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THE UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

SINGLE MOTHERS AND SELF HELP GROUPS

by



Joanne Yvonne McCarthy

A Research Project
presented to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
of The University of Windsor,
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Master of Social Work

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

1981

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1981

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Professor Mae Harman	Chairman
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Joanne Y. McCarthy

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this exploratory-descriptive research project was to study the practical problems of single mothers, their psychosocial experiences, and their perceptions of the self help groups' abilities to provide help. The sample group consisted of thirty-two single mothers who were either presently, or had in the past been members of a self help group.

The majority of the mothers who were employed maintained their positions due to financial reasons while the recipients of government transfer program welcomed the opportunity to be full-time homemakers. Generally, the respondents' child care arrangements involved the use of a relative or close friend and were primarily needed to permit the single mothers to have some leisure time away from the children and home. The single mothers expressed satisfaction with their housing arrangements indicating that their present arrangements were the best possible alternatives available to them and in many cases were far superior to the accommodations they had previously known.

The single mothers' psychosocial experiences, were measured by the use of two Guttman scales and a Lickert scale. The respondents' moderate scores on the social isolation and powerlessness scales seemed to indicate that the single mothers were at least partially able to fulfill their primary need: to be good mothers for their children. The single

mothers' low level of loneliness brought about the review of two factors: the respondents' satisfaction with the interaction they received from their social network and their membership in the self help group which may have shielded them from the norms and expectations of a couples-oriented society.

In exploring the single mothers' reasons for joining the self help groups, a number of findings proved to be interesting: the mothers wished to supplement rather than replace the support provided by their families, friends and professional helpers; the reasons for joining the groups related to "social-hedonistic goals"; and the mothers seemed to be in search of others who were in similarly placed positions with whom they could share leisure activities. The respondents expressed particular satisfaction with the programs and help-giving techniques which promoted a supportive, non-threatening environment while also being conducive to meeting friends. Though the respondents did not formally acknowledge that the group provided the opportunity for the resolution of personal problems and the possibility of finding potential dating partners, they did seem to imply that these were both interesting and viable alternatives available within the group.

Recommendations for future research and the development or expansion of services were considered in light of the implications for the field of social work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I near the completion of this research project, a number of individuals should be recognized for the help they have provided. First I would like to thank the chairman of my research committee, Professor Mae Harman, for the guidance and encouragement she has provided throughout the writing of this project. As well, I wish to thank the committee members, Professor Bernhard Kroeker and Dr. Robert Whitehurst for their advice and assistance especially in rendering the text clearer and more concise.

A special word of appreciation goes to the single mothers who participated in the sample group. As well, I wish to thank the coordinators of the resource groups for their time and cooperation in the selection of the sample group: Mrs. Marlene Sweet of Parents Without Partners, Mrs. Louise Allen of the Widows and Widowers Group (Bereavement Resource Program), Mrs. Donna Gamble of the Downtown Community Citizens Organization and Mrs. Margaret West of the Big Sisters Association.

In addition to the individuals who were directly involved in the formulation of this study, I would like to thank the array of personal friends who have helped me to retain a sense of humour during even the most stressful of times over the course of the past year. Especially I wish to thank my

husband, Pat, for the love and support he has provided
throughout this academic endeavour.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF APPENDICES	-xi
CHAPTER	
I . INTRODUCTION	1
Choice of Topics	
Relevance to Social Work	
Problem Formulation	
Marital Status of the Single Mothers	
The Resource Groups	
Summary	
II . LITERATURE REVIEW	18
Practical Problems of Daily Living	
Employment	
Child Care Arrangements	
Government Transfer Programs	
Housing	
Psychological Needs	
Alienation	
Powerlessness	
Loneliness	
Self Help Groups	
Definition	
History	
Societal Recognition	
Typology of Self Help Groups	
Principles	
The Helping Process	
Limitations	
Summary	

III	METHODOLOGY	56
	Classification	
	Research Questions	
	Operational Definitions	
	Sample Source	
	Sampling Method	
	Data Collection Method	
	Instrumentation	
	Data Analysis	
	Limitations	
	Summary	
IV	DATA, ANALYSIS, AND FINDINGS	72
	Descriptive Data	
	Marital Status	
	Age	
	Level of Education	
	Income	
	Number of Children	
	Length of Time as a Single Mother	
	Practical Problems	
	Employment	
	Child Care Arrangements	
	Government Transfer Programs	
	Housing	
	Psychosocial Experiences	
	Alienation	
	Powerlessness	
	Loneliness	
	Single Mothers' Use of Self Help Groups	
	Reasons for Joining	
	Success in Meeting the Needs	
	Features, Programs and Techniques	
	Summary	
V	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	143
	Conclusions	
	Practical Problems	
	Psychosocial Experiences	
	Self Help Groups	
	Recommendations	
	APPENDICES	166
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	190
	VITA AUCTORIS	194

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		Page
1	Canadian Families by Family Structure 1971-1976	3
2	Family Structure of Lone Parent Families in Canada, 1971-1976	4
3	Marital Status of Single Mothers in Canada .	8
4	Marital Status of the Single Mothers	73
5	Age of the Single Mothers	74
6	Level of Education of the Single Mothers . .	74
7	Annual Income of the Single Mothers	75
8	Principal Source of Income of the Single Mothers	76
9	Change in Family Income at the Time of the Loss of the Spouse	77
10	Number of Children per Family	78
11	Length of Time as a Single Mother	79
12	Occupations of the Employed Single Mothers .	80
13	Reasons for Seeking Employment	81
14	Problems Associated with the Single Mothers' Employment	83
15	Type of Child Care Arrangement Most Frequently Used	85
16	Situations Under Which Child Care is Needed	86
17	Level of Satisfaction with the Child Care Arrangements	87
18	Positive Aspects of the Child Care Arrangements	87
19	Dissatisfaction with the Child Care Arrangements	89

20	Reasons for Assuming a Full-Time Homemaker Role	90
21	Positive Aspects of Government Transfer Programs	91
22	Problems Associated with the Government Transfer Programs	93
23	Type of Housing Arrangements	95
24	Level of Satisfaction with Housing Arrangements	95
25	Positive Aspects of Home Ownership	96
26	Dissatisfaction Related to Home Ownership	97
27	Positive Aspects of Private Rental	99
28	Dissatisfactions Related to Private Rental	99
29	Positive Aspects of Public Housing	101
30	Problems Associated with Public Housing	101
31	Scores Obtained from the Social Isolation Scale	105
32	Scores Obtained on the Powerlessness Scale	106
33	Scores Obtained on the Loneliness Scale	108
34	Single Mother's Perceptions of their Families' Helpfulness	111
35	Single Mothers' Perceptions of their Friends' Helpfulness	112
36	Level of Satisfaction with the Professional Services	114
37	Manner in which Self Help was Initially Heard of	117
38	Situations under which the Respondents Joined the Self Help Groups	117
39	Single Mothers' Stated Reasons for Joining Self Help Groups	121

40	Length of Time as Members of Self Help Groups	124
41	Single Mothers' Perceptions of the Helpfulness of the Groups	125
42	Single Mothers' Selection of the Most Helpful Features of Self Help Groups	128
43	Programs Most Favoured by Single Mothers	129
44	Single Mothers' Selection of the Most Helpful Help-Giving Techniques	135

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX

	Page
A Letters of Introduction to the Self Help Groups	166
B Researcher's Interview Schedule	170

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Though single mothers have maintained active roles within our communities for many years, they have quite often been denied the right to societal recognition and acceptance. As the motherled family deviates from the idealized image of the two parent family, it is viewed with suspicion and apprehension. Surviving as a single mother in a society that emphasizes values for couples is an arduous task demanding much stamina and ingenuity.

As many of the single mothers have sought to overcome the crisis period following the loss of their spouse and to later re-organize their lifestyles, they have rallied to one another's side to offer mutual support. The encouragement the single mothers have received from members of self help groups has often been instrumental in helping them to continue reaching for their goals.

The purpose of this research project is to further study the difficulties encountered by the single mothers and to explore the means they have found to help one another. Though informal support systems have played a major part in helping the single mothers to adjust to their newly acquired role of single parents, it appears that little empirical research has been done in this area. Thus it is the intent of this study

to further explore and describe the practical problems encountered by the single mothers and the manner in which self help groups may be of service to this population.

Choice of Topics

The researcher's interest in the topic of single mothers and their use of self help groups dates back to the time of her field placement during her final year of the undergraduate social work programme at the University of Windsor in 1977-78. The opportunity to work with this client group in the capacity of a social work student provided the researcher with a preliminary understanding of the special demands placed on single mothers. It soon became evident that daily occurrences that could be easily overcome in a two parent family became major difficulties in a one parent family. The responsibilities associated with single parenthood often seemed to lead to the mother's alienation from the mainstream of society. Though the researcher recognized that the social service agencies were attempting to help the single parents cope with their situation, it appeared that many of the women continued to perceive themselves as powerless and isolated. The researcher sensed that it was not until these issues were addressed directly that the single mothers could once again gain control of their own destinies.

The extent and nature of the single mothers' social network seemed to be an important, though often forgotten, factor in their adjustment to their new role. The mothers' social network seemed to determine the quality of the support

they received during the most crucial times. It ^athus became evident that a study of single mothers and the difficulties they have encountered should also include the manner in which many have obtained the necessary support through informal support systems, also often referred to as self help groups.

Relevance to Social Work

The study of single mothers and self help groups is relevant to the field of social work for a variety of reasons. According to Statistics Canada, in 1976, two parent families made up 90.5% of all Canadian families while 9.5% were headed by a single parent. Of the single parent families, 83% were motherled families while the remaining 17% were fatherled (Canada Census, 1976). In its 1976 report Women and Poverty, the National Council of Welfare indicated the increasing proportion of motherled families over a ten year period.

While female-headed single parent families accounted for 6.6% of all Canadian families in 1966, their share grew to 7.4% in 1971 and 8.1% in 1976. (National Council of Welfare, 1979, p. 11)

TABLE 1

Canadian Families By Family Structure, 1971-1976

	1971		1976	
	Population	Percentage	Population	Percentage
Husband-Wife Families	4,575,640	90.5%	5,168,560	90.2%
Male Parent Families	100,355	2.0	94,990	1.7
Female Parent Families	377,165	7.5	464,345	8.1
Total Families	5,053,170	100.0%	5,727,895	100.0%

Adapted from Canada Census, 1971-1976.

As the number of single mothers increase thus bringing about a potential augmentation in their use of social service programmes, it is crucial that social workers acquire a basic understanding of their special needs. In order to be considered a meaningful resource to motherled families, social workers must be aware of the practical problems as well as the psychosocial experiences specific to this client population.

TABLE 2

Family Structure of Lone Parent
Families in Canada 1971-1976

	1971		1976	
	Population	Percentage	Population	Percentage
Male Parent Families	100,355	21%	94,990	17%
Female Parent Families	377,165	79	464,345	83
Total Lone Parent Families	477,525	100%	559,330	100%

Adapted from Canada Census, 1971-1976

In their capacity as change agents, social workers may also play a critical part in the education of the public in regards to the status of the motherled family. As social workers join forces with the single mothers to help bring about a change in societal attitudes, the motherled family may no longer be viewed as an oddity but rather as a variation of the nuclear family brought about by the nature of the

society in which it exists.

The study of self help groups may also be of value to the social work profession. The acknowledgment of the client's informal support systems and the manner in which they offer help enables the social worker to identify a previously neglected resource. Research into the dynamics of mutual aid groups allows the social worker to determine the helpful characteristics of such groups and to eventually mobilize resources that are easily accessible to the client.

