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LA POINT, Velma De Vonne, 1950-  
A DESCRIPTIVE SURVEY OF SOME PERCEPTIONS  
AND CONCERNS OF BLACK FEMALE SINGLE PARENT  
FAMILIES IN LANSING, MICHIGAN.

Michigan State University, Ph.D., 1977  
Education, guidance and counseling

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**A DESCRIPTIVE SURVEY OF SOME  
PERCEPTIONS AND CONCERNS OF BLACK  
FEMALE SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES IN LANSING, MICHIGAN**

**By**

**Velma De Vonne La Point**

**A DISSERTATION**

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

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**Department of Counseling, Personnel Services,  
and Educational Psychology**

**1975**

## **ABSTRACT**

### **A DESCRIPTIVE SURVEY OF SOME PERCEPTIONS AND CONCERNS OF BLACK FEMALE SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES IN LANSING, MICHIGAN**

**By**

**Velma De Vonne La Point**

The purpose of this survey was to obtain a description of the perceptions, concerns, and needs of black female single parent families in the Lansing, Michigan, community. Demographic data of these families were identified as well as the economic and interpersonal concerns that selected black female single parents encounter in the Lansing, Michigan, community. Lastly, based upon the survey results and aspects of the literature review implications were made for counselors and counselor training programs.

A self-administered questionnaire was developed. Eight general survey questions were the basis for the 22-item self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to 200 black female single parents in Lansing, Michigan. The questionnaires were mailed and collected by return mail and door-to-door collection procedures. Eighty-eight or 44% of the black female single parents returned the questionnaires.

Survey results indicated that the economic situation of the black female single parent families was bleak, but

the sample used consisted primarily of low-income families (defined here as \$4,540 for a family of four). Single parents reported difficulty in attempting to provide adequate housing, food, clothing, and transportation for their families. Single parents also reported interpersonal concerns. These focused on whether one parent can be effective in rearing children, their children's acceptance of being members of single parent families, desiring more male influence in the home, and discipline problems with their children.

A few women explicitly reported being discriminated against because they were female household heads: (a) attempting to get credit, (b) attempting to find an apartment, (c) feeling they earned less as female household heads, and (d) feeling society's negative practices towards single parent families in general. Single parents reported their perceptions of how the larger society feels about varying origins of single parenthood in terms of acceptance or rejection. The results, rank ordered, ranged from a woman who due to death of a spouse being most accepted, to a woman who has never been married being least accepted. Single parents reported that children from single parent families are usually accepted by most teachers and other children.

The existing self-perceptions among the women were somewhat typical of female single parents in terms of what the literature suggests. Single parents reported feeling degrees of pressure from having to perform tasks that both parents perform in two-parent families and feelings of

loneliness as single parents. Some less typical responses were expressions of self-confidence, effectiveness as parents, and relief from being separated from the partners in their previous relationship.

Single parents reported a range of expressions that their children have said about being members of a single parent family. Some expressions included: feeling more grown up because the children were able to help the mother, feeling negative because they do not have two parents like other children, and asking about the absent parent. In general, self-perceptions and reported children's expressions were positive and negative. Single parents reported many positive aspects about their families. These included positive family interaction, good adaptability to the lifestyle of a single parent family without a spouse, and the influence of religion that provided for a strong family bond.

Single parents also reported being generally satisfied with varying social services. Many reported receiving both interpersonal and financial support from relatives and friends. Lastly, single parents reported that they would like an agency that served the needs of a racially integrated clientele of single parents.

Results of the survey study suggested need for modification of the present study and future studies on black female single parent families. In conclusion, it served to describe the particular lifestyle of selected black female single parent families in the Lansing, Michigan, community,

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and to suggest implications for couselfors and counselor  
training programs.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am most grateful to Norman Stewart, my chairman and advisor, who has successfully guided me throughout my doctoral program. His academic and professional expertise and his personal concern for my achievement will always be remembered.

I am also appreciative of my other committee members, Tom Gunnings, John Schweitzer, Bob Winborn, and Eudora Pettigrew. Eudora, whose most insightful perspectives on black women, has been most inspiring and supportive.

Without disclosing the names of my significant friends, I am sincerely appreciative of the empathy, encouragement, and support that was given to me during moments of stress and serenity.

My dearest friend, Ernest (M&M) Wade, deserves special recognition for his professional knowledge and most supportive efforts given to me while in our doctoral program. His experiences, perspectives, and own dissertation concerning black female single parent families have served to assist me with the development of this dissertation. I look forward to future collaborations.

The topic of my dissertation has personal significance in that I have had the experience of being reared in a



female single parent family for a period of my family history. This experience has served to sensitize my feelings and sharpen my perspectives to the lifestyle and concerns of this family group. I am most appreciative to my parents, sister, and brother for our unique family experiences and togetherness.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Increasingly black families are becoming black female single parent families. The female parent and her children are more frequently living alone in the absence of the father. A great deal of concern and subsequent research has been focused on black female single parent families, particularly on the black male children in these families (English, 1974; Jackson, 1973; Ladner, 1974; Staples, 1971; 1973). The specific orientation of this research has been an attempt to hold black female single parents responsible for the disadvantaged position of a large segment of the black population (Jackson, 1973; Ladner, 1974; Pettigrew, 1974; Staples, 1974a).

Black female single parents have been erroneously labeled as heads of a so-called matriarchal society. Conclusions drawn from many studies have asserted that the causes of delinquency, drug-abuse, illegitimacy, low school achievement, and a variety of other problems which confront black youth are to be found within the so-called matriarchal



society (Jackson, 1971; 1973; Pettigrew, 1974; Staples, 1971; 1974a). This myth has detrimental effects on all black families, particularly on black female single parents (Davis, 1971; English, 1974; Jackson, 1973; King, 1973; Ladner, 1974; Pettigrew, 1974; Slater, 1973; Staples, 1971; 1974a).

Aside from being victimized by this myth, many black female single parent families are subjected to the conditions of poverty. In addition to facing a disadvantaged economic position, black female single parent families are confronted with numerous interpersonal concerns that are unique to black female single parent families as well as the gamut of concerns faced by many female single parents, regardless of race (Herzog and Sudia, 1972; Jackson, 1973; Ladner, 1974; McAdoo, 1974; Staples, 1973; 1974a; Stein, 1970).

### Need for Study

Since by definition all female single parent families, irrespective of race, differ from the societal two-parent family statistical norm, the single parent family has fostered a great deal of concern and research by child development specialists and other behavioral scientists, social planners and the general community (English, 1974; Guidepost, 1974; Herzog and Sudia, 1972; Staples 1973; 1974b; Sussman and Cogswell, 1972; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1974b). Single parent families are viewed not only as being different, but have implicit and explicit connotations of being a deficit functioning family group by social institutions and agencies (Herzog and Sudia, 1972; Ladner, 1974; Staples, 1973; Thomas and Sillen,

1972; Thompson, 1971). Because of this view there is some question as to how well the society meets the needs of this family group.

With a significant number of black female single parent families being a part of the total female single parent family population, even more doubt exists as to how well society is meeting the needs of black female single parent families. This is due to the racial discrimination in the theoretical orientation towards black families in general, black female single parent families in particular and the subsequent delivery of services to black female single parent families. Because of the particular issues that confront black female single parent families, it is crucial that attention be given to this group of women and children (Jackson, 1973; Ladner, 1974; McAdoo, 1974; Pettigrew, 1974; Staples, 1973). Thus, there is a need to document the perceptions, concerns, and needs of this population.

There is the tendency to make generalizations about the interpersonal lives of single parent family members. It is as if children and parents are all alike with the same social and economic circumstances, concerns, and aspirations. These generalizations can result in stereotyping which can be to the detriment of family members (Billingsley, 1968; Herzog and Sudia, 1972; 1969). Thus, there is a need to document the variability among black female single parent families. This includes documenting the positive aspects of black female single parent families which have tended to be neglected

(Billingsley, 1968; Herzog and Sudia, 1969; Hill, 1972; Ladner, 1974).

Lastly, with the wealth of literature and research concerning the lifestyle of women in relation to psychology and counseling, there is a need to document and include the lifestyle and needs of black women. Literature and research in the area of women studies and issues have focused primarily upon professional, middle-class, predominately white women. (Jackson, 1973; Ladner, 1974; Pettigrew, 1974). There has been one published survey about the concerns and needs of single parent families. However, this study was undertaken in Canada on a sample of white male and female single parents (Thompson, 1971). The present survey will focus on black female single parent families.

Because of the unique position that black female single parents occupy, being the victims of racism, sexism, and often times poverty, there is a need to make implications for counselors and counselor training programs with regard to this special population. Those individuals who provide human services have an obligation to be cognizant of the needs and issues relating to black female single parent families.

### Purpose

The overall purpose of this study is to document the perceptions, concerns, and needs of black female single parent families. Some demographic data of these families will be identified as well as the economic and interpersonal concerns that selected black female single parent families have in the

Lansing, Michigan, community. Lastly, the purpose of this survey is to suggest implications for counselors and counselor training programs based on the survey results and aspects of the literature review.

### Review of Literature

#### Research and Views on Black Families

The 1960's and 1970's has been characterized by a heightened interest in black family life (English, 1974; Staples, 1971; 1974a). The concern with black families has resulted in a wealth of theories and research about black families on the part of social researchers and planners. More than the general concern and study for family life in society, the interest, views and research on black families has been significantly intensive and controversial (English, 1974).

This intensity and controversy has resulted because of the particular orientation towards studying black families. The emphasis on the problems of poverty and race relations has tended to make the concern for black family life a central focus for dealing with the two problems and their effects on black families, particularly on those lower socio-economic families (Staples, 1971). In attempting to find solutions to the social and economic disadvantaged position that most black people occupy, the family life of black families has been examined as a variable (socialization unit) that could be responsible for the socio-economic position of black people (Staples, 1971).

The specific orientation of this research has been an attempt to hold black families responsible for the disadvantaged socio-economic position of a large percentage of black people. Some of the research findings have asserted that it was weaknesses in black families, more specifically, female headed households, that were responsible for black male emasculation, personality disorders, crime, educational failures and poverty among the black population. The blame for black oppression was put on black families and specifically on black women (Jackson, 1971; 1971; 1973; Pettigrew, 1974; Staples, 1971; 1974).

Placing the blame on black women centers on the matriarchal myth which is attributed to black females who are spouses and household heads in two-parent and single parent families, respectively. The matriarchal myth theorizes that black women have superior economic status, in terms of types of employment, education, and income levels in comparison to black men. This power then transfers to the interpersonal dimension of black family life whereby black women are seen as having omnipotent power over the home, marriage, child-rearing and poverty - all of which are responsible for the psychological "emasculation" of black men (Billingsley, 1968; Jackson, 1971; 1973; Mack, 1971; Pettigrew, 1974; Staples, 1971, 1974a; Ten Houten, 1970). Thus, black women are seen as psychologically castrating black men because of their unnatural superior power and aggression. However, such detrimental accusations have been challenged empirically and

philosophically (Billingsley, 1968; English, 1974; Hill, 1972; Jackson, 1971; 1973; Ladner, 1974; Mack, 1971; Pettigrew, 1974; Staples, 1971, 1974a; 1974b; Ten Houten, 1970).

It is crucial that the matriarchal myth be discussed in reference to black female single parent families because this family has been victimized by this belief politically in addition to the host of negative assumptions about female single parent families regardless of race. Female single parent families have been viewed as being a deficit functioning family group. The focus of the research has been primarily on the effects on this family group on the children, particularly the male children. Studies have correlated the effects of living in a single parent family with psychological and emotional malfunctioning, low academic achievement and juvenile delinquency. However, these studies have been challenged philosophically and empirically (Herzog and Sudia, 1968; 1972; Rosenfeld and Rosenstein, 1973; Sprey, 1967).

Although these same conclusions about the effects of single parent families on children are made regardless of race, black single parent families have received more intense criticism. The matriarchal belief is imposed on black women, whereas white female single parent families do not bear such a label. It is as if there were a social distance in viewing black as opposed to white female single parent families (Herzog and Sudia, 1969). Labels alone connote racial discrimination in viewing black female single parent families.

### Definition of Black Female Single Parent Family

For purposes of this study, the black female single parent family is a family in which there is a black female single parent whose single status is due to divorce, widowhood, legal or informal separation or having never been married. She has one or more own children living in her home. This broad definition can include a married female who is informally separated from her husband due to marital discord, desertion, the spouse's long term employment away from home or his institutionalization in a mental or penal institution. Throughout the literature on female single parents, irrespective of race, several terms are used interchangeably with the term "single parent family". These terms are "female-headed family", "one-parent family", "parent without partner", "only parent family", "broken home", "fatherless family", "father-absent family", "mother-centered home", "matriarchal family", "incomplete family", and "non-family" (Jackson, 1974; McAdoo, 1974; Schlesinger, 1971; Sprey, 1967).

Sprey (1967) suggests that the female single parent family structure has two universal characteristics which can affect the on-going family process. These universals are that:

1. One parent is absent from the family.

This fact places a heavier burden upon the remaining parent. Not only does the instrumental (economic) role responsibilities have to be fulfilled, but the expressive (emotional/psychological)

roles also. Given the reciprocal nature of emotional role behavior, it is highly doubtful that all obligations of that nature can be absorbed by the remaining parent (Sprey, 1967). This is not to suggest that parental surrogates cannot fulfill these roles (Staples, 1974b).

2. The single parent structure is a minority one in our society and as such deviates from the statistical norm.

One consequence of this is the fact that our society is poorly equipped to deal with the needs of single parent families. Aside from this practical consideration, stigmatization of the single parent family, and especially single parents, does occur. Stigma may increase the burden of single parenthood considerably, but does not necessarily have negative effects on family functioning (Sprey, 1967).

Lastly, there is another universal.

3. Single parenthood as an independent factor can be viewed as a condition which results from a number of different events happening to the family process.

The absence of a father may seriously aggravate a family's economic conditions and/or family relationships. Depending upon the amount of financial assistance and personal help provided by relatives, friends and community agencies, the family's ability to function may be increased, decreased or not affected. These conditional factors, in addition to the precipitating circumstances which give origin



to single parenthood, adds to the variability of single parent family functioning. (Herzog and Sudia, 1972).

