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THE PORTRAYAL OF SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

IN YOUNG ADULT FICTION

A Research Paper

Presented to the

Faculty of the Library Science Department

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Change is the norm for today's American family. With new
options for adoption, increasing numbers of children born out of
wedlock, and a dramatically higher evidence of divorce, the
nuclear family unit is quickly changing. The stereotypical
American family, composed of a mother, a father, and two children
residing together, is fast being replaced by single-parent
households, usually headed by women.

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1985), nearly one
out of five children lives with a single parent. Single parents
made up 26 percent of all family groups with children under 18
years of age in 1985. Almost half of all children now being born
in the United States are projected to live at least part of their
lives in single-parent homes (Levine, 1982).

Single-parent homes are created by divorce, death of a
spouse, adoption, and birth of children to unmarried mothers. The
later phenomenon is growing at an alarming rate. Recent data
indicate that unmarried mothers with children now outnumber
widowed mothers (Brown, 1980). The U.S. Bureau of the Census
(1985) reports that 25 percent of the single-parent family groups
was due to unmarried mothers while only 7 percent was due to the
death of a father.

By far the greatest number of single-parent homes are a
consequence of divorce. Twelve million children under the age of
18 are currrently living with parents who are divorced; all in

all, about one million children each year suffer through the dissolution of their families (Francke, et al., 1980).

Children usually find this a time of confusion and disruption. Besides personal and emotional considerations, the child's life is further changed by economics, by changes in family functions, and changes in the interaction patterns with those individuals and institutions that form the social network for the family.

The adults in the family also find this a stressful time as they begin the process of becoming single and forming new living patterns, new values, and new relationships. The major role adjustments faced by single-parent fathers relate to home management and child care, while mothers' adjustments relate more to re-entering the employment market and balancing the budget. Both have less time for parenting (Appel, 1985).

The sheer size of the phenomenon of single-parent families makes it one that schools cannot afford to ignore. Children in these situations sooner or later bring adjustment problems to school. Although teachers and media specialists are unable to directly do anything about the numbers of single-parent homes, they can become more aware of this growing segment of family life. Schools that persist in holding up the two-parent nuclear family as a model do a disservice to children. Failing to teach about the family and its forms is an opportunity lost to give children knowledge and insight about the social institution that most closely affects them (Joseph, 1986).

The availability of fiction about single-parent families makes the use of this literature an excellent opportunity for educators who want to help a child through this stressful time. Youth should have available to them single-parent books which they "can identify and find entertainment and from which they can learn and gain comfort" (Levine, 1982, p. 17). It is, therefore, significant to find out if books about single-parent families are realistically portraying them.

Purpose of Study

Since one purpose of young adult fiction is to portray problems which persons face in their lives, the researcher wishes to learn how current examples of young adult literature portray the problems and adjustments faced by the children and the parents living in single-parent families.

Problem Statement and Hypotheses

Are the problems and situations of children and parents living in single-parent families presented realistically in the literature written for young adult readers?

The researcher believes that the novels will accurately portray the stresses and adjustments that children and their parents must face.

General hypotheses:

H1: The single-parent family will be headed by a female in 80 percent or more of the novels.

H2:   Divorce/separation will be the cause of the single-family unit in 60 percent or more of the novels.

H3:   Novels dealing with the single-adoptive family will not be found.

Hypotheses relating to the single parent:

H4:   Single parents will experience emotional stress in their adjustment to the new family structure in 80 percent or more of the novels.

H5:   Single mothers will experience financial stress in 50 percent or more of the novels.

H6:   Single parents will experience child care problems which includes meeting the demands of jobs in 50 percent or more of the novels.

H7:   Single parents will experience problems in the management of the household in 50 percent or more of the novels.

H8:   Single parents will experience negative societal attitudes toward single parenting from friends, family, and others in 50 percent or more of the novels.

Hypotheses relating to the children:

H9:   Children of single-parent families will experience emotional stress in their adjustment to the new family structure in 80 percent or more of the novels.

H10:   Children of single-parents will be forced to act more mature and take on new responsibilities in 50 percent or more of the novels.

H11:   Children of divorce will experience problems in their relationship with the other parent in 50 percent or more of the novels.

H12:   Children will experience jealousy and express disapproval when the parent begins to date in percent or more of the novels.

H13:   Children will have difficulty in school in 50 percent or more of novels.

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, "children of single parents" referred to any person under the age of 18 who lived with one parent due to the following situations:

1.   Divorce or separation--parents had legally divorced or were in the separating or divorcing period before legal divorce. It also referred to a parent who had deserted the family.

2.   Death--either the mother or the father had died, leaving the family with one remaining parent.

3.   Unwed parenthood--one of the birthparents who was not married raised the child.

4.   Adoption--a single person adopted the child and became the legal guardian.

"Single parent" referred to that parent who had custody of his/her children by virtue of legal decisions, private arrangements, death, desertion, and unwed parenthood, without the assistance of a partner of the opposite sex living in the same household.

"Young adults" included children between the ages of 11 and 17.

"Major character" applied to any of the novel's fictional characters on which the novel's plot centered. A novel may have more than one major character.

Assumptions and Limitations

There were some basic assumptions in this study. It was assumed that the portrayal of single-parent families was significant and that adolescents were interested in reading about other adolescents in situations similar to their own. It was also assumed that there would be books of sufficient quality and quantity that would make this a useful study.

The researcher limited the novels to those which were fiction books written for the interest levels of young adults between the ages of 11 and 17 and reading levels between the fifth and twelfth grade. The books were limited to those which had contemporary settings in the United States and which reflected to some extent the needs, problems, and/or concerns of the adolescent living in a single-parent family. The books were limited to those in which the portrayal of the child and single parent was one of the major

themes of the work. The child in the book was an adolescent throughout the major portion of the book.

Single-parent families formed by the prolonged illness of a parent or extended absences on business or military service were not included in this study. This study excluded parents without custody, even though children may visit or live part-time with them and constitute another "bona fide" single-parent family. Novels which dealt with members of extended families, friends, or siblings having temporary or permanent custody were not included. In addition, novels which dealt with the problems of step-families were excluded.

The selection of novels was limited to those printed no earlier than 1985 and no later than 1989. To be included, a book must have been reviewed by December 31, 1989. The researcher limited the study to novels which had been reviewed in at least one of the following selection tools: Booklist, Junior High Library Catalog, or favorably reviewed in School Library Journal. Novels were also limited by their availability to the researcher. The search was limited to books obtained from the North Fayette Junior High Library, Area Education Agency Library in Elkader, University of Northern Iowa Youth Collection Library, and through the interlibrary loan service at the University of Northern Iowa.

CHAPTER 2

The Literature Review

One of the most significant changes in family composition

over the past fifteen years has been the substantial growth of

single-parent families. This review of the related literature is

divided into four major areas: the current status of

single-parent families in American society, characteristics of

single parents, regarding psychological, environmental, and

interpersonal stresses, stress factors in the lives of the

children as they adjust to changes in the family structure, and

analysis of the young adult novel and the reading interests of

adolescents, with particular attention to the use of fiction

materials portraying single-parent families.

Current Status of Single-Parent Families

The demographic shift toward single-parent families in recent

years has been well-documented. Thierman (1983) notes three

significant trends in the structure of the family:

1) more and more single-parent families are emerging,
    especially headed by women
2) in both two-parent and single-parent families,
    more women are working
3) large numbers of divorces and remarriages are
    responsible for restructuring of families. (p.
    2-3)

Statistics vary with sources and years. According to the

U.S. Bureau of the Census (1985) reports, single parents accounted

for 26 percent of all family groups with children under 18 years

old in 1985, a proportion twice as large as in 1970. There was a substantial increase (49 percent) in the number of single-parent groups between 1970 and 1975, but the rate of increase fell to 22 percent between 1975 and 1980, and has remained near that level over the five-year period since 1980 (p. 9). Evanson and Uhr (1986) report the proportion of single-parent families doubled between 1967 and 1984, rising from 10 percent to 21 percent of all families (p. 7). S. Levine (1982) predicts that by 1990, nearly one out of two children now being born in the U.S. will live at least part of their lives in single-parent homes.

The U.S. Bureau of the Census (1985) reports an estimated 62.7 million family households in 1985, of which about 50.4 million were married-couple families, 10.1 million were families with female householders (no husband present), and 2.2 million were families with male householders (no wife present). There is evidence of a decline in the rate of increase in the number of married-couple families since 1980. The years between 1975-1980 showed a 5 percent increase, whereas the years between 1980-1985 increased only 3 percent. The rate of increase for single-mothers has been greater. The years between 1970-1975 showed a 30 percent increase in the growth of female-headed households. The rate declined to 22 percent between 1975-1980. Statistics of 1980-1985 indicate that 16 percent of all households are headed by females (p. 1). Evanson and Uhr (1986) indicate mothers now predominate among black households; in 1984 only 44 percent of black families with children had two parents present (p. 7).

Weiss (1979) attributes the increase in single-parent
situations to three causes:

1) the population growth, especially in the increasing
    numbers of adult women
2) the large number of divorces and remarriages
3) more unmarried women having children and not giving
    them up for adoption.
    (p. ix-x)

The chance of becoming a single parent is very different for
a woman than for a man. Among all children who now live with
either mothers alone or fathers alone, 88 percent live with their
mothers (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985). Weiss (1979) explains
three phenomena for this:

1) among children one of whose parents died, about
    two-thirds lost their fathers
2) among those whose parents separated or divorced,
    about 90 percent live with their mothers
3) and of those children whose parents were not
    married, almost all live with their mothers. (p.
    x-xi)

Divorced and separated mothers constitute about 56 percent of
the persons maintaining one-parent groups. This rate of increase
was smaller than the 1975-1980 increase, possibly reflecting the
stabilization and slight drop in divorce rates (U.S. Bureau of the
Census, 1985, p. 10). Lipsitz (1983) reports the number of
families headed by divorced women rose 181 percent from 956,000 to
2.7 million from 1970 to 1980. For a father, divorce generally
means the loss of custody of his children. Estimates of custody
awards to mothers vary from 85 to 90 percent. However, as a
result of the feminist movement, the increasing divorce rate, and
some changes in the courts' attitudes, increasing numbers of
children are being reared primarily by their fathers. Recent

figures indicate that close to 900,000 children under the age of 18 live with fathers alone (Berry, 1981, p. 34).