Problem Formulation

The first task undertaken in the formulation of the problem was the identification of the major problems and experiences of the single mothers. After an extensive review of the literature it was decided to consider the practical problems of daily living encountered by the single mothers as well as their psychosocial experiences.

Much of the research in recent years has meticulously outlined the areas of difficulty most often encountered by motherled families. Many of these include practical problems most often associated with the daily maintenance of a home and family. In her 1971 study of 112 single parents across Canada, Guyatt found that 65.5% believed insufficient income to be a major problem whereas 69.6% had experienced some difficulty in the area of child care whether it be due to a lack of day care or unsatisfactory arrangements after school or during the summer months. While 27.7% mentioned that housing had been the source of much worry, 17% had come across some

quandary in their search for employment (Guyatt, 1971). Therefore it was decided that the researcher should direct some attention to the single mothers' pragmatic concerns hence focusing on the difficulties encountered in the areas of employment, child care arrangements, government transfer programs and housing.

In addition to the practical problems, single mothers have also faced a realm of stressful emotional situations. In the 1973 follow-up investigation to the British National Child Development Study, 75% of the 168 single parent respondents acknowledged having suffered from loneliness at some time after the loss of their spouse. Many also stated that the attitudes of those around them further accentuated their feelings of isolation (Ferri, 1976). In view of the single mother's present status in our society, it was deemed appropriate to include the concept of powerlessness as a relevant factor affecting her emotional welfare. Thus the psychosocial needs of the single mothers have focused on the concepts of alienation, as measured by social isolation as well as powerlessness and loneliness.

Preliminary investigations in the area of self help groups, as reported in the literature, seemed to indicate their merit in regards to helping individuals cope with stressful emotional situations. Romeder summarized the findings of Cassel's work indicating the worth of a person's informal social networks.

The study of a sample of some 7,000 California adults followed over a nine year period indicated that among those most socially isolated there was a mortality rate of more than twice that of those with the most social contacts: whether married or unmarried, having contacts with friends or relatives, belonging to a church, belonging to informal or formal group associations. . . it seems realistic to believe that self help groups can have a considerable impact on the psychological and economic costs attributable to the loneliness and social isolation which affect countless Canadians. (Romeder, 1981, p. 11)

In view of these findings, the researcher wished to emphasize the single mothers' perceptions and usage of self help groups. As much of the literature has acclaimed the merits of self help groups by making reference to the groups' objectives, structure and process, the research highlighted these areas.

Marital Status of the Single Mothers

The marital status of the single mothers can be classified according to the following four categories: widowhood, divorce, separation or never having married. According to Statistics Canada in 1976, 41.6% of the single mothers were widowed, 26.2% were separated, 20.9% were divorced, 7.5% were never married and 3.7% had spouses who were absent (Canada Census, 1976).

In 1976 widows comprised the largest proportion of single mothers. In a 1971 study of Canadian single parents, Guyatt found that widows were generally older and had fewer children living at home. Their financial difficulties were also not as great as those experienced by the divorced and separated mothers (Guyatt, 1971).

TABLE 3

Marital Status of Single Mothers in Canada

	Population	Percentage
Widowed	193,055	41.6%
Separated	121,840	26.2
Divorced	97,245	20.9
Never Married	34,790	7.5
Married Spouse Absent	29,590	3.7
Total	559,335	99.9%

Adapted from Canada Census, 1976

Though society generally accepts widowhood much more readily than any other single parent status, widows too must nevertheless contend with many societal misgivings. Many individuals are uncomfortable with the notion of death, so widows are often avoided even among their previously close circle of friends. This isolation, leading to loneliness, is often the most critical problem encountered by widows who would normally seek the opportunity to talk of their past lives with their husbands as well as their spouses' deaths (Murdock, 1980).

In his book, One Parent Family, Schlesinger has identified six phases of the recently-widowed person's adjustment to the loss: bereavement, numbness and disbelief, mourning, trial and error adjustments, the renewal of old routines and

the adoption of new ones and finally the recovery stage (Schlesinger, 1978). In a study of 74 single parents in Metropolitan Toronto, Moore ascertained that reactions most often observed among recently widowed individuals included loneliness, bitterness, guilt, hostility, problems in making decisions, and sleep disturbances (Guyatt, 1971). Marris' description of the widow's reaction to the death of her spouse encompasses "physical symptoms; a loss of contact with reality, the tendency to withdraw and hostility" (Guyatt, 1971, p. 8).

The separated mothers also constitute a sizeable proportion of the single parent population. In a 1978 study of 30 separated women living in Canadian urban centres, the predominant factors leading to marital strife and eventual separation were discord over financial matters, lack of stability and incompatibility (Schlesinger, 1978).

The separated mothers have also faced a host of different problems both within their families and in their relationships with those outside the home. The uncertainty of the status of the marriage has quite often led the single mother to exist in either an emotional vacuum or turmoil (Guyatt, 1971). The separated woman may have also felt a sense of failure as the marriage did not fulfill its initial contract of enduring forever. As the single mother assumes the total responsibility for the care of the children she may feel hostility toward her former spouse as well as guilt and confusion (Schlesinger, 1974). Outside of the home the single mother

may feel she is treated with mistrust and disdain as the general public perceives her to have rejected and threatened the societal institution of marriage (Guyatt, 1971).

Though the divorced women have some warning of their impending status as single parents, they must deal with a number of trying circumstances. Difficulties arise as the parents seek to re-establish two homes while also maintaining their relationships with the children (Schlesinger, 1974). There may also be financial hardships that cause the family to drastically alter their lifestyle.

Outside the home the divorced parent may face recriminations. According to Guyatt many women consider a divorced single mother as a "threat to marital harmony" while the men view her as an "opportunist and sexual adventuress" (Guyatt, 1971, p. 60).

The final marital status to be considered is the never married single parent. In a 1960 British study, Wimperis found never married mothers to be younger than most other single parents (Guyatt, 1971). In a survey of 59 unmarried mothers in London, Ontario, it was found that the practical aspects of daily living were presenting a number of difficulties. Inadequate financial assistance, improper housing and the lack of day care facilities made daily living difficult while also making planning for the future impossible (Schlesinger, 1978).

The unmarried mother also experiences emotional upheaval as she faces the uncertainty of the future with the responsi-

bility of a child. She may feel a loss of self esteem as she anticipates the disapproval of her family and friends. Though societal attitudes are becoming progressively more accepting of the unmarried mother she most often is the subject of some discrimination. This is further validated in Baker's article, Ironies of Truth, in which she states

Socially, an unmarried mother is more likely to be condemned for going out and enjoying life than any other female. (Barber, 1975, p. 57)

The Resource Groups

The researcher sought the support of four local groups from which the sample of single mothers was eventually drawn. Three of these groups were self help groups operating in the Windsor area: Parents Without Partners, Widows and Widowers of Windsor and the Downtown Community Citizens Organization. The final group, the Big Sister Association, was included as many of the Little Sisters have come from motherled families where the mother has been involved with a self help group.

The most popular of the self help groups designed to help single parents has undoubtedly been Parents Without Partners. According to Clayton, Parents Without Partners is an

international, non-profit, non-sectarian educational organization devoted to the welfare and interests of single parents and their children. (1971, p. 328)

Though its origin dates back to 1957, Parents Without Partners (P.W.P.) may boast of a membership of 180,000 organized into 900 chapters in four countries (Murdock, 1980).

After an extensive study of one P.W.P. chapter whose

membership included approximately 600 single parents, Weiss identified four components of the organization in which the members could become involved: administrative work, discussion groups, social activities and children's activities. The programme was designed to help the single parents cope with four areas of stress: the absence of a supporting social network, the absence of friends experiencing similar problems, the absence of any support for a feeling of personal worth, and the absence of close interpersonal ties (Weiss, 1973).

The Windsor chapter of Parents Without Partners has a membership of approximately 325 participants. The chapter, which adheres to the guidelines set forth by the international organization, is governed by a local Board of Directors. Four committees are designated to oversee the operation of the group: the program committee, the adult activities committee, the children's activities committee and the membership committee.

The second self help group to be considered, the Widows and Widowers of Windsor, is concerned with the needs of the individuals who have lost a spouse through death. Perhaps the oldest of such self help groups is Naim, a Chicago-based organization, founded in 1956. With a current membership of over 1,000 Catholic widows and widowers, Naim seeks to provide an alternate source of informal support (Bankoff, 1979).

In a 1979 study of the Chicago chapter of Naim, Bankoff learned that members of the group had initially joined the organization in order to increase their social network. The

study indicated that even though the members of Naim considered their families and friends very supportive in everyday situations, this was not the case during the period of grief following the crisis brought about by the death of the spouse (Bankoff, 1976).

Bankoff also explored the motivations of the widowed persons which led to their decision to join Naim. In view of the problems facing the recently bereaved person, a group in which all members shared a common experience and life situation seemed very appealing and reassuring to the members (Bankoff, 1976). This relates to Lopata's stance that widowhood is becoming increasingly difficult as most recreational groups emphasize couple-oriented activities (Lopata, 1969). As the individual loses not only a role but much of a previously acquired status with the death of a spouse, an alternative social support group with whom common experiences can be shared is a valuable resource.

The Widows and Widowers are a Windsor based self help group intended to provide a "place for widowed persons to share experiences and to help one another". The group was founded in 1976 by a widow in search of individuals who shared similar experiences and problems. Presently the group has approximately 150 active members. Though the group was initially operated from a local church it has since developed an affiliation to the Canadian Mental Health Association.

In order to adequately accommodate the needs of the widowed persons two groups have been formed: the Young Widows

and Widowers Group serving the needs of young and middle age adults, and the Glenwood Widows and Widowers' Group whose programme is geared toward meeting the needs of the older population. In addition to discussion groups and guest speakers, there are many recreational events intended to help the single parents become re-integrated into an active social life. Members of the group may also act as volunteers to help the recently bereaved through their grief on a one to one basis.

The third self help group to be discussed is the Downtown Community Citizens Organization. Social action groups or neighbourhood organizations gained popularity during the course of the 1960's. The National Council of Welfare makes the distinction between a social service and social action: While the service is preoccupied with what it can do for the person, social action is concerned with what the group can do in cooperation with the individual (National Council of Welfare, 1973).

In his article, The Role of Motivation and Self Image in Social Change in Slum Areas, Clinard has emphasized the extent to which the individual's personal identity is influenced by his environment. Clinard has gone on to stipulate that the individual who has the opportunity to help bring about change through participation in a self help group gains far more than just material accomplishments: a sense of self worth is either fostered or further reinforced (1970).

Haggstrom has identified five characteristics of effec-

tive social action among groups designed to help the poor.

- 1/ the poor see themselves as the source of the action
 - 2/ the actions affect in major ways the preconceptions, values or interests of institutions and persons defining the poor
 - 3/ the action demands much in effort and skill or in other ways becomes salient to major areas of the personalities of the poor
 - 4/ the action ends in success
 - 5/ the successful self-originated important action increases the force and number of symbolic or non-symbolic communications of the potential worth or individual power of individuals who are poor.
- (Clinard, 1970, p. 326).

Finally Vattano has outlined three major types of social action that have gained much popularity over the years. The community organization groups of the 1940's, intended to improve the living condition of the poor, were made popular by Saul Alinsky; the mobilization for youth movement of the sixties aimed to help restore unity among disintegrated families whereas the Welfare Rights organizations of the late 1960's were "formed to protect the civil rights of recipients who are threatened by the welfare system's abuses, humiliations and deprivations" (1972, p. 12).