Some believe that the definition of family, when applied to black people, should be inclusive of all legal relatives (nuclear and extended family members) as well as all black people, nationally and internationally. Further, they suggest that this view has theoretical and practical value for scholars studying black family life (Nobles, 1972a; 1974b; Staples, 1974a). However, given the unique social and economic position that the black female single parent family occupies, it becomes necessary to have a distinct definition and conception of the black female single parent family (Jackson, 1973; Ladner, 1974; McAdoo, 1974; Sprey, 1967; Staples, 1974b).

#### Demographic Description of Black Female Single Parent Families

The major demographic data used in this thesis were taken from three major reports from the United States Census Bureau:

1. Household and Family Characteristics, March 1974  
which was issued in February 1975
2. The Social and Economic Status of the Black Population in the United States, 1973 which was issued in July 1974
3. Household and Family Characteristics, March 1974  
which was issued in July 1974.

The comparative statistics cited in the first and third report do not differ significantly. The first report will be cited most often for consistency. However, in some

cases where certain recent categorical data are unavailable, the second and third reports will be cited. These reports contain data based on 1973 statistics which are the most recent issued by the United States Census Bureau.

In this section demographic comparisons will be made between black and white female single parent families. In the education, employment, and income categories, black and white male heads of two-parent families will be compared to black and white female single parent families to highlight the economic position that black females have as family heads with financial responsibilities of maintaining a household. This point is made explicit in table 9.

Percentages in this chapter were rounded to the nearest whole number except in the "Incidence" subsection. This was done to present exact increases in the growth of female single parent families.

Incidence. Of 55,053,000 families in the United States, 6,804,000 or 12.4% were single parent families in 1974 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975). The number of women in the United States who are heads of their families increased about 2.4 million since 1955. This number rose from 4.2 million in 1955 to 6.6 million in 1973. The increase from 1970 to 1973 has been nearly equal to the entire decade of the 1960's (1.1 million) (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1974b).

In 1974 the 4,854,000 white female single parent families comprised 71.3% of all female single parent families and 9.9% of white families (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975). In 1970, 1971, 1972, and 1973 white female single parent

families represented 9.1%, 9.4%, 9.4%, and 9.6% respectively of all white families (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1974b).

In 1974 by comparison the 1,849,000 black female single parent families comprised 27% of all female single parent families and 34% of all black families (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975). In 1970, 1971, 1972, and 1973 black female single parent families represented 28.3%, 30.6%, 31.8%, and 34.6% respectively of all black families (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1974b). Since 1955, of the 2.4 million increase in female single parent families, approximately 44% were black female single parent families (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1974b). Within 1973, black female single parents increased from 32% to about 35% (Ladner, 1974). It is speculated that by 1980, the majority of black families may be headed by a female (Staples, 1974b).

The statistics on the incidence and growth of black female single parent families when compared to white female single parent families have caused some speculations as to why proportional racial differences exist. One such interpretation is that the Census Bureau undercounts black men. It has been estimated that the decennial U.S. Census undercounts urban blacks by as much as 20%. This undercounting may have caused the estimate of black female single parent family trends to appear larger than what actually exists (Ten Houten, 1970; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1974b).

Another speculation and interpretation is that the incidence of black female family heads can be attributed to

the disproportionated sex ratios of black men to black women. In 1970, if no adjustment is made for age, there were at least 1,069,694 black women in the United States without available monogamous mates. Reasons for the limited number of black men are higher death rates for black men due to heart and lung disease, chronic alcoholism, automobile and industrial accidents, homicides and suicides. Drug overdoses are more common among black men than black women. The numbers of black men are further reduced when one notes the number of black men in prison, war deaths, those who enter interracial marriages, and those who prefer homosexual relationships exclusively (Jackson, 1971; Staples, 1974b).

Jackson (1971) theorizes that the phenomenon of the black female single parent family should be re-assessed not as a weakness in black family life but as a response to an insufficient supply of black males. There is a significant inverse relationship between the black female and black male ratios and the percentages of black female single parent families. That is, the percentage of female single parent families tends to decrease as the sex ratio increases or the greater the number of males, the smaller number of black female single parent families (Jackson, 1971; 1973). Although a significant correlational relationship exists, it cannot be equated with the causation of the phenomenon of black female single parent families. It has been suggested that this relationship could warrant causative studies (Jackson, 1971; 1973).

Given the demographic composition of the black population with the excessive number of black females, Staples (1974b) suggests that "there is simply no way for every black woman to enter a monogamous marriage and that fact alone will force alternate family life styles on large numbers of black people" (p. 6). The black female single parent family can be viewed as a rational alternative for black women given the sex ratios within the black population. The black female single parent family is not only viewed as a deviation from the two-parent family societal norm, but also implied a malfunctioning family group. Although these views exist, the black female single parent family may in fact be a normal phenomenon in response to a particular social environment where there are disproportioned black sex ratios (Jackson, 1971; 1973; Staples, 1974b).

Marital Status. Several reasons can be cited for the rising rate of female single parenthood in the black and white population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1974b). Overall, a changing societal attitude towards women living independently and without spouses has occurred. High rates of marital dissolution through divorce and separation have had an impact on the rise of female single parenthood. An increasing number of mothers who have never been married make decisions to keep their children as opposed to adoption or abortion. Women within the "never married" category are probably more willing to accurately report such a status in surveys.

The liberalization of adoption procedures whereby single women may now adopt children is another factor. Economically, women have better ways of maintaining a household than was true two decades ago. The availability of some better and wider selections of occupations and the availability of public assistance programs has led to the increased economic independence for some women. These are some general factors that have contributed to the rise of female single parenthood (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1974b).

In Table 1 four major categories of the marital status of female single parents are identified as: "never married", "divorced", "widowed", and "married, husband absent" (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975). The category "married, husband absent" is further divided into "separated", "husband in the armed services" and "other". Persons reported as "separated" included those females with legal separations, those living apart from spouses with intentions of obtaining a divorce, and those persons permanently or temporarily separated because of marital discord. The sub-category "husband in armed services" is specifically listed. The sub-category "other" refers to separation due to male spouses being employed and living a considerable distance away from home, temporarily absent on vacation, business or in the hospital (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975). The categories used in the present survey were "never married", "divorced", "widowed", and several sub-categories for "married, husband absent".

The data in Table 1 represent the percentages of black and white female single parents within the four categories

Table 1

## Percentage of Black and White Female Single Parents

Within Marital Status Categories: March 1974

Marital Status	Black Female Single Parents	White Female Single Parents
Never married	21	9
Divorced	16	32
Widowed	29	40
Married, husband absent	34	19
separated	30	15
husband in armed services	1	1
other	3	3
	<hr/> 100%	<hr/> 100%

of marital status. The percentage of black female single parents who were "never married" is at least twice the rate for white counterparts. This rate may be higher for several reasons. Black women, both married and single, produce a greater number of offspring, on the average, than do white women. Also the proportion of women who are single and of child bearing age is higher for blacks than whites. The higher rate for black females may also reflect the extent to which black children born to single women are incorporated into the family unit as opposed to women using adoption or abortion procedures. White women have had greater access to these procedures. Lastly, having access to reliable birth control methods may be a viable option for middle class females. A significant proportion of the black population is in the lower socio-economic status. Thus, many black females do not have access to reliable birth control methods (Staples, 1973; 1974b; Ten Houten, 1970).

The percentage of black female single parents in both the "divorce" and "married, husband absent" categories was double that of white female single parents. Ten Houten (1970) has suggested that poor and black persons are less able to afford and/or less likely to define legal divorce and legal separation as necessary.

Marriages between blacks are dissolving for some of the same reasons that marriages in general are resulting in separation (Staples, 1974). The institution of marriage was



strongest under patriarchal rule in a predominately agrarian setting. Marriage in this setting was not meant to be equalitarian. Women are the dependent and subordinate partner and men were to be the rulers. "In the case of blacks the independence of women in the family existed for a longer period of time (Staples, 1974, p. 6)." Staples (1974b) suggests that the equalitarian nature of marriage and the independence of black women has influenced the decline of the marital institution for black people.

Another reason for the decline of marriage among blacks is that the problems of racism and economic deprivation have further complicated the difficulties inherent in the existing fragile institution of marriage (Staples, 1974b). Often the frustration and despair that many blacks have felt at their treatment in society has been directed at the nearest and safest object - spouses in marriage (Staples, 1974b).

Black women are also making conscious decisions to form single parent families. Some women accomplish this through giving birth to a child outside of legal marriage while others opt for single parent adoptions (Staples, 1974b). Lastly, it has been strongly suggested that the disproportioned sex ratios in the black population, whereby an excessive number of females exist, have further reduced the number of two-parent families and increased the existing and probability of black female single parent families (Jackson, 1971; 1973; Ladner, 1974; Staples, 1973; 1974b).

Age. The median age for black female single parents is 39 years. This is nine years less than the median age for white female single parents (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1974b). The percentage distribution of female single parents within the specific age groups is presented in Table 2. Black female single parents in the "under 25 year old" category represent twice the percentage of their white counterparts. Black female single parents in the "25 to 29 year old" category and "30 to 34 year old" category represent almost one and one-half the percentage of their white counterparts.

The age distribution of the black population differs substantially from that of the white population in that the black population is younger with a higher proportion under 15 years old and a lower proportion 65 years old and older (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1974a).

Considering the differences in age distribution of the black and white population, it is perhaps not surprising that black female single parents, on the average, assume responsibilities as heads of household at a younger age than their white counterparts.

Family Size and Own Children. The size of the family includes the female parent and all persons in the living quarters who are related to the head of the family by blood, marriage or adoption (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975). As indicated in Table 3 black female single parent families have four members, which is one member more than their white counterparts.

Table 2

## Percentage of Black and White Female Single Parents

Within Each Age Group: March 1974

Age Group in Years	Black Female Single Parents	White Female Single Parents
Under 25	13	7
25 - 29	14	10
30 - 34	14	10
35 - 44	23	20
45 - 54	15	20
55 - 64	9	15
65 - 74	8	10
75 and over	<u>4</u>	<u>8</u>
	100%	100%

Table 3

Family Size: Percentage of Family Members in Black  
and White Female Single Parent Families  
with Mean Number Per Family: March 1974

Number of Persons	Black Female Single Parents	White Female Single Parents
2	30	50
3	22	25
4	16	13
5	13	7
6	8	3
7 or more	<u>11</u>	<u>2</u>
	100%	100%
Mean	3.89%	2.95%

"Own" children in a family are sons and daughters, including step-children and adopted children of the family head (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975). As presented in Table 4, black female single parent families have at least three children, which is one more child than their white counterparts.

In 1974, data on number of own children under 18 years old showed that black female single parents were more likely than their white counterparts to have children to support, and of those with children, a larger proportion of blacks than whites had two or more children (U.S. Bureau of the

Table 4

Percentage of Black and White Female Single Parents  
 With Number of Own Children  
 Under 18 Years of Age: March 1974

Own Children Under 18	Black Female Single Parents	White Female Single Parents
No own children under 18	30	44
With own children under 18	70	56
1 child	22	25
2 children	19	7
3 children	12	7
4 children	8	4
5 children	5	2
6 or more children	4	1
	100%	100%
Mean number	1.96	1.10
Mean number per family with children	2.46	1.71

Census, 1975). These statistics suggest that, given more children and family members in black female single parent families, they live on less income despite family size in comparison to white female families and two-parent families (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1974a).

Education. Data on years of school completed were based on the combination of answers to two questions: (a) What was the highest grade of school that the person attended? and (b) Did the person finish that grade? The questions on educational attainment applied only to progress in graded public, private and parochial elementary and high schools, colleges, universities and professional schools. Schooling in other than regular schools was recorded only if the obtained credits were regarded as transferrable to a school in the regular school system.

The percentage of female single parents and the percentage of male heads in two-parent families, by race, who have completed the listed school years of education is presented in Tables 5 and 6. "Less than three years of education" refers to low educational attainment. "One year or more of college" refers to high educational attainment.

For those persons under 45 years of age, 54% of the black females had less than three years of high school as compared to 36% for white female single parents, 37% for black male heads, and 21% for white male heads in two-parent families. Thus, the percentage of black single parents was

Table 5

Percentage of Black and White Female Single Parents  
(Under 45 Years Old and 45 Years Old and Over) Com-  
pleting Educational Levels: March 1974

Under 45 Years Old	Black Female Single Parents	White Female Single Parents
<b>Educational Levels</b>		
0-8 years - elementary	15	14
1-3 years - high school	39	22
4 years - high school	35	44
1-3 years - college	8	13
4 or more years college	<u>3</u>	<u>7</u>
	100%	100%
 <b><u>45 Years and Over</u></b>		
<b>Educational Levels</b>		
0-8 years - elementary	55	37
1-3 years - high school	22	16
4 years - high school	17	31
1-3 years - college	3	9
4 or more years college	<u>3</u>	<u>7</u>
	100%	100%

Table 6

Percentage of Black and White Male Heads of Two-Parent Families  
 (Under 45 Years Old and 45 Years and Over)  
 Completing Educational Levels: March 1974

Under 45 Years Old	Black Male Heads in Two-Parent Families	White Male Heads In Two-Parent Families
<b>Educational Levels</b>		
0-8 years elementary	14	8
1-3 years high school	23	13
4 years high school	43	40
1-3 years college	13	17
4 or more years college	<u>7</u>	<u>22</u>
	100%	100%
<b><u>45 Years Old and Over</u></b>		
<b>Educational Levels</b>		
0-8 years elementary	61	30
1-3 years high school	17	17
4 years high school	13	30
1-3 years college	4	10
4 or more years college	<u>5</u>	<u>13</u>
	100%	100%



about one and one-half that of white female single parents, about one and one-half that of black male heads and two and one-half times that of white male heads in two-parent families in the low education category. For those persons 45 years and older, 77% of the black families had less than three years of high school as compared to 53% for white females, 78% for black male heads, and 47% for white male heads in husband-wife families. Thus, black female single parents represented one and one-half times the rate for white female single parents, about the same rate as black male heads and one and one-half times the rate for white male heads in two-parent families. Overall, black female single parents were represented higher in the low education category than white female single parents, and black and white male heads of two-parent families.