Another area of single-parent groups that is rapidly increasing is the unwed mother. Joseph (1986) reports that this group has increased dramatically from 7 percent of single-parent groups in 1970 to 25 percent in 1985. The U.S. Bureau of the Census (1985) speculates that some of this increase is due to the improved survey measurements but more significantly to the increased birth rates among unmarried women (p. 9). Although the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1985) reports 2 percent of the 12 percent of male-headed households was attributed to never married fathers (p. 11), the mention of the unwed father was virtually non-existent in the literature.

Ross (1975) reports the proportion of parents whose marriages were ended by the death of the husband or wife remained about the same. The widowed made up 13 percent of single-parent groups in 1985; this percentage has stayed about the same since 1970 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985, p. 11).

Adoption by single individuals represent a relatively new phenomenon in American society. Single-adoptive parents appear much more common among females. Feigelman and Silverman (1981), citing Branham's study (1970) of 36 single-parent placements in Los Angeles, report 35 of these single-parent placements were to women. They also cite Shiremen and Johnson's study (1976) which found that most of the 31 single-parent adoptions were by women. Feigelman and Silverman's (1981) own study done between 1974-1976

concurs with these results. Of the 58 single adoptive-parents in the sample, 43 were female while only 15 were males. The Los Angeles County Department of Adoptions reports that from 1965-1975 it placed 19,134 children, 265 of them with single parents, 14 of whom were men (James Levine, 1976). At best, single-adoptive fathers still represent a minuscle fraction of all who adopt. The U.S. Bureau of the Census (1985) breakdown of single-parent groups did not include adoption (p. 11).

Families headed by males are increasing steadily each year. Single fathers represented about 12 percent of the single-parent groups in 1985. Since 1980, families maintained by men alone increased at a greater rate than either married-couple families or female-headed families. Even so, lone men maintained fewer than four out of every 100 families in 1985 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985).

The change in the growth of single-parent families has changed the employment picture. In both two-parent and single-parent families, more women are working. Lipsitz (1983) notes the average labor force participation rate in 1980 for single-parent mothers with children 6 to 17 years was 78 percent; the comparable figure for married mothers was 66 percent.

Lipsitz, citing Glick (1981), reported that the greatest increase in single-parent families has occurred for children who are 10 years old and older. "These are the children whose mother is most likely to be working full time. Thus, these are the

children least likely to be supervised at home after school hours" (p. 10).

The relatively small rate of increase for married-couple families compared with other types, particularly due to the increase in divorce and in births to unwed mothers, has significantly altered the composition of families since 1970.

Characteristics of the single parent

Men and women face many problems in their roles as single parents. One problem that is very evident in the literature is emotional stress as a result of divorce, death, and unwed parenting.

After the divorce or a death of a partner, the single parent must first come to terms with loss and establish an identity consistent with the new marital status. According to Weiss (1979), single parents must cope with intense emotional upsets often characterized by confusion, loneliness, depression, and wide mood swings. Studies of divorced women and men yield similar results. Grossman (1986), in his interviews with 40 divorced women, found that 35 of them felt depressed after the divorce process had begun. Eleven mothers felt their world had been turned upside down; 12 others stated that life seemed meaningless without a spouse. A study by Schlesinger (1978) of 30 separated women found the following symptoms of emotional disturbances: nightmares, crying spells, disturbances in eating and sleeping, and disturbed relationships between the children and the remaining

parent. Divorced fathers are frequently anxious, depressed, and overwhelmed because their "fantasies about single life evaporated" (Dreyfus, 1979, p. 79).

The single parent has a lonely struggle. "Child rearing is hard enough for two people, but to be both father and mother to children in addition to coping with the dilemma of recent separation or death of a spouse is often unnerving" (Gordon, 1976, p. 153).

In marital separation, anger and guilt are intense; in bereavement, they are much less deeply felt (Weiss, 1979). According to Schiff (1985), guilt arises from having less time and energy for parenting; the custodial parent may feel "overloaded" with no special time for his or her own needs. Grossman (1986) found similar results. Divorced mothers had guilt feelings about the length of time they needed to be away from their children for the purpose of full-time work and for a social life. In addition, all of the 40 women interviewed indicated anger as an unavoidable part of the divorce process which was primarily due to children's hurt feelings.

Studies show that during the first year after a marital separation or death of a spouse, a single parent tends to be preoccupied with problems of loss and reorganization. The persisting problems of single parenting become dominant concerns for most single parents only after they have been in their situation for about a year (Weiss, 1979).

Berry's study (1981) indicated that in the first year after divorce single fathers experienced withdrawal and spent much time alone. Most fathers reported feelings of loneliness and depression, but this was of relatively short duration.

The single father undergoes a stress period resulting from the role adjustment he must make to his new situation. Keshet and Rosenthal (1978) remarked after interviewing 128 single fathers, "This new experience is frightening, even for fathers who have had considerable child care responsibilities before their separation" (p. 17).

Weiss (1979) found separation and divorce accompanied by feelings of having been misused and by self-doubts that are the residues of an unhappy marriage. This parent generally carries an image of the children's other parent as someone who is disparaging, critical, and untrustworthy. Weiss also notes that the feelings brought to the single-parent situation by those who have lost a spouse are quite different. The bereaved tend to idealize the relationship; remembering it as happy makes it a little easier to accept its loss.

Weiss (1979) notes a special vulnerability in the situation of the unmarried parent. "No other single parent can so easily blame the child as the cause of whatever troubles are later encountered" (p. 9). A study by Zill, cited by Weiss (1979 p. 9), found that 30 percent of never-married mothers, compared with 20 percent of separated mothers, 15 percent of divorced, and 10 percent of widowed, said that if they had to do it over again,

they would not have children. Zill also found that never-married

mothers were more likely to admit that at some point, they lost

control and may have hurt their children.

This researcher found no evidence of the emotional stress on

the single-adoptive parent specifically, but did note two problems

related to adoption in general. Rillera (1981) found that

adoptive parents experienced loss. Most of them adopted because

they lost the ability to have children of their own. "Adoption

seems a solution, but it can never negate the loss" (p. 4). In

addition, adoptive parents often worry about the child searching

for the birthparents and finding them more acceptable.

Another major adjustment for single-parent families is living

within the constraints of a severely reduced income. Single

parents, more than people in any other demographic category,

report they worry constantly about money (Weiss, 1979). Parents

Without Partners (1983) notes that the severity of economic

problems may be the single most important factor influencing the

adjustment of single-parent families. Worrell (1986) states that

the median income of single-parent families is only one-third that

of two-parent families, and almost half of all families below the

poverty level are headed by women.

Financial stress appears more pronounced in female-headed

households. The U.S. Bureau of the Census reports that

statistically the female head of household is the largest category

on the the poverty levels (Schiff, 1985).

Appel (1985) describes one recently-divorced mother's account of her financial problems: "While you're coping, making $800 a month before taxes and spending $120 on child care and $300 for rent, there's not a whole lot left. It's a hand-to-mouth existence" (p. 9).

Weiss (1979) found the widowed better off financially due to Social Security and insurance. Unwed mothers, while they rarely get support payments from the fathers, do not have to maintain a standard of living to which the family has been accustomed. Feigelman and Silverman's (1981) study of single-adoptive parents (most of whom were women) found incomes lower that those of married-couple families.

Financial stress means that more single mothers are working. Parents Without Partners (1983) reports that most single mothers are poor despite the fact they work. Eighty-one percent of divorced mothers work compared to only 57 percent of married mothers. In attempting to reduce the strains of economical insufficiency, many single mothers find themselves with few job-related skills, low educational levels, and lack of adequate and affordable child care facilities (Worell, 1986).

Berry (1981) reports the most frequently cited problem of single fathers is that of finances. The single father may have to hire a housekeeper or arrange for child care at considerable cost. All this can come at a time when the family income may be dwindling (Chng and Gray, 1983). Other studies show that the single father is often better off financially than the single

mother. According to Chng and Gray (1983), 43 percent of single
mothers live below the poverty level, while only 18 percent of the
men in the same situation are poor. Keshet and Rosenthal (1978)
note that most of the single fathers in their study have more than
adequate incomes. Schiff (1985) found that, while only 10 percent
of the fathers have sole custody, their income usually rises
significantly in the year following the divorce, whereas the
women's income decreases substantially.

A third area that creates stress for the single parent is
that of role strain. This often results from conflicts between
child care responsibilities and social needs and work needs. Cook
(1985) concludes that the root of the problem is in the new family
structure. The custodial parent is often employed in a full-time
capacity leaving little opportunity for adequate interaction with
children. Weiss (1976), citing Terri and Robinson's (1976) study
of single parents who were asked whether they had experienced
particular difficulties in trying to be both mother and father to
their children, reported three-quarters of the mothers found this
aspect especially difficult, but only half of the fathers did.
Chng and Gray (1983) found employers are more reluctant to promote
men who heavily invest their time and energy in their families.
The single father usually cannot participate in activities that
may be crucial to his job or promotion. In this setting children
can be viewed as a career handicap. Keshet and Rosenthal's (1978)
study indicated that single parenting clearly limited earnings,
hours, and work relations.