Founded in 1967, the Downtown Community Citizens Organization was created in response to the needs of the residents living within the Glengarry Court Windsor Housing Project. Among the citizens' primary concerns were the lack of recreational facilities in the area as well as the gap in the service delivery of many resources in the fields of social welfare, health, legal aid and housing.

At the present time the D.C.C.O. remains a neighbourhood organization operated and maintained by the citizens for the

citizens. Though the total membership includes approximately 400 individuals, the smooth operation of the organization relies heavily on a core of twenty volunteers. There are three main components to the programme: the tenants' committee which acts as the liaison between the tenants and the Windsor Housing Authority, the recreational facilities based out of the Community Centre seek to meet the needs of the senior citizens, adults and children and finally the Action Centre which acts as the focal point for meetings and discussion groups also provides a telephone information and referral service.

The final resource group from which members of the sample group were selected was the Big Sister Association. This organization introduces a woman who would like to volunteer some of her time to a girl under the age of sixteen who might benefit from a friendship. In the event that the match is successful and a relationship is developed, the woman is referred to as the Big Sister while the girl is known as the Little Sister.

As the Big Sisters staff were aware that some of the Little Sisters were from families where the mothers were single and had some contact with a self help group, the researcher enlisted their help in the search of a sample group. The self help groups with which these mothers were affiliated included Parents Without Partners (where the mothers were not contacted by the P.W.P. coordinator), the Bloomfield Action Centre, Alcoholics Anonymous, and Parents

Anonymous.

Alcoholics Anonymous and Parents Anonymous, the only groups not previously mentioned, are self help groups categorized by Katz and Bender as "outcast haven or rock bottom groups" (1976, p. 36). Their main objective involves the control of maladaptive behaviours while promoting the substitution of healthy goal-directed behaviour. The groups provide an extensive social network from which support can be drawn at any time.

Summary

This chapter has served to introduce the study by exploring the researcher's interest in the topic, elaborating on its relevance to social work and explaining the means by which the problem was formulated. An overview of the single mothers' marital status and their respective difficulties was provided as well as a description of the four resource groups from which the sample was drawn.

The second chapter will review the pertinent literature according to the single mothers' practical problems of daily living, their psychosocial needs, and finally their perceptions and usage of self help groups. The third chapter will introduce the methodology while the fourth chapter will concentrate on the data analysis and the research findings. Conclusions and recommendations will be found in the final chapter.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review the most pertinent and recent literature pertaining to the single mother's practical problems of daily living, their psychosocial experiences and their perceptions and usage of self help groups. While the practical problems are further subdivided to include employment, child care arrangements, government transfer programs and housing, the psychosocial experiences of the single mothers are considered in view of their feelings of alienation, powerlessness and loneliness. The literature pertaining to self help groups is reviewed according to the groups' characteristics, history, recent popularity, typology, structural features, and specific help giving techniques and processes.

Practical Problems of Daily Living

While the literature contained a great deal of information regarding the factors leading to the single mothers' decision to seek employment, it also adequately recognized the difficulties inherent in this choice. Much of the literature regarding child care elaborated on the lack of day care facilities while giving considerably less attention to alternate arrangements. The factors leading single mothers

to public assistance and the deficiencies in this system are thoroughly covered. The literature concerning the housing of the single mothers has provided insight into the positive and negative aspects of both public and private rental of accommodation. The literature pertaining to the single mothers' practical problems of daily living was extensive thus providing a thorough portrayal of the difficulties.

Employment The literature has indicated that single mothers facing the reality of maintaining a home and raising children on their own were likely to experience some financial difficulties. In a 1973 follow-up investigation of the British National Child Development Study, slightly more than 50% of the single parents indicated that they encountered serious financial problems after the loss of a spouse. The families experienced a decrease in financial assets as well as a drop in their standard of living. Eventually the diminished income led to concerns in the areas of shelter, diet, clothing and recreational opportunities (Ferri, 1976).

The 1973 British study revealed that 44% of the current income of fatherless families was obtained by a household member's employment in the work force whereas 56% of the families were maintained by state benefits (Ferri, 1976). In their 1976 report, One in a World of Two's, the National Council of Welfare indicates that 45% of Canadian female single parents were employed full-time whereas 41.5% of the mothers were in receipt of government transfer payments (1976). Though variations were indicated, there appeared to

be an almost equal representation of single mothers in the labour force as there were receiving public funds.

The literature has quite adequately explored potential factors leading to the single mothers' decision to seek employment in the competitive work force as opposed to assuming the role of full-time homemaker. A 1972 study by McDay, George and Wilding surveyed the attitudes of parents in the community with regards to the single mothers' option to work or remain at home with the children. The study indicated that 90% of those questioned believed that single mothers should remain at home with pre-school children; 63% of the respondents preferred to see single mothers with school age children limit their outside work to part-time employment (Ferri, 1976).

A Canadian study endorsed by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services demonstrated the extent to which child care arrangements were a determining factor in the mother's decision to work or remain at home. In this study, 414 mothers in receipt of Mothers' Allowance were asked to state their attitudes regarding a single mother's decision to work in relation to the potential child care arrangements. A majority of the mothers (69.8%) stated they believed that a mother should be able to work outside the home if her pre-school children were being cared for by someone like a grandmother. The least popular choice involved arrangements in which the pre-school children were taken care of in someone else's home. Only 28.6% of the mothers inter-

viewed supported the latter option (1973). The child care arrangements were obviously a determining factor in the mother's decision to work or remain at home.

In its 1977 report, Jobs and Poverty, the National Council of Welfare stated that

work brings self respect and personal satisfaction and defines a person's position in his community; work is a core institution which provides order and meaning to our daily lives. (1977, p. 1)

This viewpoint is further supported by Robert Weiss' study in which single mothers indicated a desire to work since it provided them with a sense of independence and a social situation that did not impose complex emotional demands. The women reported that their ability to independently support their families enhanced their self-esteem (1979). In addition to the economic pressures leading single mothers to work, the need for a diversion from housework was also noted in the One Parent Family Study conducted by the Canadian Council on Social Development (1971).

Much of the literature focused on the limited employment opportunities available to the single mothers wishing to re-enter the labour force after a prolonged absence. The National Council of Welfare reported that there are two types of labour markets: the normal labour market in which promotion is based on merit and the marginal labour market in which the number of hours worked per week is the only factor determining the weekly salary. The marginal labour market in which most single mothers take part is characterized by low wages, little opportunity of advancement and quite

often irregular or unstable work. The Council has gone on to state that many women are prevented from joining the normal labour market due to unnecessary educational requirements and employers' discrimination on the basis of sex, age and marital status (1977).

In her article entitled Women, Power and Powerlessness, Caroline Bird has referred to the meaningless jobs in which many single mothers are trapped. Bird has labelled such jobs "pink collar jobs" that can at very best provide "pin money" for the family (1979).

George and Wilding in their 1972 study reported that most mothers working full-time were employed in clerical or factory-related occupations. They went on to state that the wage scheme and the working conditions intrinsic to such "manual jobs" did not allow single parents the flexibility needed to satisfactorily combine work and a stable home situation (Ferri, 1976).

A 1971 study of single mothers in receipt of Family Benefits in Metropolitan Toronto indicated that 33.3% of the mothers were employed in the craftsmen, production process; 26.8% in the clerical area; and 24.3% in the service and recreation fields (Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1973).

The difficulties experienced in regard to the single mothers' decision to maintain fulltime employment while assuming sole responsibility of their home and family were well covered in the 1973 British study. In the follow-up

survey of the National Child Development Study, single mothers were asked to enumerate the problems they most often encountered in relation to their full-time employment. The parents reported a great deal of stress regarding their decision to leave the children to care for themselves for longer periods of time as well as the additional responsibility given to the older children in the family. Exhaustion and tension in addition to the limited time for leisure activities constituted a major area of concern for the working mothers. The need for reasonable and flexible hours were priorities in the parents' selection of an occupation. The lower pay imposed as a result of the nature of the occupation was a source of much frustration for the entire single parent family. The unavailability and high cost of day care and the lack of adequate transportation created almost insurmountable problems for the family (Ferri, Robinson, 1976).

Child Care Arrangements In the event that a single mother has chosen to seek or continue employment outside the home on a full-time basis, provision for the care of the children during the mother's working hours must be made. The literature has identified municipally administered day care facilities as an invaluable resource for the single mother with young children.

Bryan Knight, author of Enjoying Single Parenthood and himself a single parent, has argued that there is a need for subsidized licensed day care centres in which the sole criteria for admission is the child's readiness to attend

the centre. Day care should ideally be a community service whose only purpose is to enhance the welfare of the child (1980).

However the literature has provided evidence that this is not an accurate portrayal of the present situation. In 1973 the National Council of Welfare reported that of the estimated 362,000 spaces needed for children of one-parent families, there were 55,181 spaces currently available. A mere 15.2% of the children from one parent families who could have potentially benefited from day care could have actually been accommodated (1976). The lack of day care services rather than the inefficiency of the service seems to have been the issue.

The high cost of day care may be identified as a situation warranting attention. Non-subsidized municipally administered day care can cost a family approximately \$3,000.00 annually for the care of one child enrolled in a full-time program (Windsor Social Services). The burden of such a cost for an untrained single mother whose only hope of employment is in the marginal labour force, with its minimal income, has been a significant factor dissuading her from seeking help outside the home (Guyatt, 1971). A family whose monthly expenses exceed its income may qualify for a subsidy under the Special Assistance Program of the Social Services. However a major criticism of the subsidy program is the lack of pertinent information disseminated to the mothers who might benefit from it most (Canadian Council on

Social Development, 1976).

The literature has cited a number of other difficulties intrinsic to the delivery of this crucial service. Many of the women interviewed during the 1971 Canadian Inquiry reported a discrepancy between the normal operating hours of most day care centres and their needs for such services (Canadian Council on Social Development, 1971). As many single mothers who were employed in clerical or factory related occupations were forced to work shifts, weekends, and holidays, the need for the provision of day care during hours other than the regular 9:00a.m. to 5:00 p.m. working hours was clearly indicated.

However the problems regarding child care have not been restricted to the single mothers who are employed during irregular hours. Arrangements pertaining to the care of the children of motherled families in which the mother works during the day must include provision for lunch-hour and after-school supervision. The unavailability of such programs has been clearly demonstrated in a 1976 report by the National Council of Welfare. The report, One in a World of Two's, has indicated that a mere 2.2% of the school age children of motherled families could actually be accommodated in lunch-hour and after-school programs (1976). The Council has gone on to report that such programs varied greatly from one municipality to the next and were quite often organized in a very haphazard manner (1976).

Though the literature has stressed the inadequacy of day care services, the researchers have also given some attention to alternative arrangements for the care of the children from motherled families. Of the 168 single parent families with pre-school children participating in the follow-up investigation to the National Child Development Study, 73.3% reported that they depended on relatives to provide the necessary help while approximately 20% of the children were cared for by local day nurseries (Ferri, 1976).

Private child care arrangements with a family member or a close friend or neighbour were often preferred as these provided stability and ease of mind for the single mother. Women taking part in the 1971 Canadian Inquiry also reported making use of occasional babysitters though it appears that this arrangement was often unsatisfactory as the babysitters were unavailable when needed on short notice. The Inquiry also reported emergency situations in which mothers were forced to leave their children with babysitters who were either unknown or mistrusted (National Council on Social Development, 1971).