For those persons under 45 years of age, 11% of the black female single parents had more than one year of college as compared to 20% for white female single parents, 20% for black male heads, and 40% for white male heads in two-parent families. Thus the percentage of black female single parents is about one-half that of white female single parents, about one-half that of black male heads and less than one-third that of white male heads of two-parent families in the high educational category. For those persons 45 years and older, 6% of the black female single parents had one or more years of college as compared to 16% of the white female single parents, 9% of the black male heads, and 23% of the white male heads in two-parent families. Thus, the percentage of

black female single parents was less than one-half that of white female single parents, about equal to that of white female single parents, about equal to that of black male heads and about one-fourth that of white male heads in two-parent families. Overall, black female single parents were represented less in the high educational level category than white female single parents and black and white male heads of two-parent families.

Types of Employment. Tables 7 and 8 are presented to show the percentage distribution of female single parents and male heads in two-parent families who were employed in the following twelve major occupational groups in 1974:

1. professional, technical and related workers include engineers, physicians, dentists and related practitioners, teachers at all educational levels and other professional workers
2. managers, administrators, except farm workers include salaried, and self-employed workers in retail trade and manufacturing and other managerial workers
3. sales workers include retail trade and other industrial sales workers
4. clerical and related workers include bookkeepers, secretaries, stenographers, typists, and other clerical workers
5. craftsmen and related workers include carpenters, construction craftsmen, mechanics, metal craftsmen, and other related workers

Table 7

## Percentage of Employed Black and White Female Single

Parents Within Occupational Groups: March 1974

Occupational Groups	Black Female Single Parents	White Female Single Parents
<b>White Collar Workers</b>		
Professional, technical and related workers	8	13
Managers, administrators, except farm	1	6
Sales workers	2	6
Clerical and related workers	23	34
<b>Blue Collar Workers</b>		
Craftsmen and related workers	1	2
Operatives, except transport	16	14
Transport operatives	1	1
Laborers, except farm	1	1
<b>Farm Workers</b>		
Farmers and farm managers	0	1
Farm laborers and farm foremen	1	0
<b>Service Workers</b>		
Service workers, except private household	31	20
Private household workers	15	2
	100%	100%

Table 8

Percentage of Black and White Male Heads of Two-Parent  
Families Within Occupational Groups: March 1974

Occupational Groups	Black Male Heads in Two-Parent Families	White Male Heads in Two-Parent Families
<b>White Collar Workers</b>		
Professional, technical and related workers	6	15
Managers, administrators, except farm	5	17
Sales workers	2	7
Clerical and related workers	8	6
<b>Blue Collar Workers</b>		
Craftsmen and related workers	19	24
Operatives, except transport	18	11
Transport equipment operatives	11	6
Laborers, except farm	13	4
<b>Farm Workers</b>		
Farmers and farm managers	1	4
Farm laborers and farm foremen	3	1
<b>Service Workers</b>		
Service workers, except private household	13	5
Private household workers	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
	100%	100%

6. operatives, except transport workers, include workers in durable and nondurable manufacturing, and nonmanufacturing industries
7. transport equipment operatives include drivers and deliverymen, and other transport equipment operative workers
8. laborers, except farm, include construction and manufacturing laborers
9. farmers and farm managers
10. farm laborers and farm foremen
11. service workers include cleaning service, food service, health service, personal service, and protective service workers
12. private household workers (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1974b).

When the white collar workers are combined, 34% of the black female single parents are in this group as compared to 59% for white female single parents, 21% for black male heads and 45% for white male heads in two-parent families. When the clerical workers group, which is a traditional female occupational group is omitted, 11% of the black female single parents are in the white collar group as opposed to 25% for white female single parents, 13% for black male heads and 39% for white male heads in two-parent families. When the clerical group is omitted, the percentage of black female single parents in the white collar group is only one-half that of white female single parents, about the same as black male heads and about one-fourth that of white male heads in two-parent families.

In the blue collar workers group, 19% of the black female single parents are in this group as compared to 18% for white female single parents, 61% for black male heads, and 45% for white male heads in two-parent families. Black and white female single parents are almost equal in percentages in the blue collar work category. Black female single parents are almost one-third that of black male heads and almost one-half that of white male heads in two-parent families in the blue collar workers category.

In the farm workers group, 1% of black female single parents were engaged in this group in comparison to 1% for white females, 4% for black male heads and 5% for white male heads in two-parent families. Black and white female single parents were almost equally represented in this category. Black female single parents were only one-quarter that of black and white male heads of two-parent families in the farm workers group.

In the service workers group, 46% of black female single parents were engaged in this group in comparison to 22% for white female single parents, 14% for black male heads and 5% for white male heads in two-parent families. Black female single parents were represented in this group at least twice the rate for white female single parents, at least triple the rate of black male heads and at least nine times the rate for white male heads in two-parent families.

This percentage distribution for black and white female single parents and black and white male heads in two-parent

families would suggest that the female single parents are concentrated in the lower paying occupations, particularly the more traditionally female occupations as opposed to the male heads in two-parent families. Black female single parents are heavily represented in the service workers group as opposed to the white collar workers group where salaries are higher than in the service workers group. These suggestions are further substantiated when the median income distributions are noted.

Income. The median income of female single parent families and two-parent families is presented in Table 9. In 1973, the median income for black female single parent families was \$4,226 or \$2,334 less than the median income for white female single parent families. Black female single parents were more likely than their white counterparts to have children to support and of those with children, a larger proportion of black than whites had two or more children to support (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1974b). This suggests that black female single parents had less resources, on the average, by which to support more children than their white counterparts.

The median income of black male-headed (single and two-parent) families was \$9,549 or \$3,704 less than the median income for white male-headed (single and two-parent) families. However, a distinction should be made with respect to those two-parent families where the wife was in the paid labor force. In those families where the wife was in the paid labor force, the black families had a median income of \$12,226 which was \$3,428 less than the median income of white families where

Table 9

**Median Income for Black and White  
Female Single Parent Families and  
Black and White Male-Headed Families\*: 1973**

Type of Family	Black Families	White Families
Female single parent families	\$ 4,226	\$ 6,560
Male-headed families	\$ 9,549	\$13,253
Wife in paid labor force	\$12,226	\$15,654
Wife not in paid labor force	\$ 7,148	\$11,716

\* Male-headed families include male heads of two parent families and male single parent families.



the wife was in the paid labor force. In those families where the wife was not in the paid labor force, black male-headed families had a median income of \$7,148 or \$4,568 less than the median income of white male-headed families. Thus, the median income of black female single parent families is significantly less than white female single parent families and black and white male-headed (single and two-parent) families.

Being "poor" is defined by the low-income threshold. The low-income threshold is an index which reflects the differing consumption requirements of families based on their size and composition, sex and age of the family head and farm-nonfarm residence. In 1973 the low-income threshold for a nonfarm family of four was \$4,540. Both white and black female single parents had a majority percentage residing in metropolitan areas, 71% and 81%, respectively (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1974b). Thus, a majority of all female single parent families are non-farm by residence.

The percentage distribution of female single parent families and male-headed (single and two-parent) families who are below the low-income level is presented in Table 10. The data concerning those families below the low-income level do not show a percentile distribution (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1974a). Thus, precise and meaningful information is not reported. Of the black female single parent families, 53% were below the low-income level. This percentage was at least double the rate for white female single parent families who were below the low-income level, triple the rate for black

Table 10

Percentage of Black and White Female Single Parent Families and Black and White Male-Headed Families\* Below the Low-Income Level:\*\* 1973

Type of Family	Black Families	White Families
Female single parent families	53	25
Male headed families	15	5

\* Male headed families include male heads of two-parent families and male single parent families.

\*\*Defined as \$4,540 for a nonfarm family of four.

male heads and over eleven times the rate for white male-headed (single and two-parent) families.

Thus, female single parent families, both black and white, were more likely to be poor than families headed by males. Black female single parents were more likely to be poor than their white counterparts.

It has already been stated that 35% of black families are headed by families opposed to 10% for white families (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975). It has been suggested that there is a strong correlation between low income levels and the presence or absence of fathers (Stein, 1970; Ten Houten, 1970). When a male breadwinner dies or leaves his family, the reduction or loss of financial support may be only partly offset by the wife's earnings, insurance, or other government

financial assistance. Poverty or low-income levels may create tensions leading to family breakup (Stein, 1970). It has also been suggested that the incidence of female single parent families is more closely related to level of income than to race: among blacks the low-income families are 39% more apt to have female heads; among whites, 34%. Thus, female single parent families are more characteristic of poor families than black families per se (Ten Houten, 1970). At the upper income level of \$15,000 and over the percentage of black families headed by a male is similar to that of whites (Staples, 1973).

The data on black female single parent families undoubtedly exaggerates the extent to which black fathers are not present. State welfare requirements often make financial aid to families contingent on there being no father or father substitute in the home. This creates a strong economic incentive to conceal the presence of a husband and also contributes to the husband's motivation to leave the family (Stein, 1970; Ten Houten, 1970). Thus, a black female single parent family, since it is not a two-parent family, is perceived as being out of harmony with societal norms even though it may be a practical accommodation to state welfare regulations (Herzog and Lewis, 1970; Stein, 1970; Ten Houten, 1970).

In conclusion, the major economic issue facing most black female single parent families is that they are more vulnerable and subject to the conditions of poverty (Jackson, 1973; Ladner, 1974; McAdoo, 1974; Pettigrew, 1974; Staples, 1973; 1974b). This is directly attributed to the oppressed

economic status of women whereby black women are the most oppressed in comparison to white males, white females, and black males (Aldridge, 1975; Jackson, 1973; Ladner, 1974; Pettigrew, 1974; Staples, 1974b).

The socio-economic description of black female single parent families, when compared to white female single parent families and male heads in two-parent families, is indicative of this disadvantaged economic status.

#### Interpersonal Description of Black Female Single Parent Families

Stresses on Black Female Single Parent Families. The effects of black single parenthood on the development of children in these families has been the usual emphasis of concern by behavioral scientists and social planners. As a result, less attention has been given to the needs of the black female parent (Ladner, 1974). Depending on the precipitating circumstances that give origin to the woman's single parent status (widowhood, divorce, never been married and informally separated), a host of emotional feelings can be present at varying stages of single parenthood. These feelings can range from feelings of self-confidence, independence and relief, to feelings of rejection, failure and guilt (Thompson, 1971; Welsh, 1973). With the changing attitudes toward single parenthood, women also make options for being single with children. The emotional feelings in this case may be different compared to when the single status is imposed (Kadushin, 1971; Staples, 1974; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1974b).

With reference to poor black female single parents, women who are deprived of the quality of life that comes with adequate economic resources have fewer chances for being useful to themselves and society. So much of their energies and limited resources must be expended in the acquisition of life's minimum necessities (Ladner, 1974; McAdoo, 1974). Because so many black female single parents must also be the major breadwinner, they are sometimes unable to adequately meet the physical and sometimes emotional foundation so necessary for the healthy development of their children. Thus, they find themselves unable to provide for proper food, clothing, housing, education, discipline, protection and other resources that are necessary for child-rearing. This inability to provide for life's necessities causes families to endure physical and emotional hardships. The physical deprivations are obvious but the emotional deprivations are perhaps less easily recognized (Ladner, 1974).

Because a great number of black female single parents are poor, the self-esteem and confidence of these parents may be lowered when they are unable to be like desired models of womanhood (Ladner, 1974). Being recipients of public assistance (welfare) also results in some women feeling stigmatized. The work ethic of society is that every able-bodied adult must provide for his or her own welfare. Underlying this assumption is the idea that the society allows for equal competition and opportunities. The granting of relief to supposedly physically and mentally alert adults is thought to

be contradictory to the ideals of society. Thus, some welfare recipients are labeled as "undeserving" and it is within this category that most poor black female single parents are assigned (Ladner, 1974).

With reference to models of womanhood, being a female single parent can also connote stigma for some women. This has particular implications for black women who are likely not to have a mate due to the unequal sex ratios in the black population (Ladner, 1974; Staples, 1974b; Jackson, 1973; Jackson, 1971). The numerical imbalance between the sexes in the black population is more dramatic than in the white population (Murray, 1970). In the white population the excess of women shows up in the middle or later years. In the black population the sex imbalance is present in every age group over fourteen and is greatest during the age when most marriages occur (Murray, 1970). The social implications of an excess of more than a half a million black females over fourteen years of age are obvious in a society in which the glamour and expectations of romantic love and marriage are heavily emphasized (Murray, 1970). In this case, social expectations of marriage may not become a practical reality experience for all black females because of the imbalanced sex ratios in the black population. Thus, if an aspect of the model of womanhood for some black women in a monogamous heterosexual marriage, some women may not achieve such a desired model. This could result in the woman feeling failure because she has not achieved a socially expected goal (Murray, 1970).

Social institutions and individuals can have a range of perceptions of female single parents in terms of accepting the parent's status as being a single parent. The perceptions can range from "most accepted" to "least accepted" for the various origins of single parenthood (widowhood, divorce, never married and informally separated). These perceptions from society can influence the feelings that single parents have about themselves (Ladner, 1974; Schlesinger, 1971; Thompson, 1971).

With reference to black female single parents, the result of internalizing the stigma of being reared in a single parent family can be fatal. Discussing some possible reasons why there is a rising suicide rate for black women, Slater (1973) cites Dr. Floyd Wylie, a black psychologist, who suggests that "what we are seeing here and elsewhere, I think, is a growing belief of the lie perpetrated largely by Moynihan [a major research report on black families in 1965] that single-parent, so-called mother-dominated families are somehow pathological" (p. 158). Dr. Wylie implies that a belief in this assumption may be having subtle, detrimental effects on young black women who come from such homes. The suggestion made by Dr. Wylie can apply to those women who are reared in such homes or women who head such homes.

Children in Black Female Single Parent Families. Numerous studies have suggested that a child's development is impaired when reared in a black female single parent family. Outcomes such as low school achievement, personality disorders,

and juvenile delinquency are attributed to black children who are reared in black female single parent families. However, these studies have been challenged empirically and statistically (Herzog and Sudia, 1968, 1969, 1972; Jackson, 1973; Pettigrew, 1974; Staples, 1971; 1974a).