One single parent noted his anxieties about his new
responsibities. "All the obligations you can imagine are on your
shoulders. This overwhelming responsibility that includes
everything--it's all yours, whether you want it or not" (Weiss,
1979, p. 22).

The raising of an adolescent is not a task that can be born
easily by the single parent. The power structure is changed when
a family loses a parent. Thierman (1986) notes the remaining
parent becomes the only power figure in the family and is,
consequently, either for or against the child. A study by
Dornbush, et al., (1985) reported a reduction in control of
adolescents, especially males, in female-headed families. The
presence of any other adult brought control levels closer to those
of two-parent families. Grossman (1986) also noted that single
mothers appear to have far more difficulty in dealing with their
sons than their daughters.

In the reverse situation, single men raising girls also may
face problems. Mendes' study (1976) found that 20 out of 32
single men raising daughters expressed concerns related to the
daughters' sexuality. Fathers were reluctant to discuss sexuality
and mores with daughters and felt that this information should be
given by women. Fathers also expressed concern over the lack of
female role models. Most frequently, the fathers said that the
role model teaches daughters "how to be feminine" and "you
know...learn women's ways" (p. 443). This researcher found no
evidence of single mothers facing this problem in raising sons.

Single men find one of the major problems is undertaking the new role without a clear role prescription. Chng and Gray (1983) explain that most men have been raised in two-parent homes, rather than by a single father. "It may be a case of the blind leading the blind" (p. 39). Mendes (1976) found that single fathers' lack of role clarity contributed to stresses such as managing homes, responding to children's emotional needs, and rearing daughters.

Single fathers also worry about meeting the emotional needs of their children. Mendes (1976) reported that single fathers in her sample saw the quality of their emotional relationship with their children as the most crucial area of their children's development. Twenty-two percent of the fathers reported trouble in filling their children's emotional needs.

Another area of concern for the single parent is the management of the household. Most of these problems, according to Thierman (1986), develop because there is usually little time and energy left over to perform these tasks when working full-time. Mendes (1976) noted that half of the fathers in her study experienced stress as they tried to coordinate all the various tasks of caring for the home. Weinraub and Wolf (1983) reported that single mothers had difficulties in coping with household responsibilities.

In addition to these stresses, single parenting often causes a disruption in social life. Thierman (1986) reported that many single parents play a martyr role by giving all of their time and

energy to their family and feel guilty when they seek adult
companionship.

Single parenting can cause a loss of societal status.
Dreyfus (1979) noted that the woman loses position in the
community as "wife." The man loses status as a moral,
responsible, family man; often he becomes a threat to other
married men.

Widowers, in general, receive less community stigma and may
be less isolated than divorced or separated fathers, who usually
experience disapproval and exculsion from family and community
support (Chng and Gray, 1983). They also found pressure from
family and community for the single father to remarry quickly for
the sake of the children. "Society does not look kindly on a man
raising his family alone" (p.38).

Feigelman and Silverman (1981) concluded that single-adoptive
parents were more likely than other adopters to be the subject of
disapproval by their friends. This was more intense toward the
male.

According to Schlesinger (1978), most women's social lives
had become less satisfactory and more restricted since separation.
Grossman (1986) found that after the divorce process, women were
excluded by their friends and formed new friendships with other
divorced women. Weinraub and Wolf's study of single mothers
(1983) found that single parents tended to be more socially
isolated than married parents. They worked longer hours and
received less parental support.

Single fathers, suggest Chng and Gray (1983), tend to use their overwhelming responsibilities at home and work as incentives for refusing social invitations in which they may feel like "fifth wheels."

The dating scene brings anxiety to many single parents. Despite loneliness and sexual needs, many single parents are hesitant, ranging from not becoming involved if one is past youth and was formerly married through fear of sustaining new risks and worry about what finding someone new would mean to the children (Weiss, 1979). Berry (1981) notes that although there is initial disengagement, the larger percentage of the fathers begin active dating well within a year of their divorce.

In order to cope with the demands of single parenting, divorced parents enlist aid of additional caretakers, such as the non-custodial parent, babysitters, relatives, and daycare centers. In general, support systems are being used more by fathers with custody than by mothers with custody (Berry, 1981).

Mendes (1976) sees a notable lack of help from the extended family of the single fathers. Although most studies of the single-adoptive family suggest close affiliations with extended families, the opposite was noted in Feigelman and Silverman's study (1981). Some fathers were reluctant to admit that they needed help; such behavior was inconsistent with the masculine ideals they held for themselves.

Although single parenting requires a major shift in lifestyle and priorities for the single parent, many positive rewards were

realized. Keshet and Rosenthal (1978), Chng and Gray (1983), and Pichitino (1983) report that single fathers gain a good deal of satisfaction in meeting responsibilities to the children and come to recognize strong nurturing abilities within themselves. A majority of men in Keshet and Rosenthal's study report being a single parent had helped them grow emotionally. They felt more responsive to their children and more conscious of their needs.

The literature from the organization Parents Without Partners notes that in spite of problems with money, stress, and the disapproval of society, single-parent families can be strong family units. "The quality of parenting, not the quantity of parents, counts most in raising children" (Gelman, et al., p. 50).

Effects on the Child

There is no single behavior reaction to divorce, separation, death, adoption, or unwed parenthood; therefore, there are no easy guidelines for recognizing behaviors related to these situations and the emotiona. changes which may accompany them. Single-parent children are faced with many frustrating and confusing situations. The most common agreement among experts is that divorce and death cause anxiety in children.

Kohn (1979) notes that nothing is more traumatic for a child than losing a parent. A sense of loss and insecurity follows. Disruption, agony, insecurity, guilt, isolation, and a feeling of being different are all part of the picture (Weiss, 1979). Worth (1984) indicates that children experience intense emotional

reactions to the death of a parent. A child's first reaction is generally shock and disbelief. Some feel guilty, as if they are responsible. They often become fearful that there may not be enough money for the family to survive. They also worry that the remaining parent may be taken from them.

Schleisinger (1978), citing Sugar's (1970) study of 29 children of divorce, finds divorce a crisis for children. The symptoms include separation and anxiety, feelings of helplessness, feeling hostile, lonely and sad. Predominate in Grossman's (1986) study of children of divorce were indications of a sharp lowering of self-esteem. Children were embarrassed and felt their parents' separation set them apart from former friends.

In interviews with children of divorced parents across the country, Gordon (1976) concluded:

> For these children loneliness comes as an overwhelming
> awareness that there is no support anywhere--that
> people upon whom they depend for survival, warmth,
> affection, and interest can provide only the most
> meagre attention to their needs. (p. 40)

Her observations were supported by Kelly and Wallerstein's study (1979) of 60 divorcing families in northern California. Children viewed their parents separation and divorce as extraordinarily stressful. Regardless of the age, the youngsters felt they now faced a world that was suddenly less reliable.

The age of the child has been found to be a factor in the impact of divorce on the child. In a study of 26 children of divorce, Wallerstein and Kelly (1980a) were struck by the pervasive sense of sadness in children between the ages of five

and seven. Between ages 8-12 the children's most distinguishing emotion was directed at whatever parent is thought to be the initiator of the divorce. Teenagers felt little sense of blame for the separation but were saddled with the "loyalty dilemma." "Mom doesn't want me to like Dad, and vice versa," says 14-year old Hilary Brodley of Chicago. "She tells me bad stories. He tells me others. I am always in the middle" (p. 68).

The sex of the child also plays a part in the impact of divorce. According to Hetherington's study of 72 divorced middle-class families, boys are the harder hit. More is expected of them; they receive far less support from their mothers, teachers, and peers (Francke, et al., 1980).

The period of adjustment varies with the age of the child and the stability of the child's life after separation. Wallerstein and Kelly's study (1980a) revealed that five years after separation, 28 percent of the children strongly approved of their parents' divorce: 42 percent were somewhere in the middle, accepting the changed family but not taking a strong position for or against divorce; and 30 percent strongly disapproved. This was a major shift from the initial count when three-fourths of the children strongly disapproved. Although children are flexible enough to learn to cope and bounce back from a death of a parent or a divorce, the evidence suggests that the impact of a divorce or a death and the resulting period of adjustment can be both painful and damaging.

The literature on the effect on the child of an unwed parent and a single-adoptive parent is very sparse. Obviously, an unmarried mother is not saddled with the task of helping the child adjust to marital breakup or a parent's death, but sooner or later the child will likely ask about the missing parent. Grossman (1986) found that these children usually resent the absence and were embarrassed to have others know about it.

Rillera (1981) suggests that adoptees suffer the loss of the natural nurturing connection; there is a permanent loss of family background, cultural heritage and opportunity to accurately see themselves as an extension of their lineage and genetic influence. Sometimes adoptees deny their curiosity and desire to know about their past for fear of the reaction it will cause with their adoptive families. Adoptees also experience fear of rejection. They have already experienced the supposed "ultimate rejection of mother" and now fear rejection that could come from the adoptive parent (p. 10).

Feigelman and Silverman (1981) found that children adopted by single parents have more emotional adjustment problems compared to children adopted by two-parent families. Forty-three percent reported problems, compared with 33 percent among two-parent families (p.12). Shireman and Johnson, cited by Feigleman and Silverman (1981), found most of the children's initial adjustments to the adoption were somewhat negative. Two months after the adoption, the adjustments were reported problem free by 81 percent of the parents (p. 6).

Another stress faced by children of single-parent families is being forced to grow up too fast. David Elkin (1981) in The Hurried Child, cited by Joseph (1986), reports that a child who witnesses the dissolution of a family must of necessity grow up fast and face stresses that are not usually encountered until a later age. The child experiences "the real loss of innocence losing the implicit belief that the world is good stable place in which to live--that the family, the child's basic source of security will always be there" (p. 151).