Government Transfer Programs In his book, Enjoying Single Parenthood, Bryan Knight has stated that single mothers are faced with two basic societal prejudices: a mother belongs at home with her children and "no one should receive something for nothing" (Knight, 1980, p. 67). Whether the single mother sought employment or remained at home, either by choice or necessity, she most often had to face the

discrimination of a very judgemental public.

The literature has indicated that government transfer programs were often the only viable alternative available to the single mother remaining at home. In addition to the single mother's preference for assuming the role of full-time homemaker, the literature gave evidence of a number of other factors leading her to public assistance. The lack of day care services as well as their high cost have been instrumental in keeping many single mothers in their homes to care for their young children (Guyatt, 1971). The nature of the labour market has acted as a deterrent to single mothers' search for employment. The inaccessibility of suitable occupations with adequate wages, the inflexible attitudes of many employers regarding single mothers and the difficulties inherent in transportation for both the single mother and her children were practical but very often insurmountable obstacles to employment (National Council of Welfare, 1976). Acquiring new job-related skills through the educational process also presented similar problems regarding child care and transportation.

By far the most popular government transfer program under provincial jurisdiction is the Family Benefits Allowance. It provides benefits on the basis of need to the following: divorced or widowed mothers with children who are under the age of eighteen and still attending school as well as unwed mothers who are sixteen years of age or older and where the child is at least three months old. Similarly a deserted

wife is covered where the husband has been absent for a period of three months. OHIP coverage, drug and dental benefits are also included. In an attempt to provide extra incentive, this program enables the mother to work a maximum of one hundred and twenty hours monthly, with maximum earnings of \$125.00 per month. A financial phasing out program has also been implemented whereby benefits are provided on a diminishing scale in the first three months during which a mother returns to work, regardless of income (Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1975).

The General Welfare Allowance is a municipally administered cost sharing program intended to provide assistance on a short term basis. Women who are classified as separated and awaiting Mother's Allowance can benefit from this source. In addition to financial assistance for daily living expenses, funds are available for special needs such as moving, surgical supplies, vocational training and transportation. (Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1975).

The problems associated with government transfer programs have been subject to much discussion in the literature. In a 1973 study of single mothers in receipt of Family Benefits allowances, 40.5% thought that their income should be increased and particularly in the areas of food, clothing and rent. While 25% of the women recommended the expansion of health-related services, 19.3% recommended an increase in the number of hours in which a single mother is permitted to work part-time in order to supplement her allowance. Other recom-

mendations included the provision for the purchase of major household items, a subsidy for transportation, the issue of allowances twice monthly, changes in the procedural requirements and a greater dissemination of information pertaining to the recipient's rights under the program (Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1973).

In addition to the practical problems inherent in the social assistance programs, consideration was also given to the more serious effects of the stigma associated with such programs. Of the single mothers participating in a 1973 study, 10% specifically stated that they felt stigmatized by the general population due to their status as recipients of Mothers' Allowance. Of the single parents who found it difficult to accept their own status as government transfer recipients, many felt displeasure at the thought of being "dependent" on someone else for financial assistance.

As recipients of public funds, these single mothers were also quite often subject to the scrutiny of welfare workers and administrators. "The invasion of privacy intensifies the single mother's sense of frustration and leads to the erosion of their self concept" (National Council of Welfare, 1976, p. 21).

In its 1976 report, the National Council of Welfare has stated:

The existing welfare system. . . is a trap: a trap which our society has built and which dooms its victims to poverty, hopelessness, frustration, and continued dependence. (1976, p. 22)

In spite of these overwhelming problems, single mothers interviewed in the 1971 Ministry of Community and Social Services study were able to state some positive aspects of the social assistance programs. While 52.2% of the single mothers considered the regular income an asset, 24.3% appreciated the opportunity to remain home and care for their children. Of the total mothers, 16.4% stated that they were satisfied with the health services provided through the program. Other single mothers in receipt of Mother's Allowance stated that it was a good alternative to work as they could not earn enough in the labour force to sustain their families; and still others said that it was better than municipal welfare and they enjoyed the independence it allowed them. Finally 6.9% of the mothers believed that the Family Benefits Program was totally bad and would prefer to work if they did not have the responsibilities for the care of the young children (Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1973, p. 72).

Housing The literature has surveyed the discrepancy existing between the rates of home ownership among two parent families as opposed to motherled families. The National Council of Welfare reported that 74.5% of two parent families living in Canada owned their own homes whereas 31.7% of motherled families had ownership of their homes (1976). Though the British figures are generally lower, a similar trend has existed in the United Kingdom: 50% of two parent families have ownership of their dwelling places whereas 25%

of motherled families own their homes (Ferri, 1976). The British Finer Committee report has indicated that 50% of the unmarried mothers and 20% of the separated mothers in receipt of public assistance in 1972 were forced to take up residence with someone else in order to reduce expenses (Barber, 1975).

The problems related to the rental of an apartment were explored at great lengths in the literature. In seeking private rental accommodation for their families, single mothers have had to confront the prejudices of landlords. According to the National Council of Welfare landlords have frequently refused to rent to single mothers as they either suspect that the family is unstable, the mother is unable to pay the rent or the children will damage the apartment. An additional problem that the single mothers have faced pertains to the lack of any previous credit record that would establish their reliability in financial matters. This situation makes it virtually impossible for the single mother to obtain loans that would greatly facilitate the transition to single parenthood (Knight, 1980).

A second problem related to private rental has been the high cost of apartments that were very often substandard and overcrowded. In the follow-up project of the National Child Development Study, Ferri and Robinson reported that the lack of space for teenagers was the single mother's primary reason for dissatisfaction with the home environment (1976). Ferri expanded on this point stating that inadequate space for the single family leads to the lack of privacy and subsequently

to much frustration and stress (1976).

As the single mother's income has often been too low to compete for adequate rental accommodation, she must opt for public housing. The Canadian Council on Social Development has documented the public housing tenants' primary grievances against the projects in which they have resided. The lengthy waiting period for the more modern apartments and the overcrowded environments of the housing projects were of major concern to the single mothers (1971).

In a study carried out by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, single mothers in receipt of the Family Benefits Allowance were asked whether or not they were satisfied with their present type of rental accommodation in relation to its effect on the children. Of the total respondents, 57.2% expressed appreciation for the physical conditions and neighbourhood facilities present in the immediate vicinity of their public housing project. The single mothers who believed that the public housing community did not provide an appropriate setting for their children were most concerned with the social aspects of the environments. More specifically 41.2% of the single mothers worried about the drug usage among the local teenagers (Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1973).

Psychosocial Experiences

The psychosocial experiences of the single mothers were considered in view of their feelings of alienation, powerlessness and loneliness. Though the literature abounds with

material pertaining to the sociological perspective of alienation, very little information has been made available regarding the single mother's experience of alienation except to reaffirm its existence. The discussion of powerlessness found in the literature seemed to have a sociological orientation and did not adequately describe the psychological experiences of lone parents in regards to their lack of power. The concept of loneliness, especially among widows, is well researched as made evident by the prolific literature available in this area.

Alienation Throughout the literature a wide variety of definitions are offered for the concept of alienation. By far the most prolific writers in this area are Marx, who believed men to become alienated as a result of their frustration in their work situation (Finifter, 1972), and Durkheim, who popularized the concept of anomie (Durkheim, 1972).

Though contemporary writers have been unable to agree on a specific meaning for the concept of alienation, Finifter states

there seems to be a convergence in both theoretical and empirical writings around the idea that alienation is produced by a discrepancy between strongly internalized aspirations, norms and values on the one hand and the opportunities perceived by the individual for fulfilling them on the other. (Finifter, 1972, p. 9)

Melvin Seeman has offered a comprehensive typology of the various aspects of the concept of alienation. The five usages of the concept as outlined by Seeman include powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self

estrangement (Seeman, 1959). This concept of alienation is viewed as a social-psychological construct and can be empirically measured with the use of any of the suggested variants. In their 1976 study of the dimensions of family alienation, Neal, Ivoska and Groat have operationalized these five variants in order to demonstrate their flexibility and reliability as instruments of measurement (Neal et al., 1976).

According to Seeman, powerlessness has referred to "the expectance or probability held by the individual that his own behaviour cannot determine the occurrence of the outcomes, or reinforcements, he seeks" (Seeman, 1959, p. 784). Seeman operationalized the term meaninglessness by "focusing upon the fact that it is characterized by a low expectancy that satisfactory predictions about future outcomes of behaviour can be made" (Seeman, 1959, p. 786). Normlessness refers to a "situation in which the social norms regulating individual conduct have broken down or are no longer effective as rules for behaviour" (Seeman, 1959, p. 787). "Social isolation entails the assignment of a low reward value to goals or beliefs that are typically highly valued in the given society" (Seeman, 1959, p. 788). The notion of self-estrangement refers to the "degree of dependence of the given behaviour upon anticipated future rewards, that is, upon rewards that lie outside the activity itself" (Seeman, 1959, p. 789).

However, in order to conceptualize the manner in which single mothers have been alienated from the mainstream of society, the literature pertaining to the female's indoctri-

nation into her roles as wife and mother must be critically examined. As this socialization process must be understood within its proper historical context, the literature taking note of societal trends is of particular significance.

Prior to the age of industrialization the family was seen as the major societal institution around which most of the person's time and energy was focused. The economic and social status of an individual of either sex was very often pre-determined by his home and family (Ross, Sawhill, 1975).

However as the industrial revolution gained momentum, the benefits of specialized technology received increasing recognition. As time went on, a very clear distinction was made between "the domestic life of the family and the arena of economic production" (Sutton, 1975, p. 190). While the male endeavoured to succeed in the business world and actively sought the growth and development of production, the female's concern in the home was to ensure social morality. Sutton makes the point that a woman's status is conferred upon her whereas a man has the means and flexibility to achieve his status (Sutton, 1975).

This theme is carried on in Ross and Sawhill's work in which the division of labour is referred to as "men as specializing in the market work whereas women specialize in home work" (Ross and Sawhill, 1975, p. 166). Thus existing in a society in which status and a sense of worth have been conditional upon the individual's ability to produce in the outside world, single mothers who have maintained their role

as homemakers have become increasingly alienated.

Bart has further expanded on this concept stipulating that women have been socialized to become alienated within their own homes. She has pointed to the helplessness women experience when home appliances are broken and they must depend on a man for most household repairs (1976). This sense of estrangement has been rendered much more acute for the single mother as she has often had to depend on male relatives and friends to help with the household tasks that are usually assigned to the husband.

However, in view of recent technological advances making birth control a feasible alternative, women have been granted a variety of new opportunities. It is estimated that in 1950, 25% of the women were gainfully employed as compared to a 1976 statistic indicating that 45% of the female population had joined the labour force (Statistics Canada, 1950-1976).

Powerlessness Much of the literature pertaining to powerlessness has made reference to the socializing process by which the individual's dependency is encouraged. In his article entitled In the Beginning: Helpless and Dependent, Gaylin has stated that an individual begins his life in a state of utter dependency. Though Gaylin has emphatically stated that this dependency is meant to be outgrown, the individual is often prevented from doing so by the paternalistic attitudes of the social system (1978).

Ira Glasser concurs with this view in his article, Prisoners of Benevolence: Power Versus Liberty in the Welfare State. Glasser has maintained that the social services, under the guise of benevolence, have made use of a certain degree of discretionary power that may not have been in the best interest of the client. Glasser has stated that "unlimited professional discretion comes at the expense of the clients' rights" (Glasser, 1978, p. 18). It is often the denial of the client's rights that has coerced him into a position of powerlessness.