The socialization of children in black female single parent families is inevitably affected by the stresses and strains on some mothers who must be responsible for household maintenance and child-rearing. Many scholars have begun to examine other environmental factors, aside from child-rearing practices, per se, which can affect the development of children in black female single parent families (Herzog and Sudia, 1972; Ladner, 1974; Zwack, 1973). The focus on the children in this study relates to parental perceptions of degree of acceptance by other children and teachers toward children in single parent families. Children in single parent families may also express thoughts and feelings about being in a single parent family. These can be influenced by what children perceive to be the attitudes of the larger community toward members of single parent families (Herzog and Sudia, 1972; Zwack, 1973).

Strengths of Black Female Single Parent Families. Aside from the economic and often accompanying emotional stress that confront many black female single parent families, black female single parent families can also have positive aspects. These have tended to be overlooked in the theoretical orientations and research on black female single parent families (Herzog and Sudia, 1969; Hill, 1972; Ladner, 1974).



Positive characteristics can be attributed specifically to black female single parents (Billingsley, 1968; Herzog and Sudia, 1969; Hill, 1972; Ladner, 1974). Black female single parents have a high degree of role flexibility which allows them to handle some of the traditional roles of male heads in two-parent families. With the dual role of mother and father, some black females have a high degree of parenting skills under the most adverse economic circumstances. These parenting skills include high aspirations for their children's educational and occupational achievement. Some women also embrace a religious orientation which provides a source of psychological strength to help them combat their numerous stresses (Billingsley, 1968; Herzog and Sudia, 1969; Hill, 1972; Ladner, 1974). Research has also suggested that black female single parents are effective role models for female children in the family (Myers, 1975).

The black female parent family as a unit also has positive characteristics. Strong kinship bonds can exist with extended family members. Mutual support and acceptance is also noted within and between black female single parent families. Lastly, strong family ties can survive and/or emerge with the absence of a parent (Herzog and Sudia, 1969; Hill, 1972). These positive aspects can enhance the family functioning of black female single parent families. In some cases, these strengths have accounted for the stability of black female single parent families (Jackson, 1973).

### Summary

An increasing family group among black families is the female single parent family. A great deal of research has been focused on black female single parent families, particularly on the male children of these families. The results of this research has been used in an attempt to hold black female single parents responsible for rearing unproductive children who have emotional and behavioral maladjustments. This conclusion is a part of the matriarchal myth.

The socio-economic condition that confront many black female single parent families is quite disadvantaged when compared to white female single parent families and black and white male heads in two-parent families. Aside from being confronted with disadvantaged economic conditions, many black female single parents have a number of emotional concerns and stresses as a result of being poor and as heads of families. Despite these conditions, positive aspects of family living can characterize black female single parent families.

Single parent families, irrespective of race, are viewed not only as being different from two-parent families, but have implicit and explicit connotations of being a deficit functioning family. This view subsequently determines how well social institutions and agencies meet the needs of this family group. With a significant number of black female single parent families being a part of the total female single parent

population, there is even more doubt as to how well society is meeting the needs of black female single parent families. This is due to the racial discrimination in the theoretical orientation towards black female single parent families and the subsequent delivery of services to this population.

Because of the unique position that black female single parent families occupy, being the victims of racism, sexism and often times poverty, there is the need to document the perceptions, concerns and needs of this particular population. Since black female single parent families have been stereotyped, there is also a need to document the variability among black female single parent families.

This documentation of perceptions, concerns and needs will be done by using a survey. Some demographic data will be identified in addition to the concerns and needs that selected black female single parent families have in the Lansing, Michigan, community. Lastly, implications will be made for counselors and counselor training programs based upon survey results.

## CHAPTER II

### SURVEY DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

#### Overview

The purpose of this survey was to describe a population of black female single parent families in the Lansing, Michigan, community. The description was made to obtain demographic characteristics of selected black female single parent families, to obtain an account of the experiences of the selected black female single parent families, and to identify their needs as black female single parent families. Lastly, the purpose of the survey was to suggest implications for counselors and counselor training programs based upon survey results and some of the normative data from the United States Census Bureau (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1974a, 1974b).

This survey is a partial replication of a survey undertaken in Canada to determine the needs of male and female single parents in Canada, to attain information from social agencies including single parent organizations on how they were meeting the needs of single parent families, and to recommend social policy to alleviate the problems of single parent families (Thompson, 1971). Although the Canadian

survey had value in determining the orientation of this survey, it was undertaken in another culture on a male and female white single parent population (Thompson, 1971). The present survey is more limited in scope, focusing on black female single parents.

### Survey Design

The type of design used in this survey was cross-sectional. In this type of survey design data are collected at one point in time from a sample selected to describe some population at that time (Babbie, 1973). The present survey also used a variation of the basic cross-sectional survey. This was the contextual study in which data are collected about some portions of the person's environment and used to describe the individual (Babbie, 1973).

### Sampling Procedures

The census tract data indicated that 836 black female single parent families were in the Greater Lansing area (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1972). In attempting to obtain a sample from this population, the researcher contacted various social agencies that possibly served black female single parent families. However, agency personnel were unwilling to submit names of families. Reasons for the unwillingness ranged from wanting long term services rendered to their clientele, concerns about the confidentiality of the collected data, and agency files being out-of-date.

The researcher then contacted four black community workers who served black female single parent families and who were

not affiliated with any social service agency. Each of these people were directly related to specific low-income housing sites and had frequent contact with the black female single parent residents. The workers were interested in the survey objectives and felt that their clientele would be cooperative as prospective survey participants.

The definition of black female single parent family used in this survey was a family headed by a black female whose marital status was that of never having been married, divorced, widowed, or legally or informally separated from her spouse. She could be married with the spouse absent due to marital discord, desertion, institutionalization in a mental or penal institution, or the spouse could be absent due to long-term employment away from the home. All prospective participants had to meet this broad definition of "black female single parent family" in order to be included in the survey sample. Using this definition, the community workers provided the researcher with the names and/or addresses of the prospective participants. Two-hundred black female single parent families were identified using this procedure.

### Survey Questions

Questionnaire items were constructed to obtain a description of (a) the demographic characteristics of the selected black female single parent families, (b) an account of their experiences and their feelings as single parent families, and (c) the identification of their concerns and needs as single parent families.

Eight general survey questions were identified as a basis for the study. In order to obtain data to answer these survey questions a 22-item questionnaire was developed. The survey questions were as follows:

1. What were some demographic characteristics of the selected black female single parents? This was in reference to the age of the female single parents, the length of time as a single parent, origins of their single parenthood, the number and ages of their children, their educational attainment, their current occupations, amount and source of income, and the type and adequacy of their housing.

2. What were some changes in the lifestyle of the women when they became single parents?

3. What were the most frequent concerns and problems of the single parents?

4. What were some feelings that the women had as single parents?

5. How did single parents perceive community attitudes about differing origins of single parenthood in terms of general acceptance or rejection?

6. How did single parents perceive that teachers and other children usually feel about children from single parent families in terms of general acceptance or rejection?

7. What are some thoughts that children express about their being members of single parent families as reported by their parents?

8. What types of services from social agencies have single parent families used? How did the parents rate the

services rendered? Would single parents like an agency to provide services primarily to black single parents?

The complete questionnaire appears in the Appendix.

### Design of the Questionnaire

A self-administered coded questionnaire was designed as an instrument for the survey. The questionnaire was an adaptation of the questionnaire used in the Canadian survey (Thompson, 1971). Modification was necessary because the Canadian study utilized the interview schedule as a means of instrument design and data collection. The present study utilized a self-administered coded questionnaire.

Items on the questionnaire were primarily close-ended. Respondents merely had to check the desired responses. These kinds of items were used because the majority of the sample would be low-income people and it was assumed their educational level and/or daily and/or work experiences might not be compatible with writing expressive responses to open-ended items. Although this was taken into consideration, open-ended items were included after some items to give the respondent latitude in responding to items.

The questionnaire was pilot-tested on 15 persons, men and women, with various educational levels, some without children, married and single parents. These persons were asked to complete the questionnaire, state the amount of time it took them to complete the questionnaire, and to criticize the questionnaire in terms of its clarity and the appropriateness of the items in view of the stated objectives.



The general changes that were suggested were to (a) shorten the twelve-page questionnaire without losing the most necessary items, (b) allow more flexibility for the various origins of single parenthood, and (c) include more items that relate to the positive experiences of single parent families. After incorporating these suggested changes into the questionnaire, two raters agreed that the questionnaire was ready for distribution.

### Data Collection

An introductory letter was mailed to the prospective participants on May 19, 1975. This letter introduced the researcher, explained how the prospective participants were identified through the community worker, the purpose of the survey, confidentiality of respondent information, when the participants would receive the questionnaire, and the collection procedures.

After a two-day waiting period the coded questionnaire was mailed. It was accompanied by a letter briefly reiterating the purpose of the survey, confidentiality of information and collection procedures of the questionnaires.

Fifteen percent of the questionnaires had coded addressed stamped envelopes for a mailed return. The remainder of the questionnaires were collected by the community worker in two settings and by employed children who lived in other settings. The children's assistance was organized by the researcher. This was done because the respondents lived in a public housing site where it was easier to go from house

to house to request the completed questionnaire. It was an additional motivational factor for the respondents which had the purpose of insuring a higher return rate. It was also less expensive than return mailing procedures. All questionnaires were returned and collected by June 30, 1975.

### Treatment of Data

The different stages in the treatment of collected data were divided into (a) processing the data, (b) classifying the data, and (c) tabulating the data. A rater was employed to treat the raw data from the returned questionnaires. This was done to prevent potential researcher bias.

The rater has a master's degree in educational psychology. She is currently working at the Department of Labor for the State of Michigan. Her duties consist of developing and evaluating manpower training programs, budgeting and the allocation of funds to these programs and analyzing labor force data.

Processing the data. The first step in processing the data was the editing of the questionnaires. The completed questionnaires required careful editing. They were checked for completeness, accuracy, and uniformity. Examples of editing included making check marks more visible and legibly re-writing responses to open-ended questions for coding.

Coding of data. Coding the responses to the items was the next stage after editing. The purpose of coding was to

classify responses to an item in meaningful categories so as to summarize the basic characteristics of the data.

The coding frame should be prepared for all questions by considering all possible answers a respondent might provide. The closed-ended items were initially pre-coded on the questionnaire by the researcher. This pre-coding was based on the expected responses received from the prospective participants. This procedure is called "post-coding" and was used by the rater only after all questionnaires were returned.

The items on the questionnaires were coded in the following manner:

1. Since the majority of the items were pre-coded those items did not need coding.
2. Those items on the questionnaire which were closed-ended but gave the respondent an option to express "other" would be post-coded. If the rater determined that the response could be coded in one of the pre-coded categories, the response could not be coded as one of the pre-coded responses, the rater would post-code the response.
3. If a response was not provided to an item, "no answer" was used as a post-code.

Classification of data. The classifying of data is the division of the collected information into classes or arrangements according to similarities of their nature which exist among units and groups of units. The purpose of classifying data was to reduce heterogeneity and construct

homogeneous groups. This simplified the raw data to make it more easily understood.

Collected data was classified on the basis of distinguishing features which may be either quantitative or qualitative. Quantitative data reports only the presence or absence of a feature or phenomenon. Qualitative data, on the other hand, is a measure of degree. "Number of females over 45" would be a quantitative measure, while "the assessment of the relative effectiveness of workers" would be a qualitative measure.

To classify qualitative attributes it was essential that the line of distinction between each attribute was mutually exclusive. All qualitative data was grouped according to similarity of responses. Similar responses were tallied.

To classify quantitative attributes class intervals were established. The number of items belonging to each class interval were tallied as frequencies. Some responses were formed as a series. Series were formed on responses to items such as pressing problems as a single parent, parental attitudes about acceptance of black female single parent families and the use and rating of community services.

Tabulation of data. Tabulation of data is the process of presenting classified data in an orderly manner to bring out its essential features. Numerically, it is the counting of cases falling into each of the several classes or

categories. Each classified response on the questionnaire was tabulated.

After tabulation of the responses, measures of dispersion and description such as distributions and percentages were made. These descriptions would represent the distribution of the responses to the items on the questionnaire. Conclusions concerning black female single parent families would be drawn from these data distributions as well as from the normative data on black female single parent families.

### Summary

The purpose of this survey was to obtain information about the needs and perceptions of 200 black female single parent families in the Lansing, Michigan, community. This information was collected through the use of a self-administered questionnaire. The survey design, procedures, and treatment of the collected data were described in this chapter. The tabulated results of the questionnaire are reported in chapter three.

## CHAPTER III

### SURVEY RESULTS

#### Overview

The results of the survey were reported in this chapter. The data from the self-administered questionnaires were edited, coded, classified, and tabulated by the rater. The tabulated results of this survey were based upon responses from 88 black female single parents who returned the self-administered questionnaires. This represented a 44% sample return rate.

#### Explanation of Presentation

It is recognized that the survey questions are somewhat general in nature. Care has been exercised in attempting to minimize subjective interpretation. As previously stated, these data are not based upon a random sample of black female single parents. Caution must therefore be exercised in generalizing these results to other groups.

#### Presentation of Results

The tabulated responses will be presented under sections of the eight survey questions. These questions were stated in chapter 2. Reported percentages were rounded to whole numbers throughout the chapter.

Survey question one. What were some demographic characteristics of the black female single parent families?

1. What were the ages of the female single parents?

The ages of the black female single parents ranged from 20 to 55 years old. The number and percentage of black female single parents is presented in Table 11. The largest number of black female single parents who responded were between the ages of 25 to 29 years old.

2. How long had the women been single parents?

The length of time as a single parent ranged from six months to 23 years (see Table 12). The largest number of black female single parents who responded were single parents for three to five years. This length of time might account for the other types of responses given to other items.

3. What were the origins of single parenthood among the women?

The origins of single parenthood among the women ranged from divorced, legally separated, never married, informally separated and widowed (see Table 13). The largest group of female single parents were never married. It was surprising to note the number of women who willingly reported this status, since this status is quite stigmatizing by society. The "divorced" category was almost equal to the "never married" category. It was also interesting to note that no women checked the "other" category where husbands may have been incarcerated in mental institutions or prison. This does not mean that other reasons for separation did not

Table 11

Number and Percentage of  
Single Parents Within Age Groups

Age Groups	N	%
20 - 24	14	16
25 - 29	28	32
30 - 34	20	23
35 - 39	15	17
40 - 44	4	5
45 - 49	2	2
50 - 54	1	1
55 - 60	1	1
Those who did not answer	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
	88*	100

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\* N will equal the 88 responding black female single parents unless otherwise indicated.