In addition, Joseph (1986) found that a single parent often turns to the child for emotional support, thus pushing the child into an adult role as a friend and partner. Weiss (1979) notes that the widowed, more easily than the divorced, turn to their children for support.

Financial and practical needs might also place new household responsibilities on children in single-parent families. Appel (1985) suggests that children have household tasks as:

> making their own lunch, helping to clean the house, or assisting with younger siblings. Some older children may need to get babysitting jobs, maintain yards, or get paper routes in order to pay for their own clothing and school activities. (p. 10)

Chng and Gray (1983) note that in motherless families this may mean more responsibilities and less time for socializing with peers. While this may mean children becoming more independent earlier, it may also cause resentment "or not being allowed to be just children, instead of daddy's helpers" (p. 39). Grossman's (1986) study of 66 children of divorce revealed that almost half

of the sample felt pressure to act suddenly more mature following

the separation. Much of this time this was due to new chores.

One child reported that he felt like a "grown man in taking

responsibilities around the house" (p. 102).

The relationship with the other parent can cause additional

stress in the life of the child. In a divorce, the other parent

frequently continues to have rights and responsibilities to the

children that must be acknowledged. Weiss (1979) feels that

children are likely to be loyal to both antagonistic parents and

search for some method by which they can preserve their

identification with both parents despite the parents' criticisms

of each other.

In widowed families, the other parent is a memory often

cherished, whose wishes are still considered and whose

internalized support is relied on. Unmarried mothers rarely allow

the fathers equal standing as parents (Weiss, 1979).

The return to the dating game is invariably a chaotic time

for both parent and child. For many children, seeing their

parents in roles of romantic love and courtship incites feelings

of jealousy. One 14-year-old boy streaked stark naked through the

living room when a male friend of his mother's was visiting

because he did not want her to go out with him. Another teenage

son waited for his mother and gave her a stern lecture about the

coming home time from a date (Appel, 85). Parental dating often

poses a threat to the children who see the new partner as

replacing the departed parent. "The children tend to feel as if

they're being disloyal--and may be jealous over the newcomer's place in their parent's affections" (Francke, et al., 1980, p. 62).

Recent research confirms that single parenting precipitates a major crisis in the lives of most children, but can single parenting adversely affect children's school achievement?

A study conducted by Shreeve, et al., (1985) dramatically confirms that it does. The project surveyed 7-12 grade students by administering California Tests and collecting grade point average data. In every instance but one, single-parent students scored lower than their two-parent counterparts.

Hetherington, cited by Brown (1980), sums up the new problems confronting the schools in the following:

> There is a greater probability of problems in schools
> occurring with children from single-parent families.
> The achievement test scores and grades of children
> being reared by single-parent families tend to be lower
> than those of children living with two parents. (p.
> 537)

In addition, Ourth, cited by Joseph (1986), found that children from single-parent homes not only achieved lower grades, but also were involved in more disciplinary procedures, and were truant and tardy significantly more often than children from two-parent families. Brown's (1980) reporting of a study done by the Kettering Foundation and the National Association of Elementary School Principals concurs with Ourth.

The literature indicates that stress is very evident in the life of a child living in a single-parent family. A death or a

divorce of a parent appears most stressful in a child's life. The child of a single-adoptive parent and the child of an unwed parent face different kinds of stress--especially in embarrassment and in adjusting to a new environment.

Young Adult Literature

Adolescent fiction is defined by Mertz and England (1983) as "that realistic and contemporary American fiction which young adults as well as more mature and critical readers can find aesthetically and thematically satisfying, which is, implicitly or explicitly, written for adolescents" (p. 119).

Problem novels have become one of the major categories within the field of young adult literature. These novels deal with adolescent problems in honest realistic, humorous ways. In the end the protagonist usually survives the problem and learns to deal with it in a human way (Reed, 1985).

According to Dr. Carlsen, University of Iowa, as cited by Webb (1982), people read books for the following satisfactions: unconscious delight, information gathering, seeing self, unresolved human dilemma, and aesthetic satisfaction. In teen literature, the concept of "seeing self" is often the keynote for success (Webb, 1982, p. 43).

Author Richard Peck (1981) defines the young adult novel as "unreality masked as realism."

> Adolescents are not entertained by seeing their own
> problems in books. In reaching for a book, the young
> are looking for characters they can befriend,

characters they can become. They are looking for situations more stimulating and more reassuring than their own lives. (p. 20)

Reading about single-parent families may be reassuring for those who are experiencing the upheaval of changing family structure. Fiction helps to assure young people that they are not the only ones to experience problems. Poston (1978) states, "Finding out someone else has the same problem, or at least a similar one, is important because it shows they are not alone and their problems are not unique" (p. 343).

Reinhart (1986) and Winfield (1983) reinforce this idea. Reinhart believes that characters in fiction can address an adolescent's need to know that "other kids encounter hostility, social difficulties, anger, divorce, and other ugly realities" (p. 204). Reading fiction, according to Winfield, can help adolescent readers identify with problems, such as conflict, guilt, or fear felt by others.

Reading about single-parent families can also help children cope with life situations. Poston (1978) explains that current literature written about contemporary children and their needs, their interests, and their problems can help them understand both themselves and other people around them.

According to Susan Levine (1982), youth should have available to them single-parent books with which they can identify and find entertainment and from which they can learn and gain comfort. She lists seven problems and situations which are unique to

single-parent families and which should be realistically dealt

with in young adult fiction:

1) fear of the remaining parent dying
2) inability of remaining parent to cope
3) coping with parents dating and remarrying
4) changes in household living arrangements
5) visitations with the other parent
6) new responsibilities
7) added stress to the development of one's self
   worth. (p. 16)

Joseph (1986) encourages teachers to provide opportunities

for children to deal with their problems and feelings. He cites

Bernstein's Books to Help Children Cope with Separation and Loss

(1977), noting that children's grief and depression can be

addressed through books. Reading purposes include:

1) helping children cope with loss
2) giving opportunities to identify with others
3) helping children realize that they are not alone
4) extending horizons
5) aiding the catharsis process
6) leading toward insight
7) facilitating the sharing of problems. (p. 460)

Chaudoir's (1981) study of single-parent families in fiction

for young adults finds two structural problems. The problem of

coping with the loss of a parent required a series of adjustments

from the child regardless of the reason for the parental absence.

Parent-child conflict resulting from parental romantic involvement

appeared to be the most stressful type of relationship in books.

Because the number of single-parent households are rapidly

increasing and with the prediction that half of all children now

being born in the United States will be living in single-parent

families in the future, adolescents need to be aware of the

characteristics of this group. Author Norma Klein (1981) feels that the purpose of fiction is to make people "transcend the boundaries of their own identify to understand in a intuitive and feeling way what it is like to be someone else" (p. 358).

While both male and female parents encounter difficulties in their new roles as single parents, the heaviest psychological toll falls on the children themselves. Educators and media specialists must remember that young adult fiction cannot cure emotional illness, guarantee that readers will behave in socially approved ways, or directly solve the readers' problems (Donelson and Nilsen, 1980). Still its many purposes justify its inclusion in the school library. Media specialists who are aware of content, purpose, direction, and/or prejudices in the fiction available to their young readers have many opportunities to fit the book to the patron. Young adult literature is one way for adolescents to understand their problems. If fiction written for them is realistic in the portrayals of the parent and the child in the single-parent household, then school library media specialists need to be familiar with books about this growing segment of the American family structure.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Content analysis, one of several research techniques, was
used as the basic method of collecting data for this study.
Defined as "any research technique for making inferences by
systematically and objectively identifying specified
characteristics within a text" (Stone, et al., 1966, p. 5.),
content analysis allows the researcher to do an objective study
based on "the appearance of words, phrases, concepts, themes,
characters, or even sentences and paragraphs contained in printed
or audiovisual materials" (Busha and Harter, 1980, p. 171). After
quantifying and ordering the categorized units, the researcher is
able to analyze, compare, and interpret the data. The problem of
category construction is widely regarded as the most crucial
aspect of content analysis. "It is a step in which the data are
all tied to theory, and it serves as a basis for drawing
inferences" (Stone, et al., 1966, p. 9).

Content analysis is important as a research method to
determine if what young people read is accurate in representing
society. Bekkedal (1973) explains this.

> If children do gain ideas and impressions about the
> world around them from the books they read, as is
> generally believed, it is surely important for adults
> to know what kind of world the books portray. Content
> analysis can help to provide a more comprehensive view
> of the contemporary world as it is pictured in
> children's books. (p. 124)

Content analysis allows the researcher to break down the contents of materials into meaningful units of information and to indicate "pertinent features such as comprehensiveness of coverage or the intentions, biases, prejudices, and oversights of authors, publisher, creators, or other persons responsible for the content of materials" (Busha and Harter, 1980, p. 171).

Content analysis is aimed at exactness and the elimination of biases in the investigative process; its methods are employed to decrease the degree of subjectivity inherent in procedures designed to analyze or evaluate contents or materials (Busha and Harter, 1981, p. 172).

The researcher randomly selected 19 contemporary realistic novels to read and analyze. Novels were reviewed in at least one of three selection tools which follow. One source was the retrospective tool, Junior High School Library Catalog (1985), whose primary aim is to "care for the concerns of the adolescent making the transition to young adulthood" (p. v.). This particular edition featured books that discussed the stresses of family life brought about by separation, divorce, remarriage, and adoption.

Because the selection of titles was done by an advisory committee with consultants, the researcher assumed that the titles were of high quality. The titles were listed under the fiction categories "single-parent family," "divorce," "death," "unmarried mothers," and "adoption." Only those books listed with copyright dates of 1985 or later were selected in an attempt to keep abreast

of current issues and interests of adolescents. In addition, books used in the study were recommended for students in one or more grades six through twelve or for ages 11-17.

