than work please jot write in the monthly and yearly incomes you get from the sources indicated in the first

column and the amounts of money collected in the second and third columns in the table below.

Source of income	Check/ cash per month in $	Income per year in $
I1 Father of my child(ren)		
I2 Family members		
I3 Friends		
I4 City/township		
I5 County		
I6 State		
I7 Family Independence Agency		
I8 Other _____ (specify)		

36. Have you ever received some food, commodities, and personal supplies from time to time from any source? (Circle all that apply).
    a. Food from charities or churches
    b. Food from closets/pantries
    c. Personal supplies from charities/churches
    d. Personal supplies from pantries.
    e. Other

V. Means of transportation to work and to assistance agency locations:

37. What mode or means of transportation do you use to go to work and/or assistance offices? (Mark all that apply).

Mode	Distance (Estimated)	Minutes/hours it takes to agency/service location
a. Walk		
b. Drive own car		
c. Drive borrowed car		
d. Ask for ride		
e. Bike		
f. Use bus system		
g. Other _____ (Specify)		

VI. Expenses by major categories:

38. What is your total expenditure or the major bills (for example, utilities such as electricity, heat, phone or money that you have to use for transportation to go to work and/or school, child care expenses, health insurance, auto insurance) that you have to pay per month $_____, per year $_____. (Please enter only your major five expenses (from the biggest to the smallest) each month or year. (Give an estimate if you do not know the exact figures).

    a. _____.
    b. _____.
    c. _____.
    d. _____.
    e. _____.

39. Does your total expenditure go over your income?

    a. Yes
    b. No.

40. By how much? $_____ a month, $_____ a year

41. What do you do to pay your bills, if during a particular month, you have less money to pay for everything?
    a. Borrow from parents
    b. Borrow from family members other than parents
    c. Borrow from friends
    d. Borrow from working children
    e. Ask churches/charities to pay for me
    f. Other _____ (specify please)

42. Can you please itemize your expenditures/bills in the table below?

Item	Amount estimated per month in $	Amount estimated in $ per year
Food		
Rent		
Phone bills		
Mortgage		
Health care		
Training		
Transportation		
Child care		
Eat out while at work		
Eat out with family members occasionally		
Allowances for the movies		
Travel expenses		
Other _____ (Specify please)		

VII. Workfare: Is a program that the state or government provides to welfare recipients to motivate them to work, to orient them to work and be independent by working eventually.

43. Welfare recipients are required to work on some public work jobs by law. Do you or did you participate in workfare program jobs since 1996?
    a. Yes
    b. No

44. How many hours do you/did you work each week?
    a. Less than twenty
    b. 20-30
    c. 31-40
    d. 41-60
    e. Over sixty

45. For how long were you involved in workfare? ___ months or___ years (Write in).

46. Did any person who may not be receiving welfare assistance say something bad about your association with the workfare program?
    a. Yes
    b. No.

47. The following statements relate to some of the views that recipients have regarding their workfare jobs, what other coworkers who do not receive welfare say about recipients, the whether or not recipients who meet at these job sites know one another, discuss issues that affect their every day lives and decide to work cooperatively. (Go to the next page please and mark the choice in the table you think is right).

Use the following scale to rate your response to each statement. PLEASE CIRLCE THE CORRESPONDING NUMBER FOR EACH QUESTION					
	Very true 1	True 2	Somewhat true 3	Not true 4	Very much untrue 5
11 To what extent do you think the following statements are true or untrue					
WF1 It is a job that I like	1	2	3	4	5
WF2 It is a job that I am forced to hold in order to maintain the government	1	2	3	4	5

welfare check I get					
WF3 It pays very little compared with regular jobs	1	2	3	4	5
WF4 Regular employees do complain when workfare participants get wages and benefits, two incomes, while they do not	1	2	3	4	5
WF5 Regular employees look down upon beneficiaries who work with them	1	2	3	4	5
WF6 Regular employees appreciate beneficiaries for their effort to get off welfare	1	2	3	4	5
WF7 The combined benefits and wages from workfare and regular jobs are adequate to pay the family's bills each month	1	2	3	4	5
WF8 Recipients get the chance to know one another and discuss issues about their everyday lives when they meet at the welfare office.	1	2	3	4	5
WF9 The benefits help recipients make some efforts at making investment decisions toward setting up home-based businesses	1	2	3	4	5
WF10 When recipients meet at the welfare office they try to know one another and they decide to meet in order to explore ways of helping each other	1	2	3	4	5
WF11 Recipients think about working cooperatively in order to improve their livelihood	1	2	3	4	5
WF12 Recipients' meetings lead to decisions to pull money resources together and set up small businesses	1	2	3	4	5

VIII. Recipients' knowledge about associations/cooperatives and possibilities of setting up small businesses:

48. I would now like to know if you think some recipients can set up mutual support groups or cooperatives with other recipients or other people you know to solve some of your common problems. Use the scales given in the table below to express your thoughts.