Table 12

Length of Time as a  
Single Parent

Years	N	%
0-2	14	16
3-5	20	23
6-8	18	21
9-11	13	15
12-14	2	2
15-17	3	3
18-20	3	3
21-23	1	1
Those who did not answer	<u>14</u>	<u>16</u>
	88	100

Table 13  
Marital Status Categories of  
Single Parents

Marital Status	N	%
Divorced	31	35
Legally separated	7	8
Never married	33	37
Informally separated	11	13
Widowed	4	5
Other	0	0
Those who did not answer	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
	88	100

exist; the women could have been unwilling to report such information.

4. How many families had specific numbers of children? What was the mean number of children per family? What were the ages of the children? Where did the children live?

The total number of children in the single parent families reported was 261 children, with 124 females and 137 males. The number and percentage of families with one to ten children is presented in Table 14. The largest number of families were those single parents with two children. However, families with three children were almost equal to those families with two children. The mean number of children per family was 2.96. Twelve single parents did not answer this question.

Table 14

Number and Percentage of Single Parents  
With One to Ten Children

Number of Children Per Family	N	%
1	8	9
2	20	2
3	16	18
4	13	15
5	9	10
6	5	6
7	4	5
8	0	0
9	0	0
10	1	1
Those who did not answer	<u>12</u>	<u>14</u>
	88	100

The ages of the children in the single parent families ranged from three months to 19 years old. The ages and percentage of the children are presented in Table 15. The largest group of children were in the four- to six-year old category.

The majority or 81% of the children lived at home with their mothers. Two families had some children living with their father and six families had some of their children with relatives, some in a foster home, and some living on their own. That most children were living with their mothers was not surprising. Many of the mothers had never married. Another large group of the women were divorced and courts usually place children in the custody of their mothers in divorce settlements.

5. What were the educational grades completed among the single parents?

The educational grades completed ranged from fifth grade to four or more years of college. The number and percentage of single parents who completed grades of school are presented in Table 16. Black female single parents who completed the graded categories. This will certainly reflect the type of occupations and income of the black female single parents.

6. How many single parents were employed? What were the current occupations among the single parents who were employed?

A total of 55 parents, or 63%, reported that they were unemployed. Since a majority of the women received incomes

Table 15

Ages and Percentages of Children  
in Single Parent Families

Age Groups in Years	N	%
0-3	38	15
4-6	68	26
7-9	52	20
10-12	47	18
13-15	31	12
16-18	19	7
19-21	<u>6</u>	<u>2</u>
	261*	100%

\* These 261 children are from 76 families, twelve parents (14%) did not answer this question.

Table 16

## Number and Percentage of Single Parents

## Who Completed Grades of School

Grade Completed	N	%
<b>Elementary</b>		
5th	1	1
6th	2	2
7th	4	5
8th	2	2
<b>High School</b>		
9th	11	13
10th	9	10
11th	19	22
12th	26	30
<b>College</b>		
1	2	2
2	2	2
3	2	2
4 or more	5	6
Those who did not answer	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
	88	100

from Public Assistance, it would seem likely that the majority might be unemployed.

Thirty-one single parents were employed in 15 different job titles, five were full-time students, and two were part-time students (see Table 17). Two parents did not answer the question. Most of the reported jobs were traditionally female occupations. From the job titles one may infer a broad range of incomes among the single parents.

7. What were the arrangements for child care if the single parents were employed and/or students?

For those single parents who were employed or part-time or full-time students, the various child care arrangements used are presented in Table 18. Those single parents using day care services represented the largest type of child care services. Six parents (19%) who were employed and/or students did not answer this question. A majority of the single parents were unemployed and could therefore care for their children themselves. This can account for the small number of reported child care arrangements.

8. What was the range of income among the female single parents?

Black female single parents had a range of income from \$2,000 to \$13,999. This range is presented in Table 19. The greatest number of female single parents fell in the lowest income bracket, \$2,000 to \$4,999. This was not surprising given that a majority of the parents received public assistance. Due to the manner in which the item was worded, there

Table 17

## Occupations Among Single Parents

Occupations	N	%
College level administrator and part-time student	3	10
Nurse	1	3
Nutritionist	1	3
Social worker	1	3
Court case worker and part-time student	1	3
Community worker	2	7
Hospital worker	1	3
Secretary	1	3
Secretary and part-time student	4	13
Key punch operator	2	7
Telephone operator	1	3
Sewing machine operator	1	3
Bar-maid	1	3
Cook	1	3
Baby sitter	1	3
Private household worker	2	7
Full-time student	5	16
Part-time student	<u>2</u>	<u>7</u>
	31*	100

\* These 31 occupations were reported by those student or employed single parents.



Table 18

Arrangements for Child Care  
Among Employed or Student Single Parents

Child Care Arrangements	N	%
Day care	9	31
Older children	3	10
Relatives	6	21
Friends	2	7
Baby sitter	6	21
Child can stay alone	<u>3</u>	<u>10</u>
	29*	100

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\* These 29 child care arrangements were reported by 31 parents who were students and/or employed. More than one response per parent was permissible. In addition, six parents (19%) did not answer the question.

Table 19

Range and Percentage of Income  
Among Single Parents

Income Ranges	N	%
\$ 2,000 - \$ 4,999	38	43
\$ 5,000 - \$ 7,999	28	32
\$ 8,000 - \$ 10,999	8	9
\$11,000 - \$ 13,999	4	5
\$14,000 - \$ 16,999	0	0
Those who did not answer	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>
	88	100

was no way to conclude how many families were below the low-income level.

9. What were the sources of income among the single parents?

The sources of income among the single parents are presented in Table 20. The largest number of single parents receive their source of income from public assistance. This assistance can mean Aid to Dependent Children, Unemployment Compensation, and other social security benefits. However, the item did not request specified types of public assistance.

10. What was the present type of housing among single parents? Was the housing adequate?

The type of housing that single parents inhabit is

Table 20

Sources of Income  
Among Single Parents

Income Sources	N	%
Employment	12	14
Public assistance	58	67
Child support payments	3	3
Student aid	1	1
Public assistance and employment	6	7
Public assistance and child support	1	1
Employment and child support	3	3
Public assistance and student aid	2	2
Those who did not answer	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
	88	100

presented in Table 21. The largest number of single parents reside in public housing. This large percentage is perhaps misleading in that the majority of the women who participated in this study resided within three public housing sites in Lansing.

An assessment of housing adequacy as reported by the parents is presented in Table 22. Fifty-four parents (61%) reported that their housing was adequate. This was somewhat surprising since a majority of the single parents lived in public housing where residents often complain that poor housing conditions exist. Housing that was too small or neighborhoods not good enough for rearing children were the two most frequent inadequacies among the 31 parents who responded. Three parents (3%) did not answer this question.

Survey question two. Were there changes in the lifestyle of the women when they became single parents?

1. Did the women need help in adjusting to single parenthood? If yes, who provided such help?

Sixty-six women (75%) reported that they did not need help in adjusting to single parenthood. Those who needed and received help are reported in Table 23. Eighteen single parents needed and received help from the listed sources of help. Five single parents needed help but did not receive help. It was surprising that so many women did not need help in adjusting when they first became single parents. However, given that the word "adjusting" could have been interpreted in many ways, such as interpersonally or financially, many

Table 21

Type of Housing  
Among Single Parents

Type of Housing	N	%
Public housing	60	68
Renting apartments	17	19
Buying a home	6	7
Those who did not answer	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>
	88	100

Table 22

Inadequacy of the Housing  
Among Single Parents

Type of Inadequacy	N	%
Too small	16	36
Repairs needed	9	21
Heating inadequate	4	9
Neighborhood not good for bringing up children	<u>15</u>	<u>34</u>
	44*	100

\* These 44 inadequacies in housing were reported by 31 parents. More than one response per parent was permissible. In addition, three parents (3%) did not answer the question.

Table 23

Need and Source of Help in  
Adjusting to Single Parenthood

Source of Help	N	%
Relatives	7	32
Friends	7	32
Agencies (counselors & therapists)	3	13
Those who needed help but did not receive help	<u>5</u>	<u>23</u>
	22*	100

\* These 22 responses were reported by 18 parents who needed help in adjusting to single parenthood. Five parents needed help but did not receive help. More than one response per parent was permissible. In addition, four parents (5%) did not answer this question.

women could have responded "no" because of the ambiguity of "adjusting."

2. Did the quality of housing change when the women became single parents?

Often when women become single parents through separation, divorce, or widowhood, their standard of living changes because of a decrease in finances. These finances cover various realms of living maintenance. One such area is housing. This was the rationale for having this item.

Forty (46%) of the single parents reported that there was no change in their quality of housing since becoming a single parent. Thirty-one (35%) reported that there was improvement in their quality of housing, and ten (11%) stated that their quality of housing had become worse since becoming a single parent. Seven (8%) of the single parents did not answer this question. Thus, a greater number of women reported no change in the quality of housing since becoming a single parent.

3. Did becoming a single parent cause a change in the women's job status when they became single parents?

Oftentimes when women become single parents, they may have to start working to support their families, stop working to stay home with younger children, or change a job in order to obtain more money. These are some reasons for changes in job status due to becoming a single parent.

Fifty-four (61%) of the women reported that becoming a single parent did not cause a change in job status. Five

women (6%) reported that they had to start working, eight (9%) stated that they had to stop working, and one (1%) said that she had to change jobs. Twenty (22%) of the single parents did not answer this question. Thus, a greater number of single parents stated that becoming a single parent did not cause a change in their job status.

4. Did the interpersonal relationship of the women change with close friends when they first became single parents?

Sometimes when women become single parents their interpersonal relationships may change with close friends. Often they have more single friends because of the commonality in lifestyles. Conversely, couple friendships may decrease because of differences in lifestyles. The changes of relationships with friends when becoming a single parent is presented in Table 24. Fifty-four (61%) reported no change in their relationships. Thirty parents (34%) reported some change. Interaction with close single friends increased and interaction with couples decreased in nearly equal amounts. This was not surprising due to the commonality in lifestyles as mentioned above. Four parents (5%) did not answer this question.

Survey question three. What were some of the most frequent concerns or problems that the single parent encountered?

1. Did the single parents have pressing concerns or problems? What were the nature of these concerns and problems?



Table 24

Changes in Relationships with Close Friends  
When Becoming a Single Parent

Changes in Relationship	N	%
Doing things with close female friends increased	14	23
Doing things with close male friends increased	11	19
Doing things with close couples or married friends increased	4	7
Doing things with close female friends decreased	12	20
Doing things with close male friends decreased	5	8
Doing things with close couples or married friends decreased	<u>14</u>	<u>23</u>
	60*	100

\* These 60 changes were reported by 30 parents. More than one response per parent was permissible. In addition, four parents (5%) did not answer this question.

Forty-four (50%) of the single parents reported that they did not have pressing concerns or problems. Eleven (12%) did not answer this question. Thirty-three (38%) single parents reported that they did have pressing concerns or problems. These are presented in Table 25. The most frequent problem was financial. Many women explicitly expressed difficulty in obtaining the minimum essentials (food and clothing) for living within their present income. Fifteen (30%) concerns/problems were related to the interpersonal area of family living. The specific concerns were discipline problems with children, concerns as to whether a single parent can be effective in rearing children, concern about the absence of a male from the home, their children's acceptance of being members of a single parent family, and wanting more emotional support for the children from their father.

Some parents expressed the need for transportation and dissatisfaction with their neighborhood in terms of it being inadequate for properly rearing children. Others also mentioned being confronted with family health problems. Three parents specifically expressed concern with society's discrimination towards female single parents. One was in reference to negative attitudes held about single parent families (not specific); being limited financially because of being a woman with children, and not being able to find an adequate apartment as a woman with children.

These concerns were typical in terms of what the literature suggests. It was not surprising that financial concerns

Table 25

**Frequent Concerns and Problems  
That Single Parents Encounter**

Concerns or Problems	N	%
Financial	24	48
Interpersonal	15	30
Transportation	4	8
Discrimination due to being single parent	3	6
Inadequate neighborhood	2	4
Family health problems	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>
	50*	100

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\* These 50 concerns or problems were reported by 33 single parents. More than one response per parent was permissible. In addition, 11 parents (13%) did not answer the question.

would be the most frequently listed concern, given the income of the single parents. It was unfortunate that data could not be obtained on how the single parents were dealing with the concerns, particularly the two most frequently listed.

Survey question four . What were some present feelings that the women had in terms of being single parents?