Another selection tool was Booklist. The researcher imposed the same copyright and recommended audience limitations. The books had to be reviewed by December 31, 1989. The books chosen for study carried a subject heading of "divorce," "adoption," "death," "single-parent family," "unmarried mothers," "unmarried fathers," "mothers and daughters," "mothers and sons," "fathers and daughters," "fathers and sons," or "children of divorced parents following the fiction heading or had a review which indicated the presence of a single-parent family due to divorce, death, unwed parenthood, or adoption.

Since Booklist's primary aim is "to provide a guide to current print and nonprint materials worthy of consideration for purchase by small and medium-sized public libraries and school library media centers" and since all materials reviewed are recommended for library or media center purchase" (Booklist, September 1, 1988, p. 2), the researcher assumed that only quality books were included.

The third selection tool was School Library Journal, whose primary purpose is to "publish concise critical reviews in order to help SLJ's readers make their acquisition decisions" (School Library Journal, January 1990, p. 70). Since SLJ includes reviews that are negative as well as positive, the researcher read the review carefully to be certain that it was favorable.

The researcher's search was limited to books obtained from the North Fayette Junior High Library, Area Education Agency Library in Elkader, University of Northern Iowa Youth Collection Library, and through the interlibrary loan service at the University of Northern Iowa Library.

The researcher read and analyzed each novel, investigating the elements related to the hypotheses. Using a checklist, the researcher recorded occurrences or incidents of specific actions which illustrated characteristics of single-parent families. A chart was used to note the occurrences with the numbers changed into percentages.

Examples of emotional stress on the single parent were crying, weight gain or loss, sleeping difficulties, nervous tension and depression, and failure to concentrate at home and at work. Guilt included feeling responsible for the death, divorce, or unwed child, blaming the child, and being away from children due to work demands. Loneliness included withdrawing from others, spending much time at home, and turning to alcohol or other drugs. Confusion entailed wide mood swings. Fear included not being able to cope with the new situation. Anger in a divorce was directed toward the other parent; in death the parent questioned "Why did it happen to me?" In unwed parenthood, anger was displayed through physical abuse of children.

Examples of financial stress were the single mother working full-time or part-time, children having jobs, changes in living accommodations, limitations on family outings and entertainment,

worry about the cost of college for children, and children being denied things which they would like.

Examples of <u>problems in child care</u> were mothers playing baseball, camping, and other activities normally associated with fatherly duties. Others included having discipline problems, children not obeying, verbal battles, punishing children, taking away privileges, children turning to alcohol, sex, and drugs, and threats of suicide. In male households, fathers were uncomfortable in discussing sexuality with daughters, failed to meet emotional needs of the children, had difficulty in verbalizing and exhibiting love, and enlisted the aid of additional caretakers. Work-related problems included not getting promotions, less advancement in jobs, scheduling meetings around the children, and not being able to participate in children's activities due to job commitments.

Examples of <u>management of household</u> were complaints of not getting everything done, seeking help from children for household tasks, hiring housekeepers and cooks, not having everything perfect, and eating out or eating packaged food.

Examples of <u>societal pressures</u> were negative remarks by neighbors, friends, and teachers, family disapproval, fear of threat to other couples' marriages, change in friends, withdrawal (not wanting to associate with married-couples), and hesitancy to date.

Examples of <u>emotional stress</u> on children included nightmares, bedwetting, yearning for the absent parent, sleeplessness, crying

spells, restlessness, loss of appetite, withdrawal from family and
friends, and difficulties in concentrating. Other signs included
a feeling of helplessness, hostility, loneliness, withdrawal, and
indifference to studies and playmates. Anger involved verbal or
physical aggression, temper tantrums, tension and anxiety attacks,
and rebelliousness in home routines and discipline. Guilt
included feeling responsible for causing the divorce, death, or
unwed situation, or choosing one parent over another in a divorce.
Embarrassment referred to feeling ashamed of living in a
single-parent family and being different from others. Unwed
parenthood situations included feelings of shame for not having a
father. Fear of the other parent dying, rejection from adoptive
parent, and lack of money were fears. Loneliness was feeling no
one being around for support, affection, and survival.

Examples of acting more mature entailed taking care of
cooking and cleaning responsibilities, taking care of siblings,
becoming a decision-maker with the parent, holding jobs, and
having less time for socializing with peers.

Examples of relationship with other parent were taking sides,
trying to be loyal to both parents, conflicts in spending time
with both parents at holidays and other family celebrations, and
dealing with parents' antagonism toward each other.

Examples of jealousy of parent dating were making the visit
of a date uncomfortable by conversation or action, playing pranks,
setting dating guidelines for parent, not participating in family

activities which involve the date, and showing off and doing things which draw attention to oneself.

Examples of difficulty in school included lower academic grades, truancy, tardiness, suspensions, discipline problems, absenteeism, expulsion, and drop-outs.

Chapter 4

Analysis of Data

The researcher read and analyzed 19 novels in this study,
investigating the elements of single-parent families as related in
the hypotheses. Using a checklist (see Appendix B), the
researcher recorded occurrences which illustrated the status of
the single-parent units and the effects on the parent and the
adolescent in making the adjustment to the new family structure.

For the hypotheses to be accepted, the percentage of novels
having occurrences varied from hypothesis to hypothesis.

Table 1 shows the sex of the head of the single-parent
household in the novels broken down by the reason for its
formation. Of the 19 single-parent households analyzed in this

Table 1
Sex of Head of Single-Parent Household
and Reason for Its Formation

| Cause | Households | | | | | Total | |
| | Female | | Male | | | | |
	No.	%	No.	%		No.	%
Adoption	0	0%	0	0%		0	.0%
Death	5	26.3%	4	21.1%		9	47.4%
Divorce/ Separation	8	42.1%	1	5.3%		9	47.4%
Unwed Parent	1	5.3%	0	0%		1	5.3%
Totals	14	73.7%	5	26.4%		19	100.1%*

*Total does not equal 100 percent due to
rounding to the nearest tenth.

study, 14 households were headed by females; five households were
headed by males. Of the nine households formed by divorce, eight
were headed by women with only one headed by a man. Of the nine
households formed by death, five were headed by women. The unwed
parent household was headed by a women. In order for the first
hypothesis to be accepted, 80 percent of the single-parent
households needed to be headed by females. Since only 73.7
percent of the households were headed by women, the hypothesis was
rejected.

Table 1 also shows the causes for the formation of the
single-parent units as portrayed in the 19 novels. Divorce or
separation was the cause of the single-parent unit in nine of the
novels. Every novel except one of the nine had the adolescent
living with the mother. The exception was Nina in Touching, who
lived with her alcoholic father after her mother had abandoned the
family. In Necessary Parties Chris's parents had just separated
and were in the process of getting a divorce. Chris tried to stop
them by arguing his case in court. Although the judge ruled
against him, it forced his parents to come to some realizations
about their marriage and the family. Even though the parents
decided to stay together, the reseacher counted this book as a
single-parent unit formed by divorce because the parents were
separated for approximately six months.

Death of a parent was portrayed in nine of the novels. The
formation of the single-parent unit in Megan's Island caused some
mystery. Megan believed that her father had died when she was

three years old. She was surprised to learn that he had, instead, been sentenced to life in prison, having died there recently. Since Megan had had no contact with her father since she was three years old, the researcher categorized the single-parent household as caused by death.

Only one single-parent unit in the study was formed by unwed parenting. In _Where It Stops, Nobody Knows_, Nina was shocked to learn that Joyce was not her birth mother but had kidnapped her when she was only three days old. Since Nina had thought of Joyce as her unwed mother throughout the novel, the researcher categorized this single-parent unit as formed by an unwed parent.

Two additional references to unwed parenting were found in the novels. Because they were not the cause of the main character's family structure, the researcher did not count them in this study. The researcher, however, felt the occurrences were significant. In _Someone to Love Me_ fifteen-year-old Patrice, whose parents were divorced, found herself pregnant and unmarried. After much contemplation, Patrice decided to keep the baby, thus adding another single-parent unit into the family structure.

In _A Kindness_ Chip's father abandoned the family when Chip was a baby and had not been heard from since. The researcher categorized this single-family unit as caused by divorce even though Chip lived substantially all of his life with a single mother and had no contact with his father. The theme of unwed parenting was carried out in the novel when Chip's mother became

pregnant, deciding to keep the child and refusing to tell the
father (a married man) or to let Chip know who the father was.

In order to accept the hypothesis, divorce or separation
needed to be cause of the single-parent unit in 60 percent or more
of the novels. Since divorce was the cause in only nine (47.4
percent) of the novels, the hypothesis was rejected.

In order to accept the third hypothesis, households formed by
single parents adopting children would not be found. Since none
of the single-parent families in the survey were formed by
adoption, the hypothesis was accepted.

The next five hypotheses dealt with the effect on the single
parent in making the adjustment to the new family structure.
Table 2 shows the five major areas of stress and the number of
novels containing references with corresponding percentages. To
be counted in this study, the novel must have had at least one
incident in the major stress areas.

Table 2
Areas of Parental Stress

Area	Number of novels	Percentage of novels
Emotional	13	68.4%
Financial*	9	64.3%
Child Care	7	36.8%
Household Management	10	52.6%
Societal Pressures	1	5.3%

*Category applied to novels with single mothers,
  or 14 novels.

Emotional stress was evident in 13 of the novels. Crying, one symptom of emotional stress, was evident in eight of the novels. All except one of these novels involved a recent death or divorce. The exception was the father in It Happened at Cecilia's. He got tears in his eyes when he talked about his wife even 12 years after her death. Guilt was a factor in two of the households, both having been formed by divorce. The mother in Holding Me Here felt guilty about being away from Robin because of work demands. In Jack the mother wondered why her husband became a homosexual. "Maybe I did something wrong" (Homes, 1989, p. 38).