In clarifying the various causes of dependency, Glasser has stated that the intrinsically dependent are dependent due to physical conditions outside the realm of anyone's control. However the extrinsically dependent have had the situation rendering them powerless imposed upon them by the financial inadequacies of a social system (Glasser, 1978). The external forces regulating the lives of the extrinsically dependent or the powerless have quite often been beyond the control of the individual who is most affected.

In her article, A Feeling of Irrelevance: The Effects of a Nonsupportive Society, Beatrice Reiner has stipulated that an individual's inability to have his needs recognized may result in a sense of personal irrelevance. Such a feeling of irrelevance has been characterized as "feeling unloved, isolated or abandoned, insignificant or worthless and powerless to effect change", (1979, p. 3).

In her discussion of the potential sources of feelings

of irrelevance, Reiner has identified work and status. She maintained that an individual's occupation sets his identity and provides structure to his daily life whereas status measures the individual's sense of worth in relation to others (1979). In view of a single mother's opportunities for employment and the status assigned to her in the community, this point has presented serious ramifications for mothers raising children alone.

In his attempt to define poverty, Saul Alinsky has stated that

it is not just a case of not having money. It is a case of not being accorded the opportunity of having the ability or the power to express themselves. (Alinsky, 1967, p. 306)

Alinsky has critically referred to "welfare colonialism" as the pervasive attitude adopted by many governmental agencies intent on helping the poor located in low-income areas. Alinsky has argued that even though the help may be unsolicited, the government has often insisted on designing and conducting programs for the poor thus reinforcing any feelings of inadequacy or powerlessness they may have.

The literature has indicated the extent to which poverty can influence an individual's sense of power. The actual state of economic poverty in which the individual's income is below Statistics Canada's low-income line for a particular residential area can also be devastating to a person's sense of power. The statistics seem to indicate the motherled family's vulnerability in regards to finances.

The National Council of Welfare reports that in 1973 the incidence of poverty among two parent families was 12.7% whereas it was 59.6% among motherled families (1976).

In his article, Poverty and Motivation: Figure and Ground, Pareek has defined poverty in terms of the individual's deprivation of material goods and stimuli as well as his inability to control external events. Pareek has identified three motivational areas most directly affected by poverty: low need achievement, low need extension and high need dependency. Low need achievement is characterized by a lack of interest in initiating activities; low need extension involves the lack of consideration for others and high need dependency may be noticed by the individual's over conformity or exaggerated misuse of freedom (1970).

In his attempts to study motivation and self-image, Marshall Clinard had claimed that the disadvantaged minorities have not yet had the opportunity to acquire the necessary skills to motivate themselves and potentially effect change. Furthermore it appears that the powerless are hampered by the restrictions and false promises of social and governmental agencies (1979).

Though empirical research exploring the relationship between a person's sense of power and his formal or informal social networks was scarce, an American study provided some insight into the importance of an individual's affiliations. A 1966 study exploring the relationship between organizational

affiliation and powerlessness among the poor provided interesting findings. At this time women in receipt of Aid For Dependent Children who resided in major metropolitan centres in the United States were organizing themselves into the Welfare Recipients Leagues with the intent of educating the recipients regarding their rights and pressing for government changes when necessary. The study entailed the comparison of the levels of powerlessness between the members and non-members of the Welfare Recipients Leagues. Measures of powerlessness included fatalism, a sense of control and political activism. Whereas the non-members of the social action groups demonstrated high fatalism, the members indicated a high sense of control and high political activism. Thus the findings indicated a negative relationship between organizational affiliation and powerlessness (Levens, 1968):

Loneliness: The literature often makes reference to the single parent as somewhat of a ~~misnomer~~ in a society in which couples predominate. The National Council of Welfare states that single parents are "victims of the Noah's Arc Syndrome" and are forced to exist as "one in a world of two's" (1976, p. 2). Clayton stipulates that the single parent must feel the "unacknowledged isolation of being neither fish nor fowl in a society oriented almost totally toward married couples" (1971, p. 327).

Weiss has defined loneliness as "the exceedingly unpleasant and driving experience connected with inadequate discharge of the need for human intimacy" (Weiss, 1973, p. 249).

Lopata has further elaborated stating that.

Loneliness is a sentiment felt by a person when he defines his experienced level or form of interaction as inadequate. Such feelings arise when the habitual or expected depth of relations with other people is judged as temporarily or permanently unavailable, broken or underdeveloped. (Lopata, 1969, p. 249)

The extent of loneliness among widows was subject to examination in Lopata's 1973 study in which 300 women residing in major American cities participated. The findings indicated that 48% of the widows found loneliness to be a serious problem. An additional 22% of the women made mention of loneliness in reference to other situations such as finances (Lopata, 1969).

Weiss has made a clear distinction between the loneliness of emotional isolation and loneliness of social isolation. The loneliness of emotional isolation has represented "a subjective response to the absence not so much of a particular other but rather of a generalized attachment figure" (Weiss, 1973, p. 89).

Lopata has offered an extensive classification of the various forms of the loneliness of emotional isolation as encountered by the widows in her study.

- 1/ a desire to carry on interaction with a particular other who is no longer available. . .
- 2/ . . . feel that she or he is no longer an object of love. . .
- 3/ . . . felt due to the absence of anyone to care for. . .
- 4/ . . . felt for a companionate relation of the depth provided by the deceased
- 5/ . . . a feeling of loneliness for the presence of another human being within the dwelling unit
- 6/ . . . unhappiness over the absence of another person who shares the work load
- 7/ . . . homesickness for the style of life or some set of activities formerly carried out with the other

- 8/. . . alienation due to status drop. . .
- 9/. . . the loss of a basic relation partner, such as a husband, can have repercussions in many scenes with prior associates. . .
- 10/. . . compounded by the inability to make new friends
- 11/. . . composite of any of the above mentioned forms. (1969, pp. 251-257)

This type of loneliness is manifested by an increase in the person's level of anxiety and apprehension. The individual is very often left feeling "empty" and fearful of becoming engaged in another relationship of any depth (Weiss, 1973).

The termination of a marriage has often led to variations in the individual's social roles which in turn bring about a disruption in relationship with friends. According to Weiss this may bring about the onset of the loneliness of social isolation (1973). This condition is often characterized by the individual's loss of interest in his family, his social network and his work.

Much of the literature dealing with the overall concept has been devoted to descriptions of the everyday human aspect of loneliness. Weiss has referred to the mother's sense of being alone after the children have gone to sleep (1973); Hopkinson has addressed the issue of the mother's desire for a close sexual relationship (1973); Knight has discussed the mother's decision to remain at home with the children versus the pursuit of an active social life (1980); and Morton has referred to the single mother's need to pamper herself occasionally and to develop a very busy daily schedule (1973).

Lopata has suggested that loneliness can be felt in a

three dimensional time frame that includes the past, present and future. As a person having undergone the loss of a partner, the individual may long for moments from the past, or wish for a satisfying relationship in the present. An individual may also experience "loneliness anxiety" in that there would seem to be an overwhelming fear of not being able to maintain relationships and thus being left alone (Lopata, 1969). Weiss has offered the following definition:

"Separation anxiety is the subjective accompaniment of awareness of the danger of loss" (Weiss, 1973, p. 53).

Consequently the person's efforts are placed into preventing the impending loss.

Knight and Murdock have made the distinction between the states of "loneliness" and "aleness". Having accepted "loneliness" as the lack of meaningful contacts with other people, Knight has stated that "being alone" can be a positive experience.

Positive solitude is accepting that fact and learning to enjoy times when you are physically and psychically by yourself. . .it is not a matter of filling solitude with tasks. Rather it is a finding and developing of oneself that is the task. (Knight, 1980, p. 36)

Carol Murdock has also emphasized the positive aspects of "being alone".

Learn to distinguish between being lonely and being alone. Our mass-market culture tends to condition us to believe that we can't enjoy ourselves by ourselves. Learn to constructively use times you're alone when you're alone with your best friend-- yourself. (Murdock, 1980, p. 149)

In recent years the conditions leading to loneliness have been the subject of study. In 1964, a working group of British women, endorsed by the National Council of Social Service, London, examined the various situations in which people reported feeling lonely. The findings indicated that the sources of loneliness are twofold: loneliness may be due to external circumstances in which the individual may have very little power to effect change or loneliness may also be viewed as the result of a person's temperament that has prevented him from acquiring the necessary skills to make contact (Women's Group on Public Welfare, 1964).

Robert Weiss has also referred to this dual approach to the explanation of loneliness. However he has elaborated to include provisions for change. The situational approach

directs our attention to identifying the defects of relatively inadequate social environment and to suggesting modifications of life patterns that might make available a richer social world or alternatively, supplementations of the existent social environment. (Weiss, 1973, p. 73)

The characterological approach addresses itself to

the defects in motivation or skill that leave individuals vulnerable to undesired loneliness and suggests as remedial programs therapy and education. (Weiss, 1973, p. 73)

In order to explain the occurrence and extent of loneliness among widows, Lopata has adopted a sociological framework. She has stipulated that women who have been socialized into roles which allow them competence in the area of developing friendships are far less susceptible to the severe forms of loneliness and alienation. Pertaining to the lonely

women Lopata has stated:

The very lonely are women socialized into passive membership in automatically encompassing groups, who now lack such relations. They are the victims of the gap between traditional ways of socializing a societal member, particularly women, and the realities of modern life. (Lopata, 1969, p. 261)

In terms of coping with loneliness the literature has offered a variety of suggestions. Murdock has pointed out the importance of recognizing one's social needs in order to act upon them (1980); Weiss has emphasized the supportive roles that the family and friends may assume (1979); Geddes has maintained that an active social life can be of great value (1974). More specific suggestions have been set forth by Knight: keeping in touch with friends via the telephone and letters or developing an interest in a particular activity or hobby (1980). The central theme that may be extracted from the various suggestions appears to be the individual's need for social contact.

Reducing loneliness is a matter of quality not quantity. It is not keeping busy but human interaction that nullifies loneliness. (Knight, 1980, p. 35)

Self Help Groups

The literature pertaining to the self help movement was reviewed according to its definition, its history, its recent societal recognition, its typology, its ideological principles and the specific techniques employed in the helping process. In view of the recent emergence of self help groups as valuable support systems, the literature has given much of its attention to the definition and description of the groups whereby providing a framework for future research. Empirical

research ascertaining the process by which the groups operate and may therefore be considered helpful to mothered families has been very limited.

Definition As research into the dynamics of the self help movement is still in its formative stage, much attention has been given in the literature to the definition and description of mutual aid groups. According to Katz and Bender, self help groups may be defined as "voluntary, small group structures for mutual aid and the accomplishment of a special purpose" (1976, p. 9).

Lieberman, Borman and Associates have expanded on this definition stating that the following criteria must be met in order to satisfy the definition of a self help group.

- 1/ Purpose: Its primary purpose is to provide help and support for its members in dealing with their problems. . . .
- 2/ Origin and Sanction: Its origin and sanction for existence rest with the members of the group themselves rather than with any external agency or authority. . . .
- 3/ Source of help: It relies upon its own members' efforts, skills, knowledge, and concern as its primary source of help. . . .
- 4/ Composition: It is generally composed of members who share a common core of life experiences and problems. . . .
- 5/ Its structure and mode of operation are under the control of members, although they may, in turn, draw upon professional guidance. (1979, pp. 239-240)

Gartner and Riessman have cited additional features that are critical to the self help process.