1. What were some existing feelings that the single parents might have about themselves?

Based on the literature review, several common feelings were listed that women may have as female single parents. These feelings and how single parents responded are presented in Table 26. Each of the "feeling" statements are next presented and some comments made about the findings in each instance.

a. I feel good about myself as a parent. A greater number of single parents reported feeling very good about themselves as single parents. This may be partially due to the social desirability of favorable self-report that is prevalent throughout our culture. Also, with a greater number of women having been single parents for three to eight years, feeling good as a parent could have evolved if it were not present at the time of separation.

b. I feel ashamed as a single parent with my child or children. A greater number of women reported feeling not ashamed at all as single parents. Here again, it might be

Table 26  
Feelings that the Number and Percentage  
of Single Parents Selected

Type of Feelings	N	%
<b>a. I Feel Good About Myself As a Parent</b>		
Not good at all	3	3
Somewhat good	11	13
Good	32	36
Very good	41	47
Those who did not respond	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
	88	100
<b>b. I Feel Ashamed as a Single Parent With My Child or Children</b>		
Not ashamed at all	70	79
Somewhat ashamed	8	9
Ashamed	4	5
Very ashamed	1	1
Those who did not respond	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>
	88	100
<b>c. I Feel Pressured to be Both Mother and Father in the Home</b>		
Not pressured at all	28	32
Somewhat pressured	43	48
Pressured	9	10
Very pressured	4	5
Those who did not respond	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
	88	100
<b>d. I Feel Angry With the Partner Who Was in my Relationship or Marriage</b>		
Not angry at all	53	60
Somewhat angry	17	19
Angry	7	8
Very angry	7	8
Those who did not respond	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
	88	100

Table 26 (cont'd)

Type of Feelings	N	%
e. I Feel That Being Married is Important to me		
Not important at all	21	24
Somewhat important	25	28
Important	21	24
Very important	17	19
Those who did not respond	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
	88	100
f. I Feel Relieved that I am Separated from the Partner in the Relationship or Marriage		
Not relieved at all	12	14
Somewhat relieved	13	15
Relieved	18	20
Very relieved	35	40
Those who did not respond	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>
	88	100
g. I Feel Rejected by the Partner Who Was in the Relationship or Marriage		
Not rejected at all	50	57
Somewhat rejected	15	17
Rejected	10	11
Very rejected	7	8
Those who did not respond	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>
	88	100
h. I Feel Sure That I Can Make It		
Not sure at all	4	5
Somewhat sure	13	15
Sure	24	27
Very sure	41	46
Those who did not respond	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>
	88	100

Table 26 (cont'd)

Type of Feelings	N	%
i. I Feel It Is Easier To Make Plans and Decisions Now That I Am a Single Parent		
Not easy at all	6	7
Somewhat easy	7	8
Easy	12	14
Very easy	12	14
Those who did not respond	<u>51</u>	<u>57</u>
	88	100
j. I Feel Lonely As a Single Parent		
Not lonely at all	22	25
Somewhat lonely	42	48
Lonely	9	10
Very lonely	7	8
Those who did not respond	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>
	88	100

expected that most people would not respond negatively to themselves.

c. I feel pressured to be both mother and father in the home. The distribution of responses were more evenly distributed between feeling no pressure and feeling somewhat pressured. A relatively small number reported feeling this pressure to any great extent. The literature suggests that feeling pressured to perform some duties of both parents is common among female single parents.

d. I feel angry with the partner who was in my relationship or marriage. More women responded they were not angry with their partner. However, 35% reported some degree of angry feelings. Whether or not their anger was justified was not explored. It was interesting to note that a majority of the women held no angry feelings which could be attributed to length of time since their marriage or relationship dissolved. The majority had been single parents three to eight years. Intense angry feelings, if present, could have been reduced or become extinct over time.

e. I feel that being married is important to me. The responses to this item were almost evenly distributed. Those who attached some importance to marriage represented 71% of the respondents. This was almost three times the number who felt marriage was not at all important to them. There can only be speculation as to whether these results indicate varying degrees of ambivalence concerning being a single or married parent.



f. I feel relieved that I am separated from the partner in the relationship or marriage. A greater number of women reported feeling very relieved from their previous relationship. Those reporting varying degrees of relief represented 75% of the total. This was almost six times as large as the percentage (12%) who reported not feeling relieved at all. People have tended to think that relief is an uncommon feeling for female single parents, especially those in the divorced categories.

g. I feel rejected by the partner who was in the relationship or marriage. The majority of women reported not feeling rejected at all. However, again, people have a tendency to report positively about themselves. Thirty-six percent of the women felt some degree of rejection. Feeling rejected is another quite common feeling among single parents.

h. I feel sure that I can make it. In the three categories of being sure or confident, 88% reported feeling sure of themselves. Again, people have a tendency to report positively about themselves. However, since a greater number of the women have been single parents for three to eight years, confidence, if not present at the time of separation, could have developed over time.

i. I feel it is easier to make plans and decisions now that I am a single parent. A number of responses were placed in the "no answer" category due to a slight error in the wording of the item on some questionnaires. The error raises questions about the validity of responses and results should

be viewed with caution. However, 36% did indicate that they experienced some degree of ease in making plans and decisions. This represented over five times as many respondents as those indicating no ease at all in planning or deciding. Again, due to the length of time as single parents, women could quite likely have gained confidence, if it was not present at the time of separation.

j. I feel lonely as a single parent. The largest percentage of women reported feeling somewhat lonely. However, when all three categories of loneliness are combined, 66% felt some degree of loneliness. The literature suggests that loneliness is a very common feeling among female single parents.

2. What were positive aspects about family living among the single parent families?

The categories of positive aspects of single parent families are presented in Table 27. The number of parents who responded did not equal 88 because some respondents expressed more than one positive aspect.

The rater determined that statements from the single parents expressing closeness of family members, cooperation, good communication, love, understanding, respect, well disciplined children, and family pride would be classified in the "positive family interaction" category. Some respondents explicitly stated that there was better family functioning as a result of the spouses' or partners' absence. Some women also explicitly stated that they and their children were well adjusted to the single parent lifestyle despite

Table 27

Positive Aspects About  
Single Parent Families

Positive Aspect	N	%
Positive family interaction	58	84
Excellent emotional and social adjustment to a single parent lifestyle	5	7
Influence of religion which creates strong family unity	4	6
Peace and togetherness due to spouse's absence	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
	69*	100

\* These 69 positive aspects were reported by 66 parents. More than one response per parent was permissible. In addition, 22 parents (25%) did not answer the question.

the absence of their spouse and their limited family income. Those expressions which mentioned "God", "Jesus", or the "Lord" as the entity who created a strong family bond were classified in the "influence of religion which creates family unity" category.

These expressions of positive aspects about single parent families run contrary to the existing literature which usually states negative aspects of black female single parent families.

Survey question five. How did the single parents perceive the larger community would feel about single parents who had various reasons for their single parenthood in terms of the extent of acceptance or rejection?

1. How did the single parents perceive that the larger community would feel about single parents who had various reasons for their single parenthood in terms of accepted by all in the larger community, accepted by most, accepted by half, rejected by most, and rejected by all of the larger community?

Forty-five respondents (51%) of the sample, followed the directions correctly in responding to this item on how they perceived the larger community would feel about the differing origins of single parenthood. It was apparent that some respondents misunderstood this item. A rank ordering of these perceptions in terms of degrees of acceptance and rejection is presented in Table 28.

Table 28

Degree of Acceptance Indicated for  
Possible Origins for Single Parenthood

Origins of Single Parenthood*	Accepted By All		Accepted By Most		Accepted By Half		Rejected By Most		Rejected By All		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N**	%
Death of husband	35	78	8	18	2	4	0	0	0	45	45	100
Husband is away due to employment	16	36	19	42	9	20	1	2	0	0	45	100
Mother is divorced	6	13	24	53	12	27	3	7	0	0	45	100
Mother is separated due to marital problems	5	11	23	51	15	34	2	4	0	0	45	100
Husband in mental hospital	6	3	7	16	23	51	6	13	3	7	45	100
Husband in prison	3	7	6	13	13	29	15	33	8	18	45	100
Mother never married	2	4	12	27	19	43	11	24	1	2	45	100

\* The origins of single parenthood were ranked in order of acceptance by all as reported by the single parents.

\*\* N represents the 45 parents who answered the question. This number was much smaller than 88 due to respondents probably not understanding how to answer the question as indicated.

A woman who was widowed was ranked the highest in terms of acceptance by all in the larger community. A woman who was never married was ranked the lowest in terms of acceptance by all in the large community. This distribution was not surprising. Schlesinger (1970) ranked four origins of single parenthood in order of acceptance by society similar to the respondents in the sample as follows: (a) widowed, (b) divorced, (c) separated, and (d) never married.

If both categories of rejection are combined, a woman who was never married received 26% of the responses; a woman's spouse who was in prison received 51% of the responses. Although a woman who was never married was ranked lowest in acceptance by all, she was more accepted by most and more accepted by half than was the woman whose husband was in prison. The status of being in prison is quite stigmatizing. However, it is interesting to note that the spouse's imprisonment has such a negative affect upon the wife's acceptance by community members.

Survey question six. How did single parents perceive that other children and teachers would usually feel about children from single parent families in terms of acceptance or rejection?

1. How did single parents perceive that other children would feel about children from single parent families in terms of (a) accepted by all children, (b) accepted by most children, (c) accepted by half the children, (d) rejected by most children, (3) rejected by all children?

Respondents could select one of the above categories. Twenty-eight (32%) of the single parents reported that children in single parent families were usually accepted by all children. Forty-four (50%) reported that children in single parent families were usually accepted by half the children. No responses were in the rejection categories. Seven (8%) of the single parents did not answer the question. Thus, the largest group of single parents indicated that children in single parent families were usually accepted by most other children.

2. How did single parents perceive that teachers would feel about children from single parent families in terms of (a) acceptance by all teachers, (b) accepted by most teachers, (c) accepted by half the teachers, (d) rejected by most teachers, and (e) rejected by all teachers?

Respondents could select one of the above categories. Twenty-nine (33%) of the single parents reported that children in single parent families were usually accepted by all teachers. Forty-one (47%) reported that children in single parent families were usually accepted by most teachers, and five (6%) stated that children were usually accepted by half the teachers. One (1%) parent each reported that children are usually rejected by most or all teachers, respectively. Eleven (13%) of the single parents did not answer the question. Thus, the largest group of single parents indicated that children in single parent families are usually accepted by most teachers, a most encouraging finding.

Thus, contrary to this researcher's expectations, a high percentage of children from single parent families are accepted by other children and by their teachers. No parent believed her child was rejected by other children and only two parents (2%) reported that teachers rejected their children.

Survey question seven. What were some thoughts that children express about being members of single parent families as reported by their parent?

1. What are the various expressions that children have stated about being members of single parent families?

Children in single parent families often express their views about being children in single parent families. These expressions, as reported by their parents, are presented in Table 29. Ten parents, or 11%, did not answer this item. The responses will exceed 77 because the parents could select more than one expression.

Three parents reported that their child never made any of the expressions because (a) they were too young, (b) they were older and understood the family situation, and (c) since the father had frequent contact with children, they never made any expressions.

This distribution shows the variety of expressions that parents reported children have said about being members of single parent families. Expressions reported by parents ranged from disappointment to positive statements about being children in single parent families.



Table 29

Children's Expressions Concerning Being Members  
of Single Parent Families as Reported by Parents

	N	%	
Asking why there is only one parent in the home	34	12	
Asking if you will get married	38	14	
Feeling more grown up because they can help you	40	15	
Feeling disappointed when outside activities suggest that both parents come	16	6	06
Feeling it's easier because they have only one parent to check with	14	5	
Feeling disappointed when you do not have time for activities because you are the only parent	36	13	
Saying how things are going better with one parent in the home	11	4	
Wanting to have two parents in the home like some other children have	33	12	
Feeling relieved because there are not so many fights	22	8	
Asking if and when the other parent will return	29	10	
Why is the parent married to someone else	2	1	

Table 29 (cont'd)

	N	%
Asks if other parent will forget to buy gifts on special occasions	1	0
Stating children will dislike step-parent	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
	277*	100

\* These 277 reported expressions were reported by 77 parents. More than one response per parent was permissible. In addition 11 parents (13%) did not answer the question.

Survey question eight. What types of assistance do single parents receive from friends and relatives? What types of community services have these single parents used? Would single parents like an agency that would be geared to the needs of primarily black single parents?

1. Did the women receive assistance from friends or relatives since becoming single parents?

Thirty-six (41%) of the single parents reported they did not receive help from friends or relatives since becoming a single parent. This can be interpreted as the parent's not needing help from friends or relatives or needing assistance but not receiving it for a number of reasons. Forty-four (50%) of the parents reported that they had received some type of assistance from friends or relatives. This form of assistance ranged from financial assistance, help with doing heavy work, listening to the parent's problems, taking the children places, and keeping the children while they were gone for business or recreation purposes. These responses are indicative that friends and/or relatives do provide single parents with varying types of assistance. Finally eight parents (9%) failed to answer this question.

2. What types of community agencies/services have these single parents used? How did the parents rate the services in terms of satisfaction with the services?

Sixty parents (68%) used and rated the community agencies/services listed in Table 30. Only those parents who used and rated the agencies were presented on the table. If they used the services but marked no rating, the responses

Table 30

## Community Services Which Were Used and Rated

## By Single Parents

Services or Agencies	N	%	Ratings Given by Parents		
			Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Not Satisfied
Juvenile Court	9	5	3	4	2
Family Court	6	3	3	1	2
Public Health Clinic	41	23	11	28	3
Parent-Teacher Groups	14	8	1	13	
Single Parent Groups	1	1	1		
Church Activities	21	12	11	9	1
YWCA/YMCA	11	6	8	3	
Girl/Boy Scouts	17	10	4	12	1
Big Brother	9	5	5	2	2
Public Recreation	16	9	7	9	
Counselor/Therapists	17	10	5	7	5
Day Care/Nursery	16	9	6	9	1
Totals	178*	100	65	97	17

\* These 178 responses represent services used by 60 parents. More than one response per parent was permissible. In addition, 28 parents (32%) did not answer the question and/or did not complete the question.

were tallied in the "no answer" category. Twenty-eight (32%) fell into this category and/or did not answer this question.

When looking at the computed totals for agency/service satisfaction (at the bottom right in Table 30) 17 (10%) were not satisfied, 97 (54%) were satisfied, and 65 (36%) were very satisfied. This refers to several different agencies/services but does indicate that 9 out of 10, for example, were not satisfied with the community services/agencies that they have used. Generally, the single parents were satisfied with the used services.

3. Would single parents like an agency/organization that primarily served the needs of black female single parents or an agency that served an integrated clientele of single parents?

An agency that served a racially integrated single parent clientele was desired by 69 parents (78%). Three of these parents stated that all single parents had similar needs irrespective of race. Eight (9%) of the single parents stated that there should be an agency that primarily served the needs of black single parents. Eleven (13%) single parents did not answer this item.

Although most black single parents preferred an agency/organization that served a racially integrated clientele it is probable that if an agency/organization were located in a predominantly black residential area, it would serve primarily black single parents. However, this does not mean the agency would discriminate against other racial groups of single parents. Another speculation is that if the agency/

organization served an integrated clientele, with a substantial number of whites, it may have better resources than an agency/organization serving a predominantly black clientele. This could be a result of discrimination in the allocation of funds by various sources. Thus, black female single parents may well believe that an integrated agency/organization is more likely to provide parents with better services.