Loneliness was found in one of the novels. The mother in You'll Miss Me When I'm Gone "settled on a routine to get her through the evening: one drink...another drink" (Roos, 1988, p. 36). Anger was evident in four of the novels. In the three divorced situations, the anger was directed toward the other parent. Much of the father's anger in Touching stemmed from his wife's abandonment and his alcoholism. The mother in Jack was angry because her husband announced that he was gay. In Dear Bruce Springsteen when Terry asked his mother to give his father another chance, she argued, "I was giving him a chance for 15 years! Where did it get us? Stuck in a hole-in-the-wall apartment with about as much future as that striped band he was playing in" (Major, 1987, p. 13). In the unwed parent family, the mother became physically abusive to Nina. "She grabbed Nina by the shoulders and began shaking her back and forth" (Ehrlich, 1988, p.92).

In order to accept the hypothesis, single parents needed to experience emotional stress in their adjustment to the new family situation in 80 percent or more of the novels. Since only 13 (68.4 percent) of the 19 single parents displayed at least one example of emotional stress, the hypothesis was rejected.

Of the 14 households headed by females, nine experienced financial stress. All of the mothers had to work full-time or part-time to support the family. The mother in Where the Kissing Never Stops took a job as a stripper. In Dear Bruce Springsteen Terry's mother worked two shifts at the hospital in order to support Terry and his younger sister. Three of the families had to make changes in living accommodations. Robin's mother in Holding Me Here had to take in a boarder. In With You and Without You the O'Haras, finding their old home too expensive, moved to cheaper accommodations. Three mothers worried about having money to send children to college. Children being denied things they would like was very evident in Megan's Island. "Megan hadn't seen a movie theater or a bowling alley, or anything like that for entertainment" (Roberts, 1988, p. 19). The household in With You and Without You exhibited financial stress in every one of the areas on the checklist.

The family in You'll Miss Me When I'm Gone was just the opposite. Marcus's father was a developer, and his mother did not work. The family enjoyed the luxury of the country club. Marcus's father provided very well for his family after the divorce.

In order to accept the hypothesis, single mothers needed to experience financial stress in 50 percent or more of the novels. Since nine of the 14 (64.3 percent) single mothers showed signs of financial stress, the hypothesis was accepted.

Problems with child care was found in seven of the novels. Three of the novels described verbal battles with the children. Two of them had work-related problems. Of the five male households in the study, two of them dealt with the fathers' failure to meet their child's emotional needs. In A Friend Like That, Robby's father found him at a bus depot after he had run away. He reached over and pulled Robby toward him and kissed him. "Dad and I never kissed before" (Slote, 1988, p. 135). In Alice In Rapture, Sort Of, Alice wished for a female's influence in helping her buy a bra, wondered about the female anatomy, "not having a mother, I'd never really seen live breasts up close" (Naylor, 1989, 104), and needed advice in dealing with her boyfriend. When she approached her father, he replied, "I guess this is the kind of thing you talk about with your mother if you have a mother" (Naylor, 1989, p. 20). Of the 14 female households analyzed, only one novel depicted the mother doing activities normally associated with fatherly duties. In Jack the mother took it upon herself to "become my new dad" (Homes, 1989, p. 13). She played basketball with him and tried to take Jack to the father-son Scout dinner.

In order to accept the hypothesis, child care problems needed to be found in 50 percent of the novels. Since only seven (36.8

percent) contained references to child care problems, the
hypothesis was rejected.

Ten of the single-parent households showed some problems in
the management of the home. Most parents sought the help of their
children for household tasks in helping with cooking and cleaning
tasks. One male parent enlisted the aid of a housekeeper.

In order to accept the hypothesis, problems in the management
of the household needed to be found in 50 percent or more of the
novels. Since 52.6 percent of the novels contained references to
problems in household management, the hypothesis was accepted.

Only one of 19 novels displayed negative societal attitudes
toward single parenting. Grandma Van Dorn in It Happened at
Cecilia's disagreed with the way her son-in-law was raising Andy.
She had tried to gain custody of him after her daughter's death
but was unsuccessful. Andy noted, "The way I looked would add
ammunition to her conviction that I'm being raised 'wrong' by an
irresponsible egomaniac" (Tamar, 1989, p.6). None of the single
parents were hesitant to date. In Holding Me Here Robin's mother
had been dating Tom, but, fearing how Robin would react, was
hesitant to tell her. Andy's father in It Happened at Cecila's
told him, "I loved her (your mother) more than I can say -- and
that makes me open to loving again" (Tamar, 1989, p. 130).

In order to accept this hypothesis, single parents needed to
experience negative societal attitudes toward single parenting in
50 percent or more of the novels. Since only one (5.3 percent)

novel displayed a negative attitude toward single parenting, the hypothesis was rejected.

The next five hypotheses dealt with the effect on the adolescent making the adjustment to the new family structure. Table 3 shows the five major stress areas and number the novels containing incidents with corresponding percentages. The researcher counted the novel if at least one example was found in the major area.

Table 3
Areas of Adolescent Stress

Area	No. of books	% of books
Emotional Stress	17	89.4%
Acting more mature	9	43.3%
Relationship with other parent (divorce only)	7	77.7%*
Jealousy in parent dating	9	90.0%ә
School difficulty	5	26.3%

*Based on 9 novels.
әBased on 10 novels.

Of the 19 adolescents portrayed as main characters, 17 exhibited at least one type of emotional stress. Carrie in Carrie's Games and Andy in It Happened at Cecila's were the exceptions. Carrie channeled her energies into breaking up her father's new love interest. Andy stated his feelings about his mother who had died when he was two years old, "Look, I can't miss someone I don't even remember" (Tamar, 1989, p. 31).

Crying, a symptom of emotional stress, was evident in eight

of the novels. All the adolescents except one had just recently

lost a parent due to divorce or death. Other physical symptoms,

such as nightmares and changes in eating habits, were used very

sparingly; only four examples were found. Yearning for the absent

parent was prevalent in nine of the novels. This was most evident

in <u>Alice in Rapture</u> as Alice felt the need for a mother to go to

for advice. Examples of indifference and withdrawal was found in

two novels. Brendon in <u>Holding Steady</u> began to withdraw from

friends and dropped school activities after his father's death.

In <u>You'll Miss Me When I'm Gone</u> Stephen began to withdraw after

his parents' divorce. "Since the holidays he hadn't gone to a

party or a school dance. The kind of things he liked to do best

were best done at home alone" (Roos, 1988, p. 2). Wray Jean in <u>A</u>

<u>Small Pleasure</u> handled her emotions in just the opposite manner.

To avoid thinking about her father's death, she became involved in

every school activity to the point of exhaustion.

Anger was displayed by eight of the adolescents. Seven of

them were children of divorce. Most of the anger in these

situations was directed at one of the parents in the divorce. In

<u>Maybe I'll Move To the Lost and Found</u>, Gilly was angry with her

father for leaving her mother and for moving in with "Airhead."

In <u>Touching</u> Eve's anger clouded her vision enough so that she

could not admit her dad was an alcoholic anymore than he could.

In <u>A Kindness</u> Chip, shocked and uncertain about his mother having

a baby, raged at her. Liza in <u>With You and Without You</u> was filled

with anger for her father for dying and at her siblings for carrying on with their lives as if nothing had happened.

Guilt was displayed by two of the adolescents. Liza in <u>With You and Without You</u> was afraid to have fun after her father's death. "It's not right for me to have fun when Dad is. . . when Dad can't" (Martin, 1986, p. 157).

Feelings of shame were exhibited by six of the adolescents. Eve in <u>Touching</u> was ashamed of her drunken father. Chip in <u>A Kindness</u> made up a story about the whereabouts of his father to avoid embarrassment at school. In <u>Where It Stops</u>, Nina, rather than admit that her mother was unwed, made up a story about her father's death.

The adolescent's fear of the remaining parent dying was found in two of the novels. Both characters had lost their fathers. When their mothers failed to return home after work, they were fearful that something had happened to them. Megan in <u>Megan's Island</u> worried, "Would it be on the radio if her mother got hurt or got killed in a car crash?" (Roberts, 1988, p. 75).

Loneliness was the most predominant emotion experienced by the adolescents in this study. Fourteen adolescents exhibited loneliness. Nine of those adolescents were living with divorced parents. Marcus in <u>You'll Miss Me When I'm Gone</u> turned to alcohol to relieve his loneliness. When this did not work, he attempted suicide. Gilly in <u>Maybe I'll Move to the Lost and Found</u> had thoughts of suicide. Eve in <u>Touching</u> felt she had nowhere to go during her father's drunken stupors. "I am an orphan. I'm on my

own" (Levy, 1988, p. 74). Children who have experienced the loss of a parent also exhibited loneliness. Alice in _Alice In Rapture_ was lonely for a mother. Nina in _Where It Stops_ experienced loneliness in travelling around the country with her unwed mother, who kept a tight rein on her activities. "I was pretty lonely though. Now with Joyce always around, it seemed like I might never meet any kids my age in Venice either" (Ehrlich, 1988, p. 111).

In order to accept this hypothesis, children of single-parent families needed to experience emotional stress in 80 percent or more of the novels. Since 17 out of the 19 adolescents (89.4 percent) experienced emotional stress, the hypothesis was accepted.