Use the following scale to rate your response to each statement. PLEASE CIRLCE THE CORRESPONDING NUMBER FOR EACH QUESTION					
	Very much true 1	True 2	No idea 3	Untrue 4	Very much untrue 5
12 To what extent do you think that the following statements are true or untrue					
BC1 Cooperatives are good means of organizing recipients and creating a mutual support system	1	2	3	4	5
BC2 I belong to a childcare cooperative group that takes turns baby sitting each other's child/ren	1	2	3	4	5
BC3 I belong to a cooperative group that pooled money/other resources in order to give loans to its members	1	2	3	4	5
BC4 I want to belong to a cooperative group that would like to pool money and provide loans at low interest rates	1	2	3	4	5
BC5 I would like to be a member of cooperative group that would help me bond with other recipients (that is, one that would, unlike commercial banks, not require of its members money or real estate as a collateral) in order to get loans at low interest rates.	1	2	3	4	5

IX. According to some observers, poverty seems to be around even though single mother parents have been given relief as well as education and training for some time or in some cases for years. The root and immediate causes of poverty and what society should do about them have been points of continued disagreement among many people. Please use the following scale to share your thoughts of and knowledge about issues of poverty.

49. On the root causes of poverty:

Use the following scale to rate your response to each statement. PLEASE CIRLCE THE CORRESPONDING NUMBER FOR EACH QUESTION					
	Strongly agree 1	Agree 2	Undecided 3	Disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
The root cause of poverty is:					
CP1 Laziness of the individual	1	2	3	4	5
CP2 Government failure to help the needy	1	2	3	4	5
CP3 Failure of communities who should help but don't	1	2	3	4	5
CP4 Local government's negligence of the poor	1	2	3	4	5
CP5 The lack of enough resources in charities/churches	1	2	3	4	5

(Go to the next page please).

50. On the main reasons for the existence of poverty:

Use the following scale to rate your response to each statement. PLEASE CIRLCE THE CORRESPONDING NUMBER FOR EACH QUESTION					
	Strongly agree 1	Agree 2	Undecided 3	Disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
The main reasons for the existence of poverty in the U.S. are:					
EP1 Adequate number of jobs are not available	1	2	3	4	5
EP2 Adequate number of hours are not given to employees on regular jobs	1	2	3	4	5
EP3 Hours given to workfare jobs are not enough	1	2	3	4	5
EP4 Workfare and/or public sector jobs do not pay much	1	2	3	4	5
EP5 Businesses make a lot of profit	1	2	3	4	5

and workers do not get a living wage					
Other _____(write in please).	1	2	3	4	5

(Go to the next page please).

51. On the question of what society should do to help the poor:

Use the following scale to rate your response to each statement. PLEASE CIRLCE THE CORRESPONDING NUMBER FOR EACH QUESTION					
	Strongly agree 1	Agree 2	Undecided 3	Disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
13 Society should:					
SD1 Create good-paying jobs for those who do not work	1	2	3	4	5
SD2 Raise the minimum wage to the level of cost of living all the time	1	2	3	4	5
SD3 Encourage more professional training in addition to the general education paid for by government for welfare recipients.	1	2	3	4	5
SD4 Not give any benefits to able bodied persons	1	2	3	4	5
SD5 Increase the income tax credit to motivate all low income earners to work even harder	1	2	3	4	5
SD6 Do not allow single mother parents to collect welfare benefits that taxes exacted on the public support.	1	2	3	4	5

(Go to the next page please).

X. It is said that some members of the American public are disrespectful of welfare recipients who they come in contact with at places of service such as grocery stores. The

negative statements made by some members of the public displease recipients. What do you think about these statements?

52. Based on the statements below, evaluate the following three sets of statements on welfare on a scale of 1-5:

Use the following scale to rate your response to each statement. PLEASE CIRLCE THE CORRESPONDING NUMBER FOR EACH QUESTION					
	Strongly agree 1	Agree 2	Undecided 3	Disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
14 Welfare recipients do not cross the poverty line and be independent because:					
WI1 Checks given as benefits to recipients are too small	1	2	3	4	5
WI2 The FIA regulation that lowers benefits when some single mothers work more hours and get some extra cash reduces their motivation to work	1	2	3	4	5
WI3 Cheating by beneficiaries is widely practiced by many	1	2	3	4	5
WI4 Stigmas or stereotypes attached to benefits discourage recipients from holding jobs	1	2	3	4	5
WI5 Statements that directly or indirectly put stigmas on or insult beneficiaries are common at stores check out points	1	2	3	4	5
WI6 Those who stigmatize welfare recipients have no experience of what it means to be poor	1	2	3	4	5
WI7 Government at all levels should change the perspective of those who disrespect recipients	1	2	3	4	5
WI8 Recipients openly talk about the benefits they get from the government to many people they know	1	2	3	4	5
WI9 Some beneficiaries do not want other people to know about the fact that they get welfare checks	1	2	3	4	5

and other assistance					
WI10 Some beneficiaries try to criticize other beneficiaries in public in order to hide the fact that they themselves are welfare recipients	1	2	3	4	5