- 1/ Self help groups always involve face-to-face interactions. . . .
- 2/ The origin of self help groups is usually spontaneous.
- 3/ Personal participation is an extremely important ingredient.
- 4/ The members agree on and engage in some actions.
- 5/ Typically the groups start from a condition of

powerlessness.

6/ The groups fill needs for a reference group.
(1977, p. 6)

In their 1974 report, Beyond Services and Beyond Jobs, the National Council of Welfare maintained that the self help movement was a "developmental approach to the social services". The predominant feature of this approach is the "egalitarian and participatory character" of the groups involved (1974, p. 15). Characteristically members of the group have interacted on a peer level and have been active participants in the helping process.

Burke and Weir have cited three types of effects that services provided by informal social networks may have. A preventative effect is demonstrated by a decrease in the individual's experienced level of stress; the therapeutic effect is made evident when a person reports greater satisfaction with his quality of life; and a moderating effect is seen when the individual becomes more resilient to stressful situations with the support of his social network (1981).

History Though the self help movement has only gained recognition in recent years, it has quite a vivid history dating back to nineteenth century England. The consumer cooperatives and trade unions were first introduced in order to enable the lower economic stratum of British society to cope with the adverse conditions of the time (Katz and Bender, 1976). As the Industrial Revolution brought about long working hours for minimal wages in substandard factories, trade unions

were also becoming more popular. The merits of self help were particularly evident during the 1930's as Americans were coping with the effects of a depression (Gartner and Riessman, 1977).

As the North American societies witnessed industrialization and urbanization, the people were experiencing a change in their quality of life. Katz and Bender have suggested that the conditions of the times led to the "depersonalization and dehumanization of institutions and social life; feelings of alienation and powerlessness" (1976, p. 3). Gartner has gone on to explain that institutions that were once held in high regard such as the family and church were losing much of their authority and could no longer satisfy the needs of the general populace (1977).

Societal Recognition The increasing societal acceptance of the self help approach has been discussed by a number of researchers. Gartner has suggested that the present political and economic climates are conducive to the self help philosophy as an antibureaucratic mood appears to have swept the country (1977). This is further validated by Vattano's proposition that a "new sense of egalitarianism coincides with the diminished importance of the traditional status and authority" (1972, p. 8).

The recent popularity of the self help approach has also been linked to the inability of the family and social institutions to adequately meet the needs of the individual in stress. In a 1978 Chicago-based study, Bankoff examined the

relationship between membership in Naim, a self help group for widowed individuals, and the adequacy of the professional services and social networks to have met their needs. Findings of the study indicated that members of Naim were more likely than non-members to have sought professional help at some time but that when help was obtained, both members and non-members were equally satisfied with the intervention. However, members of Naim found that even though their families and friends were supportive on a daily basis, they were much less helpful during the grieving period following the death of their spouse. Bankoff concluded that the members were seeking an informal social network from which they could draw support (1979).

The literature adequately reviewed the members' motivation to join self help groups. Bankoff has examined the reasons expressed by self help group members as to what has most influenced their decisions to join the particular group to which they belonged. The reasons were then divided into three all-encompassing categories including "endstate goals" in which members expressed a wish to bring about change; "process goals" in which members had expectations regarding possible experiences in the group; and "social hedonistic goals" in which individuals joined the group in order to establish new friendships and enjoy themselves. Members of Naim expressed particular interest in the social hedonistic goals as 68% of the respondents indicated that "making friends" was very important in their decision to join while 65% wished

to spend time with people in whose company they felt comfortable (1979).

Gartner and Riessman (1977), Vattano (1972), and Katz and Bender (1976) concur that the self help approach has been increasingly sanctioned by society as it has proven its value in terms of helping people regain a sense of control or mastery over their lives. Vattano more specifically referred to Alinsky's Community Organization groups and the Welfare Rights Organizations of the 1960's as evidence of the potential strength and effectiveness of self help groups.

Typology Due to the recent emergence of a great variety of self help approaches a number of researchers have attempted to categorize the groups into formal classification schemes. Such typologies are of definite value as they serve to provide the framework from which the analysis of the groups can be completed. Typologies have been based on the composition of the group (Lieberman and Borman, 1979), the purpose of the group (Katz and Caplan, 1976), and style of leadership (Vattano, 1972), and the type of problem addressed (Romeder, 1981). The typology advanced by Katz appears to encompass most approaches to self help. The classification scheme has been developed according to the primary purpose of the groups.

- 1/ Groups that are primarily focused on self-fulfillment or personal growth. . . .
- 2/ Groups that are primarily focused on social advocacy. . . .
- 3/ Groups whose primary focus is to create alternative patterns of living. . . .
- 4/ Outcast haven or rock-bottom groups. (1976, pp.37-38)

Principles Research has recently begun to determine the principles by which the self help approach can effectively meet the needs of its clients. Katz and Bender have maintained that the "structural features" and the "functional attributes" of the self help approach have enhanced the client's sense of participating in his own recovery. They have emphasized the benefits of the structural features: the equal status contact, the notion of reciprocal assistance, the delegation of power by the membership (1976), the adoption of common goals and the horizontal basis upon which leadership is assigned (1970). The merits of the functional attributes are also outlined: the action orientation, the informal communication patterns and the stress given to personal involvement and responsibility (Katz, 1970).

Gartner has stipulated that the "aprofessional dimension" of the group has appealed to the general population as the helping process has been clarified and therefore seems to have become more relevant to the person's immediate situation. Characteristics of the aprofessional dimension utilized in self help groups have included the experiential component, the subjective identification with other group members and the focus on practical coping mechanisms that have been considered to be helpful in the past (1977).

According to Gartner the "helper-therapy principle" has played a major part in effecting change among the participants of a self help group. Based on the idea that an individual's sense of control is enhanced when given the opportunity to

assume the role of helper, self help groups have purposely created an array of administrative positions. In a 1973 study in which Weiss surveyed members of a Chapter of Parents Without Partners it was found that "those in administrative roles had greatest support for their own sense of worth" (1973, p. 322). In fact Gartner maintains that "those who help are helped most" (1977, p. 97).

In their 1974 report Beyond Services and Beyond Jobs, the National Council of Welfare has made a very similar point. The Council has purported that a service is most often "developmental" in nature for the helper whereas it may be considered "remedial" for the recipient (1974).

The concept of "personal growth through service" has been advanced by Clayton in his article entitled Meeting the Needs of the Single Parent Family. The sense of accomplishment received from having helped someone has been connected to a greater sense of competence. The individual's realization that he may be helpful to one in need enables him to feel wanted (1971).

Also intrinsic to the self help approach is the notion of the user of the service being help responsible for its delivery. Having coined this concept "the consumer as producer", Gartner and Riessman presupposed that as active participants benefiting from the group experience, the self help membership will demonstrate greater motivation in order to ensure the quality of the service delivery (1977).

The final principle upon which the foundation of the self help approach rests involves the ideology present among the membership of the various groups. Katz and Bender (1976) and Gartner and Riessman (1977) have indicated the extent to which group members are committed to improving their lifestyles by bringing about a change in attitudes and governmental policies. Group members have demonstrated the motivation to work towards the alleviation of the stigma attached to certain oppressed minorities and to press for social reform.

The helping process In a 1979 study, Lieberman and Borman attempted to provide an analysis of the therapeutic techniques used in the helping process among members of a self help group. Their review of the literature was further supported by their personal observations of twenty groups in action and a series of questionnaires from the members. Subsequently Lieberman and Borman developed a classification scheme for the processes operating in the self help group. The "behaviourally-oriented processes" focused on the acquisition and maintenance of newly formed patterns of behaviour whereas the "cognitively oriented processes" sought to encourage the members to gain insight into their present behaviour in order to eventually effect attitudinal changes (1979).

Lieberman has also listed a number of activities that characterize the processes most often associated with the self help movement. The behaviourally-focused activities included reinforcement and rehearsal; the notions of mutual

support and confrontation were expressed through self-disclosure and sharing; and finally goal-setting accounted for both the immediate and long-term objectives (1979).

In a 1975 study, Burke and Weir have also examined the specific helping techniques most often used among the lay population. Individuals were asked why they thought they were occasionally chosen as helpers and what type of helper they most preferred in times of stress. The researchers categorized the responses according to "process reasons" referring to the helper's qualities such as empathy and the ability to listen in a non-judgemental manner; "problem solution" involving the helper's objective analysis of the problem; and the "situation" which stipulates that the helper is sought out due to his status or reputation. Of the 464 respondents, approximately 66% believed they were sought out as helpers due to the process reasons while 78% cited the process reasons as their guide to locating helpers (1981).

Limitations Though the literature has recognized the merits of the self help movement, it has also given recognition to the limitations of the movement. Gartner has warned against the danger of viewing self help as a substitute for professional services or the promotion of antiprofessional biases (1977); Katz and Bender expressed concern as a result of the self help movement's lack of communication with the greater societal institutions (1976); the National Council of Welfare feared that the concrete services may have dominated the focus of the self help approach relegating the

social action component to a secondary position (1973). As well Romeder has outlined the risk involved in the self help group providing too much advice under the guise of knowing what an individual is going through, thus encouraging dependence among group members (1981).

Summary

This chapter has attempted to outline the practical problems and the psychosocial experiences of the single mothers as well as the dynamics of the self help groups. The literature pertaining to the single mothers' pragmatic concerns was abundant and well covered. Much of the literature pertaining to the single mothers' sense of alienation, powerlessness and loneliness was presented from a sociological perspective. Due to the fact that the value of self help groups has only recently received societal recognition, the literature in this area is predominantly concerned with qualitative information that is gradually being used as the foundation for empirical research.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Classification of the Study

An exploratory-descriptive research design was selected for this study. Though recognition has been given to mother-led families in recent years, social work literature pertaining to the ability of self help groups to meet the single mothers' needs has been very limited. Thus in an effort to further describe the sample group of single mothers in relation to their use of self help groups, the researcher wished to refine already existing concepts that may eventually lead to the formulation of hypotheses.

A review of the functions of the exploratory and descriptive studies may provide insight into the rationale for such a decision.

In their text, Research Methods and Social Relations, Selltiz, Wrightsman and Cook have noted the functions of the exploratory study.

Many exploratory studies have the purpose of formulating a problem for more precise investigation. . . increasing (the) investigators' familiarity with the phenomenon. . . clarifying concepts; establishing priorities for further research; . . . providing a census of problems regarded as urgent by people working in a given field of social relation. (1976, pp. 90-91)

Polansky has discussed the overall purpose of the descriptive study in the book, Social Work Research.

The general purpose is to describe the characteristics of a population or phenomenon when the characteristics of interest are known.

There are no prior hypothesis about causal relationships between variables, or testing of such relationships. However, there may be simultaneous consideration of two or more variables for more precise description. The design requires carefully defined populations and representative samples. Data may be gathered from questionnaires, interviews, observation, or available statistical reports. Such studies are usually ends in themselves. . .but also generate hypotheses. (1975, p. 62)


In their text, The Assessment of Social Research, Tripodi, Fellin and Meyer have attempted to further elaborate on this classification system. Tripodi et al. stipulate that the exploratory-descriptive research may be considered as a sub-type of the exploratory study.

The primary purpose of these (exploratory-descriptive) is to refine and develop concepts and hypotheses. Both quantitative and qualitative-descriptions of the phenomenon being studied are included in the research (1977, p. 25)

The population from which the sample group was drawn could be clearly identified, thus meeting the requirements of the exploratory-descriptive study. The researcher was able to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data in an effort to ensure a better description of the sample group. Thus the purpose and nature of this study is consistent with an exploratory-descriptive research design.

Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to explore the single mothers' self perceived practical problems and psychosocial experiences and to determine their perceptions of the self help groups' abilities to help them meet their needs. In



order to achieve this purpose, the investigator formulated five research questions.

The first research question pertained to the practical problems of the single mothers.

- 1/ Have the single mothers encountered any self perceived practical problems in their daily living in such areas as employment, child care arrangements, government transfer programs and housing?

The second question was included in consideration of the single mothers' psychological and emotional experiences as they assumed the responsibilities of a new and demanding role.

- 2/ Have the single mothers encountered such self perceived psychosocial experiences as alienation, powerlessness and loneliness?

The following three questions pertained to the single mothers' perceptions and usage of self help groups. The third question was intended to determine the single mothers' motivation leading to their decision to join a self help group. The fourth question sought to establish the single mothers' degree of satisfaction with the self help groups' ability to help them meet their perceived needs whereas the final question explored the manner in which the mothers believed their needs had been met in the group.

- 3/ What led the single mothers to seek help when initially joining the self help group?

- 4/ Do the single mothers believe that the self help groups have been successful in meeting their perceived needs?
- 5/ How do the single mothers believe that the self help groups have been able to meet their perceived needs?

Operational Definitions

Following the formulation of the research questions it was necessary to operationally define the concepts under investigation. According to Polansky,

the operational definition consists of the steps, actions, "operations" one performs in order to relate the concept to events in the real world. (1975, p. 23)

In order to lay the foundation for sound research, the

definitions ought to be unambiguous and clear in what they refer to and definitions ought to be constructed so that the concepts fit into theories. (Selltiz et al., 1976, p. 40)

The definition assigned to a single mother was easily designated as it presents clear boundaries. A single mother was defined as a mother who has custody and sole responsibility for at least one child under the age of eighteen living at home. The single mother may have attained her present status through widowhood, divorce, separation or having never married.

The psychosocial experiences of the single mothers were intended to include their social needs in which an emotional component was also present. In order to operationalize this concept thus rendering it measurable, a further breakdown was necessary. The researcher chose to focus on alienation

(as measured by the use of a social isolation scale), powerlessness and loneliness.

Social isolation, as a variant of alienation, was defined as "the extent to which individuals experience cleavages between themselves and other people" (Neal et al., 1976, p. 397). Powerlessness was conceptually defined as the "expectancy or probability held by the individual that his own behaviour cannot determine the occurrence of the outcomes, or reinforcements, he seeks" (Seeman, 1959, p. 784).

The psychosocial constructs of powerlessness and social isolation were measured by use of Guttman scales initially introduced by Neal et al. in their 1976 study. The objective of their research was to "develop alienation measures by drawing upon numerous facets of family life as sources of items" (1976, pp. 396-397). The researcher who was in contact with Neal obtained permission to use the scales as part of her data collection instrument. The use of a standardized scale allowed the researcher to empirically measure the concepts of powerlessness and social isolation.

Loneliness, the final psychosocial construct in need of measurement was conceptually defined in Watson's article, Group Membership, Social Isolation and Loneliness. Loneliness was defined as an "unwelcome lack of companionship" (1976, p. 140). In his 1962 study of 1,215 nonacademic personnel employed by an American University, Watson also provided the means by which to operationalize the concept of loneliness with the use of a Likert scale, also known as the method of

summated ratings.

The final construct needing to be operationally defined was that of self help groups. The extensive literature review provided a good framework from which to obtain a definition of self help groups in such a manner that would allow measurement. Self help groups were then defined as "voluntary, small group structures for mutual aid. . . They are usually formed by peers who have come together for mutual assistance in satisfying a common need" (Katz et al., 1976, p. 9).

Sample Source

The sample sources that were eventually identified were Parents Without Partners, Widows and Widowers of Windsor, the Downtown Community Citizens Organization and the Big Sister Association. However, in the initial search for a potential sample group, the researcher had hoped that one general source of single mothers could be located. Many obstacles were inherent in this plan.

A general list of many of the single mothers presently living in the Windsor area could be found in the records of the local Income Maintenance Programs. However, due to the confidential nature of the Family Benefits records, a list of the single mothers presently in receipt of Mothers' Allowance could not be obtained. As well a sample group consisting strictly of single mothers in receipt of government transfer programs would have created a biased sample thus necessitating a change in the focus of the study. Since the

only general source could not provide a list of the single mothers, a probability sample was not feasible.

It was therefore necessary to seek and identify a sample group through a variety of specific self help groups. Many of the programs offered for single mothers were led by professionals and therefore could not be considered self help groups. Such programs were offered by the local hospitals, Children's Aid Societies and Mental Health.

A third difficulty was encountered in regard to self help groups in which the members could not be identified according to their marital status. Though it was suspected that the Consumer Association served the interests of many single mothers, there were no records that indicated the marital status of its membership.

Finally it was necessary to identify the type of self help groups that could be included in this study. Self help groups having as their main objectives the personal growth and mutual support of their membership were considered most appropriate for the purposes of this study. However a limited number of single mothers who had previously been members of "rock bottom groups" (Katz and Bender, 1976, p. 38) were also included in the sample group. These single mothers no longer seemed to exhibit the maladaptive behaviours for which they had initially sought help while also maintaining ties with their respective self help groups in order to ensure the provision of support.

As previously mentioned, the sample sources that were

eventually identified were Parents Without Partners, Widows and Widowers of Windsor, the Downtown Community Citizens Organization and the Big Sister Association. Initial interviews with the coordinators of each group were conducted early in the research process in order to determine the appropriateness of the groups for this study. This was later followed by letters to the organizations confirming their willingness to cooperate with the study. (see Appendix A)

Sampling Method

The researcher chose non-probability, purposive sampling as the most appropriate method of selecting a sample group.

Selltiz et al. state:

A common strategy of purposive sampling is to pick cases that are judged to be typical of the population in which one is interested. (1976, p. 521)

After enlisting the cooperation of the four self help groups, the researcher met with the individual coordinators in order to specifically outline the criteria that the potential respondents must have met. As the researcher had hoped that the sample group would be as closely representative of the larger population as possible, the coordinators of the groups were instructed to select and vary the potential respondents according to their marital status, length of time as a single mother, age, education, number of children living at home and socio-economic class. Thus it may be stated that the sampling method was congruent with the purposes of the study. However it was also recognized that the purposive nature of the sampling method dictates that caution be

exercised when generalizing the findings to the larger population (Tripodi et al., 1977).

As it was suspected that the single mothers' response to the study would likely be more favorable if they first heard about it from a familiar person, the group coordinators made the initial contact with the single mothers. The researcher then followed-up these initial contacts with telephone calls to briefly introduce herself and the study and to establish a mutually convenient time for an interview.

Though thirty-five respondents were initially interviewed it was necessary to disqualify three of these: one widowed person had never been a parent, one single mother no longer had children living with her, and one mother had re-married. The sample group then consisted of thirty-two single parents who met all the criteria and were either presently involved with a self help group or had been so involved in the past.

Data Collection Method

For the purpose of this study, the researcher selected the interview as the most appropriate method of data collection. According to Selltiz et al.,

the interview is the more appropriate technique for revealing information about complex, emotionally laden subjects or for probing the sentiments that may underlie an expressed opinion. If a verbal report is to be accepted at face value, it must be elicited in circumstances that encourage the greatest possible freedom and honesty of expression. (1976, pp. 297-298)

As much of the research was concerned with the single mothers' practical problems regarding the maintenance of the familial home as well as their psychosocial experiences, the

researcher believed the interview format was better suited to deal with the emotional content of the information. For the most part, the researcher also chose to interview the single mothers in their own homes thus encouraging a less threatening atmosphere in which the single mothers could freely express personal concerns.)

The researcher chose to standardize the interview in that questions were "presented with exactly the same wording, and in the same order, to all respondents" (Selltiz et al., 1976, p. 309). This served to ensure that all members of the sample group were given the opportunity to respond to the same questions thus increasing the reliability of the study.

Each interview began with the researcher's explanation of the purpose of the study, the assurance of confidentiality and a note of encouragement to ask for clarification if necessary. The length of the interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to three hours with the average interview being one and one half hour in duration. Necessarily the shorter interviews provided the researcher with the basic material whereas the longer interviews indicated the single mothers' willingness to provide additional information regarding their problems, experiences and use of the self help groups.

Instrumentation

The data collection instrument consisted of an interview schedule, two Guttman scales and one Likert scale. (see, Appendix B) The interview schedule was designed to record

the single mothers' perceptions of their practical problems of daily living and their usage of self help groups, the two Guttman scales measured the single mothers' social isolation and powerlessness as two variants of the broader concept of alienation and finally the Likert scale measured the respondents' level of loneliness.

The interview schedule made use of both fixed alternative and open ended questions. The fixed alternative questions were intended to gather the demographic information and also provided the structure to the interview. The open ended questions served to collect the experiential data (Polansky, 1975) providing the account of the single mothers' life situation. The open ended style of the questions was deemed more appropriate as the researcher wished to encourage the single mothers to freely express their thoughts and feelings.

In order to facilitate the analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data, most of the questions formulated for the interview had been pre-coded. Though many of the open ended questions seeking qualitative data were pre-coded, the researcher chose to not divulge any of the alternatives in order to avoid biasing the participants' responses. A category known as "other" was provided in order to classify any answers that may not have been included in the coded answers and yet specified by the respondents. The gathered information was easily categorized and subsequently analyzed.

According to Polansky, attitudinal data seeking the feelings and values of the respondents can best be obtained

by use of a standardized scale (Polansky, 1975) thus increasing the validity of the study. The researcher chose to measure social isolation as a variant of alienation and powerlessness with the use of two Guttman scales, also commonly referred to as the scalogram method (Selltiz et al., 1976). Selltiz et al. have expanded on the major purpose of the Guttman scale.

To ascertain whether the attitude or characteristic being studied . . . actually involves only a single dimension. In the Guttman procedure, a "universe of content" is considered to be unidimensional only if it yields a perfect, or nearly perfect, cumulative scale. (1976, p. 423)

Though in theory Guttman has set .90 or higher as the ideal reproducibility coefficient in theory (Selltiz et al., 1976), he has also recognized .85 as an acceptable approximation to perfect scales in practice (Guttman, 1967). The social isolation scale yielded a reliability coefficient of .91 on a sample group of 479 subjects while a reproducibility coefficient of .87 was obtained for the powerlessness scale in which 604 respondents participated.

The single mothers' scores on a social isolation scale were calculated by counting the number of favourable responses and comparing these to the "scale of favorable-unfavorable attitude provided by the relationship of the items to one another" (Selltiz et al., 1976, p. 42). The powerlessness scale was scored dichotomously with the high powerlessness response assigned a score of 1 and the low powerlessness response assigned a score of 0.

Loneliness was measured with the use of a Likert scale,

also known as the method of summative ratings. Seven statements were presented to the single mothers who were asked to respond to each item according to whether they were satisfied, a little satisfied or very dissatisfied. The answers were scored according to the various weights assigned with a satisfied response being one, a little dissatisfied as two and very dissatisfied as three. Watson chose to consider respondents with a score of thirteen as lonely while those below thirteen were not considered lonely. This number was chosen as the respondents would have to have indicated 'a little dissatisfied' in six of the seven times in order to obtain a score of thirteen (Watson, 1976).