Of the 19 adolescents portrayed, nine of them were forced to act more mature and to take on new responsibilities as a result of living in a single-parent family. Most of the responsibilities involved taking care of household chores and siblings and holding part-time jobs. Chris in _Necessary Parties_ had the primary responsibility for his six-year-old sister as his parents spent time at the country club and other social gatherings. He was also called upon to attend to her psychological needs as she tried to cope with her parents' divorce. Chip in _A Kindness_ had even greater responsibilities. He served as a decision maker with his mother. "She had never been good at it, making decisions, and as far back as Chip could remember, Anne had bungled and stumbled until _he_ made the choices for her" (Rylant, 1988, p.36). Chip now

wanted to make the decision about Anne's pregnancy. In <u>With You</u> <u>and Without You</u>, after his father's death, Brent became the money manager for the family. He worried about having money for college and encouraged "Mom to cut back on allowances, buy the cheapest brands, trim our own hair, save on gas----and NOT ADOPT A NEW CAT" (Martin, 1986, p. 109). Nina in <u>Where It Stops</u> had always been grownup for her age. As they moved from place to place across the country, Nina was "put in charge of everything concerning the outside world" (Ehlrich, 1988, p. 179).

In order to accept this hypothesis, children of single parents needed to act more mature and take on new responsibilities in 50 percent or more of the novels. Since only nine of 19 (43.3 percent) adolescents acted more mature, the hypothesis was rejected.

Nine of the households analyzed in this study were formed because of divorce. In these nine households, seven adolescents had problems in their relationship with the other parent. Robin in <u>Holding Me Here</u> felt bad about her father being alone over Christmas. Chris in <u>Necessary Parties</u> felt he must celebrate Christmas with both parents. Eve in <u>Touching</u> had to deal with her father's antagonism toward his wife who left him. "If she comes wandering up the street, I swear, I'll throw her right out again" (Levy, 1988, p. 6). Jack in the novel <u>Jack</u> and Terry in <u>Dear</u> <u>Bruce Springsteen</u> tried to remain loyal to their fathers in spite of their mothers' antagonistic remarks.

In order to accept this hypothesis, children of divorced
parents needed to experience problems in their relationships with
the other parent in 50 percent or more of the novels. Since seven
of the nine adolescents (77.7 percent) experienced these problems,
the hypothesis was accepted.

Of the 10 single fathers and single mothers who were
beginning to date, nine of their children expressed disapproval.
Robin in Holding Me Here and Patrice in Someone to Love Me
refused to participate in family activities which involved the
date. Robin refused her mother's boyfriend's gift and refused to
laugh at his jokes. Terry in Dear Bruce Springsteen made the date
uncomfortable. "It's just that it's hard to think about there
being a man in the house all the time that's not Dad" (Major,
1987, p. 107). Name-calling was used in two of the novels. Gilly
in Maybe I'll Move to the Lost and Found referred to her dad's
girlfriend as "Airhead." Andy in It Happened at Cecilia's
referred to his dad's girlfriend as "Chipmunk." Carrie in
Carrie's Games went a step further by doing things to draw her
father's attention to herself rather than to his girlfriend.
Carrie began to dress outlandishly and began to date a person she
felt would be undesirable in her father's eyes. In A Friend Like
That eleven-year-old Andy took drastic steps to stop his widowed
father from developing a new love interest by running away from
home. In It Happened at Cecilia's, when Andy's father sent him
away to live with his grandmother for a time, Andy thought his
father was trying to get rid of him. "But I was in the way. I

was the 5th wheel, the lovebirds were shipping me out" (Tamar,
1989, p. 69).

In order to accept the hypothesis, children needed to
experience jealousy and express disapproval when parents began to
date in 50 percent or more of the novels. Since 90 percent of the
children whose single parents were beginning to date expressed
disapproval, the hypothesis was accepted.

Of the 19 adolescents portrayed, five had difficulty in
school. Jack's grades begin to slip as he thought of his father's
homosexuality and the break-up of his parents' marriage. Jack
exploded after flunking a history test on the Reconstruction, "I
have enough trouble reconstructing my life without being expected
to remember how they put back together a whole goddamned part of
the country" (Homes, 1989, p. 197). Terry in Dear Bruce
Springsteen experienced many school problems particularly because
his math teacher disliked him. Marcus in You'll Miss Me When I'm
Gone missed deadlines and his grades started to drop because of
his dependency on alcohol. "Just in case the shakes got to him
during the day, he slipped the bottle in his book bag" (Roos,
1988, p. 138). Andy in It Happened at Cecilia's generally did
things to irritate the teacher. "Mrs. Morfly caught me horsing
around and made me stand up" (Tamar, 1989, p. 31). Although
Brendon in Holding Steady did not have difficulty in school as
such, he withdrew from school activities. After his father's
death, he resigned from the letterman's club, the National Honor
Society, and the track team and dropped a pre-college research

class. The situation in <u>A Friend Like That</u> was much different from the others. Since Robby purposely got himself into trouble so that his father would be called to the office, preventing him from going on his date, the researcher did not count this novel. In <u>Where the Kissing Never Stops</u> Walker felt that "Just about every teacher yelled at me for no reason" (Koertge, 1986, p. 83). Since Walker tended to exaggerate throughout the novel, the researcher did not count this novel in the stress area.

In order to accept this hypothesis, children needed to have difficulty in school in 50 percent or more of the novels. Since only five of the 19 adolescents (26.3 percent) experienced difficulty in school, the hypothesis was rejected.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Recommendations and Summary

Conclusions

Considering the fact that six of the hypotheses were accepted, and seven were rejected, one can conclude that the portrayal of single-parent families in young adult fiction is realistically portrayed in some respects and unrealistically portrayed in other.

The status of the single-parent family was realistically portrayed only in the number of single-adoptive units. The novels did not realistically portray the sex of the head of the household and the reasons for its formation.

The study did not show that single-parent households were headed by females in at least 80 percent of the novels. One contributing factor was a problem in the sample. The researcher compiled a list of novels that fit the selection criteria and then selected 20 titles from the list. Because of the unavailability of some titles, the researcher had to select other titles on the list. Some of the titles had to be eliminated because they failed to meet the limitations of age of main character, location, or major theme. Novels which involved stepfamilies and remarriage also were eliminated, thus cutting down the number of novels about divorce. Research indicates that in divorce custody battles, mothers are awarded custody in 85-90 percent of the cases (Berry, 1981, p. 34). Because of these reasons, the researcher felt the sample was more heavily weighed in favor of books about death.

The study also did not show divorce *as* the cause of the single-parent unit in 60 percent or more of the novels. One factor, again, was difficulty in the sample. Another factor was the limitations established in this study. The researcher limited the selection of books to ones in which the portrayal of the child and parent was one of the major themes, with the plot revolving around the major character. Although the study showed only nine of the 19 households formed by divorce, the researcher found many more references to single-parent families in the novels. These single-parent units involved minor characters, usually close friends of the main character. Examples of additional single-parent units were found in six novels, two of these each containing two units, totaling eight additional single-parent units. Seven of these units were formed by divorce; the remaining one was formed by death of a parent.

In <u>Megan's Island</u> Megan's friend, Ben, lived with his father for the summer after being rejected by his mother and new stepfather. Ben protested, "I don't want to be here, either, but I got nowhere to go" (Roberts, 1988, p. 68). In <u>Holding Steady</u> Brendon met a girl who tried to help him cope with his father's death. She was living with her divorced father, trying to build a relationship of trust with him as he recovers from alcoholism. In <u>Necessary Parties</u> Haverman, Chris's best friend, learned that his father was going to be divorced for the third time. The subplot in <u>Jack</u> revolved around Jack's best friend's family, the Burkas. This family that everyone thought was the "perfect"

family broke up after the husband had physically abused his wife. The other unit involved Jack's girlfriend's family. Maggie was living with her divorced father who was gay, just as Jack's father was. In A Friend Like That nuclear families did not exist. Robby's girlfriend's parents both remarry, much to Beth's dislike. She had hoped they would reconcile. Ben "The Snot" Nathanson lived with his divorced mother, who was beginning to show interest in Robby's father, much to Robby's dislike.

Only one novel had a subplot involving the death of a parent. In Where the Kissing Never Stops, Walker's girlfriend lived with her widowed father. Robin tended to make "friends with other kids whose mom or dad has died" (Koertge, 1986, p. 46).

These additional references to single-parent units indicate that divorce was, indeed, very prevalently portrayed in the young adult fiction analyzed in the study.

The single parent was realistically portrayed in two of the main areas: financial stress and problems in household management. The study, though, failed to realistically portray the single parent's emotional stress, problems in child care, and negative attitudes by society.

Financial stress was very apparent, reflecting the increasing plight of the single mother in making ends meet. In addition, one of the father's showed financial stress. In It Happened at Cecilia's Andy's father worried about inances. "Cecilia's special Christmas dinner doesn't draw much of a crowd and Dad looks worried again. Lorraine and Dad's gift for me is an

electronic typewriter. That's pretty lavish, considering the cash register is not exactly overflowing" (Tamar, 1989. p. 126).

Although the hypothesis dealing with household management problems was accepted, the reviewer wondered if these problems were common to the nuclear family as well.

The study rejected the hypothesis that single parents experience emotional stress in at least 80 percent of the novels. One contributing factor was the large number of novels written from the first person point of view of the adolescent. Of the 19 novels analyzed, 14 were written from the adolescent's perspective. Life was seen through the thoughts, actions, and conversations of the adolescent who perhaps wasn't aware of the stress the parent was experiencing. None of the novels were written from the parent's perspective. Another contributing factor was the amount of time that had elapsed from the loss, either the divorce or the death. In A Kindness the reader never feels the mother's emotional stress because 15 years have passed since her husband left the family. A third factor was the theme of the book. Both Carrie's Games and A Friend Like That dealt primarily with jealousy in the father dating with little or no reference to the parent's emotional stress.