XI. I would now like to ask you about your perceptions relating to your provider agency and state officials and staff.

Use the following scale to rate your response to each statement. PLEASE CIRLCE THE CORRESPONDING NUMBER FOR EACH QUESTION					
	Strongly agree 1	Agree 2	Undecided 3	Disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5

53. Use the following chart to express your feelings of relationships with staff, workers and officials in provider agencies and government offices as well as recipient peers

	1	2	3	4	5
FR1 The social worker that has my case is kind to me	1	2	3	4	5
FR2 (S)he sees that I am helped if I deserve any assistance	1	2	3	4	5
FR3 (S)he respects me as a person with temporary problems	1	2	3	4	5
FR4 (S)he allows me enough time to talk about my problems	1	2	3	4	5
FR5 (S)he listens to me very carefully	1	2	3	4	5
FR6 (S)he is harsh	1	2	3	4	5
FR7 S(h)e is angry with me whenever I want to talk about my problems	1	2	3	4	5
FR8 (S)he looks down upon me	1	2	3	4	5
FR10					

Other recipients like me, uplift my morale when I am not treated well by FIA staff	1	2	3	4	5
Fr 9 Church/charity staff understand problems of recipients better than social workers	1	2	3	4	5
FR12 They provide me with some money and commodities to help me overcome my frustrating day at the welfare office	1	2	3	4	5

54. Some people seek church, charity/shelter services when they experience critical shortage of resources. These people use these services to get some resources that may supplement small income or satisfy their temporary needs. Which charity/church service do you frequent the most at times of your great need?
    a. Day shelter services
    b. Soup kitchen services
    c. Rent deposit
    d. Clothing for the family
    e. Children's supplies – clothing, dolls, books and so on.
    f. Housing subsides
    g. Other _____ (Specify please)

55. Did you at any time during the last one-year use a shelter to stay temporarily?
    a. Yes
    b. No

56. How many times a week did you use the service?
    a. Once
    b. Twice
    c. Three times
    d. Four to seven times
    e. Other _____ (Specify please)

57. Why do you use soup kitchens? Because I:
    a. Want to save money for my other bills
    b. Do not have enough money to pay for all my family's daily meals'
    c. Want to save money for rent
    d. Other _____ (Specify please)

XII. The following sets of questions relate to welfare assistance and the number of times these services were used by you. Please go over the questions carefully and give the correct answer.

58. How many times were you on welfare in your lifetime?
    a. Once
    b. Twice
    c. Three Times
    d. Four Times
    e. More Than Five

59. When did you first apply for welfare? 19__ or 20__.

60. For how many years were you on welfare since 1996?
    a. Less than a year
    b. From 1 – 2 years
    c. 3 – 5 years
    d. 5 – 10 years
    e. 10 – 20 years
    f. Other _____ (Specify please)

61. When did you last exit from welfare? _____ (Give the specific year).

62. Why did you get off welfare?
    a. I got a job
    b. I got married
    c. I decided to go to school
    d. Other _____

63. Did you ever get back on welfare after you left it during the last seven years, that is after welfare to single mother parents was eliminated in 1996?
    a. Yes
    b. No

64. If yes, when? ____ (Give the right year please).

65. Why did you get back on welfare after you left it?
    a. I lost my job
    b. I was dismissed from my job
    c. I was laid off
    d. I was divorced
    e. Other _____ (Specify please).

XIII. The following questions ask about your housing and/or your condition of homelessness if you experienced the problem.

66. Where do you live?
    a. On a private rental property
    b. In a public housing project
    c. In a make shift housing
    d. In a trailer house
    e. Other _____ (Specify please).

67. Where do you 'pitch' a temporary 'roof' over your head or shelter when you are in a homeless situation?
    a. Public parks
    b. My own home
    c. A trailer
    d. Under high way bridges/overpasses
    e. Other _____ (Specify please)

XIV. Political party affiliation and participation

68. Are you a registered voter?

    a. Yes
    b. No

69. Do you/did you vote at all for any candidate you know?

    a. Yes
    b. No

70. If your answer is no, why do/did you not vote?

    a. I have no interest
    b. I do not have the necessary qualifications
    c. I do not have the money and/or the resources to be a candidate
    d. Other reason _____ (Specify please)

71. Do you belong to a political party?

    a. Yes
    b. No

72. Did you offer yourself as a candidate for a public office or position since 1996?
    a. Yes
    b. No

73. If yes, to which public office?
    a. Legislative or congress, city council
    b. Administrative president, governor or mayor
    c. Judicial
    d. Other _____ (Specify please).

Thank you very much for completing the questionnaire.

Teshome Tadesse.
July 20, 2003.

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