### Summary

The results of the survey were presented in this chapter. Under the eight general survey questions, specific questions were answered by 88 black female single parents. The responses from the self-administered questionnaires provided data for a description of the perceptions, needs, and concerns of selected black female single parents in the Lansing, Michigan, community. Using the survey results and related aspects of the literature review, implications for counselors and counselor training programs will be discussed in chapter 4.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Summary

The results of the survey described some perceptions, concerns, and needs of selected black female single parent families in the Lansing, Michigan, community. To obtain this description a self-administered questionnaire was distributed to 200 black female single parents in the Lansing, Michigan, community. Eighty-eight, or 44%, of the black female single parents returned the questionnaires.

This chapter will present a discussion of the survey results. Based on these results and aspects of the literature review, implications for practicing counselors and counselor training programs will be discussed.

The economic status of the black female single parent families was generally disadvantaged. Forty-three percent of the women had incomes between \$2,000 and \$4,999. Sixty-six percent of the women received some type of public assistance. Yet, families averaged at least three children per family. The educational status reflected the types of employment and low incomes of the black female single parents.

A majority of the women in the sample had completed only high school. The majority of the occupations were semi-professional and service kinds of jobs, and traditionally female occupations with low pay.

The disadvantaged economic conditions of the black female single parents were stated as their most pressing concerns and needs as single parents. Some women reported that they had difficulty in obtaining enough income to secure the basic essential of living --- decent housing, food, and clothing. Some women expressed interpersonal concerns that related specifically to the lifestyle of female single parents, irrespective of race. Some of these concerns were whether or not one parent could be effective to rear children, concern about not having male influence in the home for the children, and how the children felt about being members of a single parent family.

Black female single parents expressed a range of existing feelings about their status. Almost half of the parents felt somewhat pressured in having to perform tasks that mothers and fathers perform in two-parent families. More than half of the women felt some degree of loneliness which is a common feeling among single parents. A majority of the women reported that they felt good about themselves as parents, as well as being confident of their ability to function as household heads. The fact that people in this study have a tendency to respond favorably about themselves may be partially explained by the finding that a majority of the women had been single parents from three to eight years and



therefore may have altered their self-perceptions during the time since separation from their partner. Good feelings about self, if not present at the time of separation, could have developed over time.

Contrary to a wealth of literature which theoretically and empirically supports a host of negative characteristics about black female single parent families, single parent families reported many positive aspects about their family life. One possible reason for this contradiction between the negative findings that pervade the literature and the positive outcomes of this study may be suggested by the hypothesis of Herzog and Sudia (1969). They state that the paucity of positive findings may be less attributable to the tendency of researchers to frame their inquiries in such a way that positive aspects of black female single parent families are not tapped. Thus, a stream of negative reports result.

The rank ordering of the various origins of single parenthood in terms of acceptance by the respondents was almost parallel to the rank order of society's acceptance of the various origins of single parenthood as suggested by a researcher on the lifestyle of female single parents (Schlesinger, 1970).

Black female single parents expressed a wide range of feelings about themselves as well as about their children's expressions in terms of being members of single parent families. Behavioral scientists and laymen have tended to

stereotype the affective state of members of single parent families as if the members all felt the same about aspects of living in a single parent family. Results of this study suggest a range from negative to positive feelings.

The black female single parents' desire for an agency/organization that served the needs of an integrated clientele of single parents was briefly discussed in chapter 3. However, the three respondents who stated that "all single parents have the same needs, irrespective of race" needs qualifying. Although most female single parents have commonality of needs, those suffering with impoverished living conditions may have different priorities than those single parents who have better living conditions. Thus, socio-economic status is a variable.

An officer of a single parent organization in Lansing, Michigan, stated that her organization had no black female members. When black single parents did join they did not remain members after attending two or three meetings. This could reflect a lack of knowledge about the organization's existence, difficulty of black parents finding a means of transportation to reach the organization, a lack of time to attend meetings or activities, or a lack of interest in activities, or services rendered. It has been suggested that ethnic groups and lower socio-economic people may not join some single parent organizations because of their white middle class orientation (Schlesinger, 1970).

An officer of a black female single parent's organization in New York City reported (at a workshop on "The Black

Single Parent" [men and women] at the National Association of Black Social Workers' Convention held in Detroit, Michigan in April 1975) that their organization was viable and meeting the needs of its members. Their priorities did appear to be different from those economically well-off single parents, black or white. However, in reading the New York organization's recent newsletter, services were being provided to meet the common needs of female single parents, interpersonally or economically, irrespective of race.

In conclusion, this survey study served to report the concerns and needs of black female single parent families, the variability in terms of their feelings and views, their perceptions of how female single parent family members are viewed by the larger community, and the positive aspects of black female single parent families.

#### The Place of a Survey Study in a Research Stream

The usefulness of descriptive surveys in research is often debated. Often, surveys are seen as indiscriminate fact-collecting ventures. However, a survey study should be seen as a useful means for the inquiry into a particular substantive area (Babbie, 1973; Moser and Kalton, 1972). Surveys can result in the research problem being brought into focus. With such pilot information as a guide, a series of hypothesis can be formulated and tested by further empirical studies.

Existing research on the effects of a single parent family on children has been criticized for not controlling

certain variables. Such variables as socio-economic status, precipitating conditions surrounding the origin of single parenthood, and the time of the father's absence from the child's life can have very different effects on the lives of children. Yet, many studies overlook such variables.

It has been suggested that more exploratory and descriptive research is needed in studies on single parent families in general. This research might prove to be more productive and beneficial to single parent families. Some examples are studies that describe the families strengths, ways in which it copes with undeniable difficulties, and ways in which the community supports these families (Herzog and Sudia, 1968). These can lead to further experimental studies on single parent families. The present survey has implications for further research on black female single parent families.

### Limitations

Before the implications of this survey study are presented, it is appropriate to state the limitations of the study:

1. The subjects used in the survey were not randomly selected. Thus, the survey results cannot be generalized beyond the present sample. In conjunction with sample selection, the single parents who returned the questionnaires represent a biased sample. The women who returned the questionnaires may have been different in some ways from those women who did not return the questionnaires. Those who

returned the questionnaires could have been more motivated and willing to disclose personal information about their single parent lifestyle. It could be speculated that they felt less inhibited or unembarrassed about their single parent status than those who did not return the questionnaires.

Some single parents could have disagreed with the objectives of the survey study. Those who did not return the questionnaires could have had no particular concerns or needs as it relates to being a single parent. They could have objected to being designated as a different family constellation.

2. The quality of the data obtained from the black female single parents was limited through the use of the self-administered questionnaire. More exploratory and in-depth data could have been collected through the interview method. Interviewers could have clarified any misunderstood questions. The possibility exists that a number of prospective participants could not read the questionnaire or fully understand its intent or some items. Interviewers could have alleviated this handicap. However, time and financial costs prohibited the interview method as a data collection procedure.

3. The self-administered questionnaire could have been reduced in its number of pages by omitting some items in the demographic area. Some of those who collected the questionnaires reported that prospective subjects said that completing the questionnaire would be too time-consuming. Reducing

the number of pages might have insured a higher sample return rate.

4. Lastly, the questionnaires were distributed and collected prior to and after a national holiday. Prospective participants were preparing for the holiday and/or leaving town. If another time could have been selected, a higher return rate might have resulted. However, dates for the conducting of the study had been set without considering this factor.

#### Implications for the Counseling Profession

Counselors need to be knowledgeable about the family life of black people in general. The literature suggests that a great many stereotypes about black families has been perpetuated by social and behavioral scientists. Black female single parent families have been the victims of many of these stereotypes.

If counselors want to broaden their perceptual field, understand the black counselee, and interpersonalize across racial lines, then counselors should gain knowledge of the historical, sociological, economic, and psychological dynamics of black people. To empathize with and understand the black counselee, the counselor needs a fuller understanding of the black counselee's world. In order to accomplish this, one must be able to relate the black counselee's behaviors to the environmental factors that develop and strengthen these behaviors, both positive and negative (Harper, 1973).

This holds true for white and black counselors who both are, or may be, in settings which serve a black clientele. It cannot be assumed that all black counselors are aware of the cultural and psychological dynamics of black people. Although most black counselors may be closer to understanding the black American experience, some black counselors may be handicapped in the counseling relationship because of racism in educational programs, as well as a lack of exposure to black people's culture.

The social and economic conditions that confront black female single parent families is certainly worth knowing in reference to serving the needs of this clientele. Because black female single parents are frequently identified as victims of racism, sexism, and often times poverty, counselors need to increase their knowledge of this group (Jackson, 1973; Ladner, 1974; McAdoo, 1974; Pettigrew, 1974; Staples, 1973; 1974b). Only through increased knowledge of their plight can counselors be helpful to these families.

### Practicing Counselors

Given that 34% of the black families are headed by females and that this phenomenon is expected to increase, practicing counselors can make use of the following suggestions:

1. Vocational and educational programs should be made relevant to black females at all educational levels. Black females should be exposed to a wider choice of occupations other than traditionally female occupations, such as

elementary school teachers, social workers, and clerical workers. It may be appropriate to inform black females at the high school level of the incidence, growth and issues confronting black female single parent families. There is the likelihood that a significant number of black females may become household heads because of issues discussed in the literature review. This would suggest a need for higher education and better selected occupations for black females to better insure higher and more adequate incomes.

2. It is very likely that a significant number of black females who terminate their elementary or high school education due to being pregnant will be household heads (Jackson, 1973). Sufficient policies and programs permitting such females to continue their education is needed. Counselors can have an active role in advocating such policies in educational systems. Higher educational attainment can mean having access to better employment opportunities and more adequate incomes for families headed by black females.

3. Practicing counselors should become aware of any stereotypic beliefs that they may possess about black families. This is particularly true for black female single parent families who are victimized by many stereotypes. Empirical research, counselor, and client self reports suggest that women and blacks have been limited by inappropriate counseling because of stereotypic views held by counselors (Oliver, 1975; Schlossberg and Pietrofesa, 1973). Since this population is black, as well as female, counselors could profit by reading



in the area of the cultural and psychological dynamics of female behavior. Current literature does exist in this area as it relates to black females.

4. Counselors could also profit from reading current literature on black families. Many traditional views held about black families have been philosophically and empirically challenged since the late 1960's.

#### Counselor Training Programs

Knowledge about the lifestyles of black people could also be gained in counselor training programs. Counselor education programs cannot assume that graduates will work in settings that serve a predominantly white middle class clientele. Counselor training programs should begin to integrate the black experience into counselor education curriculums. The black experience here is in reference to the lifestyles of black female single parent families.

As it relates to serving the needs of female single parents in general, it has been recommended that counselor educators evaluate their curriculums to determine if the need exists to modify coursework to include the behavioral patterns of women, particularly female single parents (Welsh, 1973). This should include course content relevant to the needs of black female single parents.

One handicap in some counselor training programs is that some counselor educators know little about the cultural and psychological dynamics of black people (Bell, 1971; Gunnings, 1971; Harper, 1973). This would include the lifestyle of

black female single parent families.

One solution to this is that counselor educators should learn about the cultural and psychological dynamics of black people. This can be done through personal readings and professional meetings, interpersonal and interprofessional collaboration and more cross-racial encounters (Harper, 1973). Another solution would be the hiring of black faculty in counselor education departments to further facilitate black perspectives in curriculum content (Bell, 1971; Gunnings, 1971; Harper, 1973). This would include the hiring of black women faculty. Programs could also require all students to have some black-oriented courses in their programs. Counselor education programs must also recruit more black students (male and female) in their programs who may be able to contribute different and valuable perspectives in the classroom (Gunnings, 1971; Harper, 1974).

### The Role of the Change Agent

Female single parent families, irrespective of race, are victims of sexism and a society that discriminates against families that are headed by women. Black female single parents are the victims of this discrimination as well as racism, which often has poverty as its by-product. These conditions exist because of socially sanctioned discrimination against black female single parent families.

Bandura (1969) states:

Restrictions of behavioral freedom arise also from *socially sanctioned discrimination*. In such cases, a person's freedom is curtailed because of

his skin color, his religion, his ethnic background, his social class, or other secondary characteristics. When a person's warranted self-determination is externally restricted by prejudicial social practices, the required changes must be made at the social systems level (p. 87).

One criticism of counselor training programs is that they simply prepare counselors for dyadic therapeutic counseling. Counselors also need to be knowledgeable of the effects of the environment on clients behavior and how to change systems or environments so that they can become more humane and responsive to individual needs (Bandura, 1969; Dustin, 1974; Gunnings, 1971; Harper, 1973; Randolph and Zimmerman, 1974; Schlossberg, 1972; Thoresen and Hosford, 1972).

Thus, there is a need for counselors not only to assist black female single parent families on an individual/interpersonal level, if needed, but also to support state and federal legislation that would help black female single parent families, work at changing institutions/agencies which may not adequately serve the needs of black female single parent families; and become involved in social action movements which will better the environment in which the black female single parent families live.

Some recommendations for environmental change that would help black female single parent families are:

1. A guaranteed income of \$6,000 for a family of four. Some economists contend that a \$6,000 minimum income is more than sufficient for a family of four. However, other economists believe that an annual income of \$7,000 is needed to

maintain a family of four at the non-poor, but low, standard of living in urban areas (Staples, 1973).

2. Government legislation and enforcement is needed to remove arbitrary sex role barriers, employment opportunities, and job mobility for black women (Aldridge, 1974; Jackson, 1973; Staples, 1973).

3. Community controlled child care centers are needed to better facilitate black women into the labor force. The fees for quality services should be based on a sliding scale for women with certain incomes (Staples, 1973).

4. To provide support to black female single parent families, black people will have to continue performing necessary family tasks through an extended family kinship system. This assistance to black female single parent families can come from other single parent families, as well as two-parent families.

Staples (1973) has recommended that the government recognize the desire of blacks to control their destiny and communities. Any government policy that will affect black families, should be formulated and implemented with the input from black people.

In sum, black female single parent families should be insured of the same life opportunities as other families. The presence or absence of a male is not the determinant of a family's success. It is the availability of both material and emotional resources (Ladner, 1974; Staples, 1975).