Results indicated that child care problems were not a major problem in single-parent units. Both single men and single women were able to hold down jobs and still care for their children. The study did indicate, though, that two of the single fathers

were having problems in meeting the emotional needs of their children.

The hypothesis dealing with negative societal attitudes toward single parenting was soundly rejected. An important factor was that most plots revolved around the adolescent's life in the single-parent unit. There was little interaction and conversation with adults other than the parents and school personnel.

The adolescent was portrayed realistically in three of the five major areas. The novels realistically portrayed the adolescent's emotional stress, problems in dealing with the other parent in households of divorce, and disapproval in the parent dating. A majority of novels failed to show adolescents acting more mature or experiencing difficulty in school.

Emotional stress of the child living in a single-parent unit was firmly supported in this study. The study confirmed the adolescent's fear, anger, guilt, shame, and loneliness in making the adjustment to the new family situation. Loneliness was, by far, the most prevalent feeling among the teenagers portrayed.

The researcher concluded that children of divorce had problems in the relationship with the other parent. Although conflicts existed in the initial break-up of the family unit, the researcher found that the adolescent gradually came to terms with the new family situation.

The study strongly supported the conclusion that adolescents experience jealousy and express disapproval when the parent begins to date. The researcher noted that of the nine adolescents who

initially disapproved of the parent dating, every one of them came
to accept, to some degree, the parent's new relationship.   In
Carrie's Games even Carrie, who went to extreme lengths to break
up her father's relationship, comes to accept Lise, her father's
new love interest.   This, perhaps, reflects society's changing
views toward remarriage and stepfamilies.

The researcher rejected the hypothesis that children of
single-parent units acted more mature and took on new
responsibilites.

Another conclusion was that adolescents of single-parent
units did not have difficulty in school.   One contributing factor
was the theme of the novels.   Of the 19 novels studied, the plot
of seven of them concentrated on another aspect of single
parenting which did not concern the school setting.   In addition,
five adolescents experienced success in school.   Two other novels
had adolescents who did not "legitimately" have problems in
school, leaving only five experiencing difficulty in school.

Recommendations

Further study could be done in this field as the number of
single-parent families continue to grow and books about the
single-parent unit continue to be written for children and young
adults.   The researcher feels that young adult authors need to
address the black single parent.   Research from 1984 showed that
56 percent of black families were headed by women (Evanson and
Uhr, 1986), yet the researcher found no black households in the
novels analyzed in this study.

Young adult authors also need to address the problem of unwed parenting in greater numbers. Birth rates of unmarried woman are reaching new heights. The problems of single-adoptive parents need to be addressed as well. The researcher found only one novel on single-parent adoption that met the selection criteria, but it was eliminated when it failed to meet the limitations of time setting.

This study supported the conclusion that adolescents experience emotional stress, particularly loneliness, in their single-parent units. This points a need for school and community groups to study the problem further and develop programs and support groups which meet the needs of these lonely adolescents.

Further study could be done in the development of programs to help single mothers deal with financial stress. This could include development of educational programs, job training, and child care programs.

Researchers interested in pursuing this subject might limit some of the aspects of this study. Researchers might do a study which compares the emotional stress of an adolescent who is living with a divorced parent with the emotional stress of an adolescent who is living with a widowed parent. Comparing emotions, such as guilt and anger, would be particularly interesting.

When the original methodology was developed, the researcher intended to use Booklist and Junior High Library Catalog as the selection tools. In order to locate enough titles that met the

criteria, the researcher added a third selection tool, School Library Journal.

The original methodology called for novels written for middle school level readers. In order to locate enough titles, the researcher expanded the parameters to include fiction written for the young adult.

Summary

A content analysis of 19 contemporary fiction novels, published between 1985-1989, was conducted to determine if these novels realistically portrayed the problems and adjustments faced by the children and parents living in single-parent families.

Books were chosen from reviews or recommendations in Booklist, School Library Journal, and Junior High Library Catalog. The books used in this study were found in the North Fayette Junior High Library, the Area Education Agency Library in Elkader, the University of Northern Iowa Youth Collection Library, and through the interlibrary loan service at the University of Northern Iowa.

The thirteen hypotheses dealt with the current status of single-parent units and the effect on the parent and the child in making the adjustment to the new family structure. Six of these hypotheses were accepted. Seven were rejected.

One can conclude that young adult fiction is realistically portraying the number of single-adoptive units, the single parent's financial stress and problems in household management, as well as the adolescent's emotional stress, problems in the

relationships with the other parent, and disapproval of the parent dating.

Young adult fiction is not realistically portraying the number of female-headed households and the causes for their formation, the single parent's emotional stress, problems in child care, and negative societal attitudes, as well as adolescent's acting more mature and having difficulty in school.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BOOKS ANALYZED

Christiansen, C. B. _A Small Pleasure_. New York: Atheneum, 1988.

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APPENDIX B

CHECK LIST FOR BOOKS ABOUT SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

Author _____Title _____

Place of pub_____Publisher_____copyright_____

Recommending source/s _____

Grade level ____   Subject headings _____

Brief summary of plot:

1. Age of main character _____ sex _____   setting _____

2. Head of household   _____male   _____female

3. Cause   ____death ____divorce ___adoption ___unwed

4. Effect on single-parent (check if mentioned)

    A. Emotional stress

        <u>symptoms</u>
        crying   _____
        weight loss or gain   _____
        sleeping difficulties   _____
        nervous tension and depression   _____
        failure to concentrate   _____

        <u>guilt feelings</u>
        feeling responsible for the loss   _____
        blaming child   _____
        being away because of work demands   _____

        <u>loneliness</u>
        withdrawing from others   _____
        spending much time at home   _____
        turning to alcohol and drugs   _____

        <u>confusion</u>
        mood swings   _____

        <u>anger</u>
        (divorce) directed toward other parent   _____
        (death) "Why did it happen to me?"   _____
        (unwed) physical abuse   _____

        <u>fear</u>
        not being able to cope w/ new situation   _____

B. Financial stress (single mothers only)

    working full-time or part-time   _____
    children having jobs   _____
    changes in living accomodations   _____
    limitations on outings and entertainment _____
    worry about the cost of college   _____
    children being denied things they would like _____

C. Problems with child-care

    discipline problems
    children not obeying, verbal battles   _____
    punishing children, taking away privileges _____
    children turning to alcohol, sex, and drugs _____
    children threatening suicide   _____

    work-related
    not getting promotions   _____
    scheduling meetings around children   _____
    not being able to participate in children's activ _____

    male households
    uncomfortable in discussing sexuality with daughters _____
    failing to meet emotional needs of children _____
    difficulty in verbalizing and exhibiting love _____
    enlisting aid of additional caretakers   _____

    female households
    mothers doing activities normally associated with
    with fatherly duties: baseball, camping   _____

D. Management of household
    complaints of not getting everything done   _____
    seeking help from children for household tasks _____
    hiring housekeepers and cooks   _____
    eating out or eating packaged food   _____

E. Societal pressures
    negative remarks by neighbors, friends, and teachers _____
    family disapproval   _____
    fear of threat of other couple's marriages _____
    change in friends   _____
    not wanting to associate with married couples _____
    hesitancy to date   _____

5. Effect on children

    A. Emotional stress

        <u>symptoms</u>
        nightmares, bedwetting, sleeplessness   _____
        crying spells   _____
        loss of appetite   _____
        withdrawal   _____
        yearning for absent parent   _____
        difficulting in concentrating   _____
        indifference to studies and playmates   _____
        withdrawal   _____

        <u>anger</u>
        verbal or physical aggression   _____
        temper tantrums, tension or anxiety attacks   _____
        rebellious in home routines and discipline   _____

        <u>guilt</u>
        feeling responsible or causing divorce, death _____
        choosing one parent over another (divorce)   _____

        <u>feelings of shame and embarrassment</u>
        being different from others   _____
        not having a father (unwed mother unit)   _____

        <u>fear</u>
        of other parent dying, rejection from adoptive
        parent   _____
        of lack of money   _____

        <u>loneliness</u>
        feeling no one is around for support, affection,
        and survival   _____
        turning to alcohol or drugs   _____

B. Acting more mature
    taking care of cooking and cleaning responsibilites   _____
    taking care of siblings   _____
    becoming a decision maker with the parent   _____
    holding jobs   _____
    having less time for socializing with peers   _____

C. (divorce) Problems in relationship with other parent _____
    taking sides   _____
    trying to be loyal to both parents   _____
    conflicts at holidays and other family celebrations   _____
    dealings with parent's antagonism toward each other   _____

D. Jealousy in parent dating   _____
    making visit of date uncomfortable   _____
    playing pranks   _____
    not participating in family activities which involve
    date   _____
    showing off and drawing attention to self   _____

E. Difficulty in school   _____
    lower academic grades   _____
    truancy, tardiness,   _____
    suspensions, expulsion, drop-outs   _____
    discipline problems   _____

Abstract

A content analysis was used to examine 19 young adult novels
to determine whether single-parent families were realistically
portrayed.

Books published between 1985-1989 were selected from
Booklist, School Library Journal, and Junior High Library Catalog.
Hypotheses dealt with the status of single-parent units and the
effect on the parent and the child in making the adjustment to the
new family structure. Six of the hypotheses were accepted; seven
were rejected. The researcher concluded that young adult fiction
was realistically portraying the status of single-adoptive units,
the single parent's financial stress and problems in household
management, as well as the adolescent's emotional stress, problems
in relationships with the other parent, and disapproval of the
parent dating. Young adult fiction was not realistically
portraying the number of female-headed households and causes for
their formation, the single parent's emotional stress, problems in
child care, and negative societal attitudes, as well as
adolescents acting more mature and having difficulty in school.

Factors that affected the study were problems in the sample,
subplots involving single-parent families, and the novels' point
of view and theme.