### Implications for Future Research

Future research on black female single parents could be undertaken in the following areas:

1. Studies are needed in which existing organizations/agencies are evaluated on how adequately they are meeting the needs of black female single parent families. The literature suggests that single parent families are discriminated against by social services. This kind of survey was undertaken in the Canadian study (Thompson, 1971).

2. Studies are needed to assess whether personnel in agencies or institutions have stereotypic views about black female single parent families. Counselors/therapists and teachers come into contact with members of single parent families. It is possible that their decisions and behavior in working with members of these families can be influenced by possible stereotypic views. These views can be to the detriment of black female single parent family members.

3. Studies are needed on black female single parents in the interpersonal area of family living. This includes attitudes and practices in child-rearing. If problems/concerns are identified, ways to reduce or eliminate problems can be developed. Experimental studies can then be developed to test the effectiveness of certain strategies in solving certain types of interpersonal concerns/problems.

4. Studies are needed on black female single parent families which include the father's/father substitute's influence on the mother-child(ren) constellation. There is the

tendency to assume that black female single parent families are devoid of any influence from the father/father substitute.

### In Retrospect

A dissertation should be a learning experience for the researcher. Because it has been in the present instance, several modifications would be implemented if the study were repeated. The modifications include:

1. Use of the interview method as a data collection tool - this could have yielded more exploratory and in-depth information. Preferably, subjects would be paid for more than one interview. This could insure more subjects in the sample. The sample would also be captive which could allow longer interviews.

2. Use of random selection procedures - this would allow for generalizability of results.

3. Use of the children as subjects in the sample - it would have been quite interesting to gather information about the lifestyle of black female single parents from the children's perspective.

4. More time to conduct survey - incorporating the above alterations would require a greater span of time to complete the study, perhaps a year.

The researcher views this survey study as a beginning step in the stream of research that is needed concerning black female single parent families. She hopes that this survey study and studies to follow will serve to provide for a better understanding of this family group. The conducting

of this study has been personally rewarding and intellectually enriching.

## **APPENDIX**



## **APPENDIX A**

### **SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE**

## APPENDIX A

### SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE

Code \_\_\_\_\_

Here is the questionnaire that was referred to in the previous letter.

Please read each question carefully. Follow the directions for each question.

It is important and easier if you complete the questionnaire without stopping to do other things.

\*After you complete the questionnaire, mail it in the self-addressed, stamped envelope.

\*\*After you complete the questionnaire, one of the neighborhood children will come by your house to collect the questionnaire tomorrow after 4:00 p.m.

Thank you,

Velma La Point

\* For those who were selected to use the return mail procedure.

\*\* For those who were selected to use the door-to-door collection procedure.

[Note: In order to have a replication of the actual questionnaire, the typing style of the original questionnaire was used.]

ode \_\_\_\_\_

IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

- . Age of Parent: (Put Number) \_\_\_\_\_ Years Old
- . How long have you been a single parent? (Put Number)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Year(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Months (If less than one year)
- . Is your type of single parent status due to being (Check [✓] Only One Space):
- a. ☐ Divorced
  - b. ☐ Legally Separated
  - c. ☐ Never Married
  - d. ☐ Informally Separated
  - e. ☐ Widowed
  - f. ☐ Other (Prison, Mental Hospital, Long Term Employment Away From Home)  
 Please State Which One:
- 

Education (Check [✓] Only the Highest Grade Completed):

- a. ☐ 6th
  - b. ☐ 7th
  - c. ☐ 8th
  - d. ☐ 9th
  - e. ☐ 10th
  - f. ☐ 11th
  - g. ☐ 12th
  - h. ☐ Additional Education or Training - State Type of Education or Training:
- 

. Source of income (Check [✓] All That Apply):

- a. ☐ Employment
- b. ☐ Public Assistance

Code \_\_\_\_\_

- c. ☐ Receive Child Support
- d. ☐ Student Aid (Scholarship/Loan/Campus Job)
- e. ☐ Other (Please State): \_\_\_\_\_

Range of income (Check ☒ Only One Space):

- a. ☐ \$2,000 - \$4,999
- b. ☐ \$5,000 - \$7,999
- c. ☐ \$8,000 - \$10,999
- d. ☐ \$11,000 - \$13,999
- e. ☐ \$14,000 - \$16,999
- f. ☐ \$17,000 - \$19,999
- g. ☐ \$20,000 - Above

Employment: Are You Currently Employed:

- a. ☐ Yes      b. ☐ No

If Yes: Check ☒ All That Apply:

- c. ☐ Homemaker at Home
- d. ☐ Employed Part-Time at Outside Job
- e. ☐ Employed Full-Time at Outside Job
- f. ☐ Part-Time Student
- g. ☐ Full-Time Student

A. If employed outside home:

- a. What is your present job/occupation

How Long?  
Years Months

[ ] [ ]

Code \_\_\_\_\_

7B. If employed or a student, what are the arrangements for child care?  
Check ☒ All That Apply:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| b. <input type="checkbox"/> Day Care            | e. <input type="checkbox"/> Friends              |
| c. <input type="checkbox"/> Your Older Children | f. <input type="checkbox"/> Baby Sitter          |
| d. <input type="checkbox"/> Relatives           | g. <input type="checkbox"/> Child Can Stay Alone |

8. Did becoming a single parent cause a change in your job status?  
(Check ☒ One):

- a. ☐ Yes      b. ☐ No

If yes, why? Check ☒ All That Apply:

- c. ☐ I Had to Start Working  
c. ☐ I Had to Stop Working  
d. ☐ I Had to Change a Job

9. Type of present housing. (Check ☒ Only One):

- a. ☐ Renting  
b. ☐ Own/Buying  
c. ☐ Living With Relatives Who Pay The Rent  
d. ☐ Public Housing  
e. ☐ Other (State): \_\_\_\_\_

9A. Is your type of housing adequate?

- a. ☐ No      b. ☐ Yes

If no, what are reasons. (Check ☒ All That Apply):

- c. ☐ Too Small  
d. ☐ Repairs Needed  
e. ☐ Heating Inadequate  
f. ☐ Neighborhood Is Not Good For Bringing Up Children  
g. ☐ Other - State: \_\_\_\_\_
-

Code \_\_\_\_\_

9B. How has the quality of your housing changed since becoming a single parent? Check ☒ Only One:

- a. ☐ Remained The Same
- b. ☐ Improved
- c. ☐ Become Worse

### INFORMATION ABOUT PARENT

10. Do you have pressing concerns or problems as a single parent?

- a. ☐ Yes
- b. ☐ No

If yes, state your most pressing concern or problem as a single parent.  
If there is more than one concern or problem, please state:

- c. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

11. Have you received help from relatives or friends since being a single parent?

- a. ☐ Yes
- b. ☐ No

If yes, what types of help. Check ☒ All That Apply:

- c. ☐ Financial Help
- d. ☐ Help With Doing Heavy Work
- e. ☐ Listening To Your Problems
- f. ☐ Taking Children Places
- g. ☐ Keeping Children While You Go Out On Business/Recreation
- h. ☐ Other. Please State: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Code \_\_\_\_\_

12. Did your relationship with close friends change when you first became a single parent?

- a. ☐ Yes                      b. ☐ No

12A. If Yes, How? (Check ☒ All That Apply):

- c. ☐ Doing Things With Close Female Friends Increased  
 d. ☐ Doing Things With Close Male Friends Increased  
 e. ☐ Doing Things With Close Couples or Married Friends Increased  
 f. ☐ Doing Things With Close Female Friends Decreased  
 g. ☐ Doing Things With Close Male Friends Decreased  
 h. ☐ Doing Things With Close Couples or Married Friends Decreased

13. Your feelings as a parent.

- a. Read each statement carefully.  
 b. For each statement, check ☒ the one possible feeling that you have.

Example:

- a. I feel able to deal with my family situation.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very	Able	Somewhat	Not Able
Able		Able	At All

BEGIN HERE:

- a. I feel good about myself as a parent.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not Good	Somewhat	Good	Very
At All	Good		Good

- b. I feel ashamed as a single parent with my child or children.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very	Ashamed	Somewhat	Not Ashamed
Ashamed		Ashamed	At All

- c. I feel pressured to be both mother and father in the home.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not Pressured	Somewhat	Pressured	Very
At All	Pressured		Pressured

Code \_\_\_\_\_

d. I feel angry with the partner that was in my relationship or marriage.

☐ Not Angry  
At All

☐ Somewhat  
Angry

☐ Angry

☐ Very  
Angry

e. I feel that being married is important to me.

☐ Very  
Important

☐ Important

☐ Somewhat  
Important

☐ Not Important  
At all

f. I feel relieved that I am separated from the partner in the relationship or marriage.

☐ Very  
Relieved

☐ Relieved

☐ Somewhat  
Relieved

☐ Not Relieved  
At All

g. I feel rejected by the partner who was in the relationship or marriage.

☐ Somewhat  
Rejected

☐ Rejected

☐ Very  
Rejected

☐ Not Rejected  
At All

h. I feel sure that I can make it.

☐ Very  
Sure

☐ Sure

☐ Somewhat  
Sure

☐ Not Sure  
At All

i. I feel it is easier to make plans and decisions now that I am a single parent.

☐ Very  
Easy

☐ Easy

☐ Somewhat  
Easy

☐ Not Easy  
At All

j. I feel lonely as a single parent.

☐ Very  
Lonely

☐ Lonely

☐ Somewhat  
Lonely

☐ Not Lonely  
At All

14. Did you need help in adjusting to single parenthood?

a. ☐ Yes      b. ☐ No

If No, Skip Item 14A and 14B.

14A. If yes, did you get the help you needed in adjusting to single parenthood?

a. ☐ Yes      b. ☐ No



Code \_\_\_\_\_

14B. If yes, who provided this help? Check ☒ All That Apply:c. ☐ Relativesd. ☐ Agencies-Counselors or Therapistse. ☐ Friendsf. ☐ Others. Please State: \_\_\_\_\_

15. Please complete the following sentence:

The Best Thing About Our Family (You and Your Child or Children) Is:

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16. How does the larger community (agencies, schools) feel about single parent families.

A. Listed below are several single parent situations.

B. Put a check ☒ under the attitude that you think that the larger community has for each single parent situation.SINGLE PARENT SITUATION

	Accepted By <u>All</u> In Community	Accepted By <u>Most</u> In Community	Accepted by about <u>Half</u>	Rejected By <u>Most</u> In Community	Rejected By <u>All</u> In Community
a. Mother is Divorced	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Death of Husband	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Husband in Prison	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Mother Never Married	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Husband in Mental Hospital	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Code \_\_\_\_\_

	Accepted By <u>All</u> In Community	Accepted By <u>Most</u> In Community	Accepted By <u>About</u> <u>Half</u>	Rejected By <u>Most</u> In Community	Rejected By <u>All</u> In Community
f. Mother is Separated Due to Marital Problems	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
g. Husband Away Due to Employment	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

INFORMATION ABOUT CHILDREN

17. Follow the directions below:

- A. Put the ages of your child or children
- B. Circle the sex of your child or children
- C. Check [✓] where the child or children are living

Put Number	A Age		B Sex Circle B or G For Boy or Girl	C Where Children Are Living					With Friends	With Relatives
				At Home	With Father	Foster Home	On Their Own			
1.	[ ]		B G	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]		[ ]	[ ]
2.	[ ]		B G	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]		[ ]	[ ]
3.	[ ]		B G	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]		[ ]	[ ]
4.	[ ]		B G	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]		[ ]	[ ]
5.	[ ]		B G	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]		[ ]	[ ]
6.	[ ]		B G	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]		[ ]	[ ]
7.	[ ]		B G	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]		[ ]	[ ]
8.	[ ]		B G	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]		[ ]	[ ]

18. How do other children usually feel about children of a single parent family?

[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Accepted By <u>All</u> Children	Accepted By <u>Most</u> Children	Accepted By <u>About</u> <u>Half</u>	Rejected By <u>Most</u> Children	Rejected By <u>All</u> Children

Code \_\_\_\_\_

19. How do teachers usually feel about children in a single parent family?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Rejected</u> By	<u>Rejected</u> By	<u>Accepted</u> By	<u>Accepted</u> By	<u>Accepted</u> By
<u>All</u>	<u>Most</u>	<u>About Half</u>	<u>Most</u>	<u>All</u>
Teachers	Teachers		Teachers	Teachers

20. Your use of community agencies and services since becoming a single parent.

- A. Listed below are several agencies and services that you and your family may have used as a single parent family.
- B. Check each agency or service that you may have used.
- C. For each agency or service used, put a check [✓] in the space that shows how satisfied you were with the agencies or services.

	Have Used	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Not Satisfied
1. Juvenile Court	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
2. Family Court	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
3. Public Health Clinic	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
4. Parent-Teacher Groups	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
5. Single Parent Groups	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
6. Church Activities	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
7. YWCA/YMCA	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
8. Girl or Boy Scouts	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
9. Big Brothers	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
10. Public Recreation	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
11. Counselors or Therapists	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
12. Day Care or Nursery	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

21. Do you think there should be a single parent agency for the following groups of families: Check [✓] All That Apply:

- a. [ ] An Agency for Chicano or Mexican American Families Primarily
- b. [ ] An Agency for Black Families Primarily
- c. [ ] An Agency for White Families Primarily

Code \_\_\_\_\_

d. ☐ An Integrated Agency Which Serves All Families

22. Sometimes children will talk to a parent about their feelings. Some children might say things about being a single parent family. Listed below are things that some children might say:

A. Read each statement carefully

B. Put a check ☒ by any statement that your child or children may have said at any time

BEGIN HERE:

a. ☐ Asking Why There Is Only One Parent in the Homeb. ☐ Asking if you will get Marriedc. ☐ Feeling More Grown Up Because They Can Help Youd. ☐ Feeling Disappointed When Outside Activities Suggest That Both Parents Comee. ☐ Feeling It's Easier Because They Have Only One Parent To Check Withf. ☐ Feeling Disappointed When You Do Not Have Time for Activities Because You Are the Only Parentg. ☐ Saying How Things Are Going Better With One Parent in the Homeh. ☐ Wanting to Have Two Parents in the Home Like Some Other Children Havei. ☐ Feeling Relieved Because There Are Not So Many Fightsj. ☐ Asking If and When the Other Parent Will Return

If None of The Above Apply, State What Feelings Were Expressed:

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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