Data Analysis

The data obtained during the process of the interviews was analyzed with the use of the Statistical Analysis System (SAS), the computer-system for data analysis. The programs utilized in the analysis of the data were determined by the type of statistic employed to describe the variables. Thus the nominal data was interpreted with the use of the mode (majority) or percentage; the ordinal data, as presented in the Guttman and Lickert scales measuring the mothers' psychosocial experiences, was interpreted with the use of the median; and the measure of central tendency used to analyze the interval data was the mean or average.

Though the researcher initially attempted to cross-tabulate some of the data pertaining to the mothers' practical problems and psychosocial experiences with the data pertaining

to self help groups, this plan was later rejected in favour of the use of measures of central tendency and dispersion. A number of factors led the researcher to this decision. First, the small number in the sample group did not allow the researcher to draw findings of any significance from the data available since the marital status of the single mothers necessitated that the data be spread across four cells. Secondly, as the single mothers were all participants of self help groups and all but one expressed a level of satisfaction with the groups, the comparison of the respondents according to their use of self help groups would not have yielded any significant findings.

Limitations

A number of limitations were recognized by the researcher. The sample group composed of thirty two single mothers was considered small in comparison to the larger population of single mothers presently residing in Windsor. The small size of the sample then impedes generalizations to the larger population.

The use of a non-probability, purposive sampling method may have lessened the reliability of the study while not necessarily affecting its validity (Selitz, 1976). Due to the sampling procedure, the study was more apt to include single mothers whose experiences with self help groups had been positive. As the study also included only single mothers who had some contact with a self help group, it is more likely that the women taking part in the research were

generally more apt to seek out activities in which to participate.

In order to determine the approximate length of the interview and to establish the interviewing style, the researcher interviewed an individual who assumed the role of a respondent. The researcher also sought the opinions of the group coordinators in regards to the data collection instrument prior to the selection of the sample group. This approach was selected rather than doing a pre-test due to the limited number of potential candidates for the sample group. Though the researcher attempted to interview the respondents at a quiet time during the day when the single mothers were temporarily free of their responsibilities, this was not always possible. Disruptions during the interviews causing interruptions in the flow of concentration were evident in many cases: working mothers who were interviewed in the evening when the children were home, mothers of pre-school children with full time child care responsibilities and finally single mothers whose children were either ill and at home or returned home from school early due to an emergency. Though these circumstances may have caused interruptions in the interview, it provided the researcher with a better understanding of the needs and problems facing single mothers.

Summary

This chapter has presented the classification of the study as an exploratory-descriptive design, the formulation of the five research questions and the means by which to operationalize these. The discussion pertaining to the sample source outlined the manner in which four resource groups were selected from which the thirty two respondents were drawn. The interview as the data collection method and the components of the instrument of measurement, the Interview Schedule and the Guttman and Likert scales, were thoroughly reviewed and explained. Finally, the plan for the data analysis using the SAS computer system and the limitations of the study were examined.

CHAPTER IV

DATA, ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

It is the intent of this chapter to describe the sample group according to a variety of variables including marital status, age, level of education, income, number of children and length of time in the present marital status. The findings pertaining to the single mothers' perceptions of their pragmatic difficulties will be outlined and discussed according to four main areas: employment, child care arrangements, government transfer programs and housing. The respondents' perceptions of the self help groups will be discussed in view of their reasons for joining, their level of satisfaction with the groups' abilities to meet their needs and their current involvement with the groups. The features, and programs as well as the help-giving techniques used by the self help groups will also be reviewed.

Descriptive Data

Marital Status The marital status of the single mothers can be categorized according to four groups: the separated, divorced, widowed and never married. While the divorced single mothers comprised 34.38% (11) of the sample group, the widowed single mothers also numbered 34.38% (11). The separated single mothers accounted for 18.74% (6) and the never married totalled 12.5% (4). In comparison to the data

provided by the 1976 Canada Census (see literature review), the widowed and separated single mothers were under-represented while the divorced and never married respondents were over-represented.

TABLE 4
Marital Status of the Single Mothers

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Separated	6	18.74%
Divorced	11	34.38
Widowed	11	34.38
Never Married	4	12.50
Total	32	100.00%

Age Table 5 illustrates the breakdown of the respondents' ages. The average or mean age of the single mothers was 36.4 years with the range spanning from 22 to 50 years. When the ages of the single mothers in the sample group are compared to the 1976 Census information, it is found that all of the age brackets in Table 5 are over-represented while the study contains no single mothers who are in the older age bracket of 55 years and above.

TABLE 5
Age of the Single Mothers

Age	Frequency	Percentage
15 - 24	3	9.38%
25 - 34	11	34.38
35 - 44	11	34.38
45 - 54	7	21.86
55 and over	0	00.00
Total	32	100.00%

Level of Education Of the total number of respondents, 71.87% (23) had either partially or totally completed high school whereas 15.63% (5) had finished grade school and 12.50% (4) were in the process of working towards a degree at the University level. The majority of the single mothers had some high school education.

TABLE 6
Level of Education of the Single Mothers

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Grade School	5	15.63%
High School	23	71.87
University	4	12.50
Total	32	100.00%

Income Whereas 63.33% (19) of the respondents reported having incomes between \$5,000.00 and \$9,999.00, 10% (3) of the mothers fell within each of the following three income brackets: less than \$4,999.00, \$10,000.00 to \$14,999.00 and \$15,000.00 to \$19,999.00. Only 6.67% (2) of the mothers had incomes between \$20,000.00 and \$24,999.00. Of the total respondents 6.67% (2) did not wish to answer questions pertaining to their income. The average or mean income for the sample group was \$8,840.00 and total incomes ranged from \$4,200.00 to \$20,000.00.

The single mothers were also asked what their principal source of income was. While 56.67% (17) of the respondents were in receipt of funds from government transfer programs, 36.67% (11) were participating in the labour force either on a full or part time basis. As well 3.33% (1) of the respondents were dependent on the Canada Pension Plan for financial assistance while 3.33% (1) were receiving funds from the estate of the late spouse.

TABLE 7

Annual Income of the Single Mothers

Annual Income	Frequency	Percentage
Less than \$4,999.00	3	10.00%
\$5,000.00 to \$9,999.00	19	63.33
\$10,000.00 to \$14,999.00	3	10.00
\$15,000.00 to \$19,999.00	3	10.00
\$20,000.00 to \$24,999.00	2	6.67
Total	30	100.00%

TABLE 8

Principal Source of Income of the Single Mothers

Principal Source of Income	Frequency	Percentage
Full time employment	9	30.00%
Part time employment	2	6.67
Family Benefits	15	50.00
Municipal Welfare	2	6.67
Canada Pension Plan	1	3.33
Estate of late spouse	1	3.33
Total	30	100.00%

In comparison to the 1976 National Council of Welfare report, the employed single mothers were under-represented while the respondents in receipt of public funds were over-represented.

In addition to their principal source of income, the single mothers with children under the age of 18 years were also receiving the Family Allowance. Other means of financial support included Unemployment Insurance, support payments from the spouse, and insurance premiums collected after the death of the spouse.

The respondents were also asked if their income had increased, decreased or remained the same at the time when they assumed the status of single parent. While 72.41% (21) of the single mothers reported that their incomes had decreased, 17.24% (5) maintained that their incomes had

increased and 10.34% (3) stated that their incomes remained the same. Due to the extended length of time in her present marital status, one mother could not recall her income at the time of the loss of her husband. Clearly the majority of the single mothers experienced a drop in the family income as a result of the loss of their spouses.

TABLE 9

Change in Family Income at the Time
of the Loss of the Spouse

Change in Family Income	Frequency	Percentage
Income increased	5	17.24%
Income decreased	21	72.41
Income remained the same	3	10.34
Total	29	99.99%

The respondents were asked to discuss the manner in which the change in income brought about by the loss of their spouse affected their family's lifestyle. The single mothers who experienced a decrease in income emphasized the necessity of budgeting in order to meet all of the family's expenses. The lifestyles of the families were sometimes altered: a decrease in travel, fewer outings, the purchase of only practical foods as opposed to "junk food", and the constant delay having household and car repairs done until enough money could be saved. Two single mothers summarized it by stating that: "What used to be taken for granted is now a

real treat" and "It's not really going backwards, it's just like starting all over again".

Number of Children Of the total respondents, 34.37% (11) had two children while 25% (8) had one child and 25% (8) had three children. Finally 12.50% (4) of the single mothers had four children and 3.13% (1) had five children. The mean number of children per family in this study was 2.34.

TABLE 10

Number of Children per Family

Number of Children	Frequency	Percentage
One	8	25.00%
Two	11	34.37
Three	8	25.00
Four	4	12.50
Five	1	3.13
Total	32	100.00%

Length of Time as a Single Mother Of the total number of respondents, 59.37% (19) had maintained their single parent status between 1 to 4 years. While 18.75% (6) had been single parents between 5 to 9 years, 12.50% (4) had held the status between 10 to 14 years and 9.38% (3) had also been single parents between 15 to 19 years.

Table 11 clearly illustrates that the mode of the single mothers had held their present marital status between 1 to 4

years. The average (means) length of time as a single mother was 5.72 years.

TABLE 11
Length of Time as a Single Mother

Length of Time as a Single Mother	Frequency	Percentage
1 - 4	19	59.37%
5 - 9	6	18.75
10 - 14	4	12.50
15 - 19	3	9.38
Total	32	100.00%

In reviewing the preceeding data it is found that a general profile describing the single mothers emerges. The majority of the single mothers within the sample group were either divorced or widowed, were between the ages of 25 and 44 and had received some education at the high school level. While the average income of the single mothers was \$8,840.00, the majority of the respondents were recipients of the Family Benefits Allowance and acknowledged that their income had decreased as a result of the loss of their spouse. The mean number of children among the single mothers was 2.34 and the majority had maintained their present marital status between one to four years.

Practical Problems

The following section will outline and discuss the findings arising from the first research question pertaining to the single mothers' self perceived practical problems of daily living, namely problems encountered in the areas of employment, child care arrangements, government transfer programs and housing. A host of other pragmatic difficulties such as the lack of transportation, the maintenance of a household and the expense of recreational activities will be considered in relation to the four main areas.

Employment Of the eleven single mothers who were employed, 45.45% (5) worked in a clerical capacity while 27.27% (3) were involved in the service and recreation field including such positions as a domestic worker, a pharmacy assistant and a power sewer in a small firm. Professional and technical positions were held by 27.27% (3) of the employed single mothers and consisted mainly of teaching.

TABLE 12

Occupations of the Employed Single Mothers

Occupations	Frequency	Percentage
Professional and technical	3	27.27%
Clerical	5	45.45
Service and recreation	3	27.27
Total	11	99.99%

In comparison to the 1971 Metropolitan Toronto study, from which the occupational classification was drawn, the sample group was over represented in the clerical field.

The single mothers were also asked to discuss the most important reason leading to their decision to work either on a full or part-time basis. Of the total number of employed respondents, 63.64% (7) stated that financial reasons formed the basis for their decision to work, whereas 18.18% (2) reported that the sense of achievement obtained from their work was the motivating factor and 9.09% (1) maintained that they enjoyed the sense of independence. As well, 9.09% of the respondents reported that the wish to get out of the house was the predominant reason leading to their choice to seek employment.

TABLE 13
Reasons for Seeking Employment

Reasons for Seeking Employment	Frequency	Percentage
Financial reasons	7	63.64%
Sense of achievement	2	18.18
Sense of independence	1	9.09
To get out of the house	1	9.09
Total	11	100.00%

TABLE 15

Type of Child Care Arrangements Most Frequently Used

Child Care Arrangements	Frequency	Percentage
Municipally administered daycare	1	5%
Family day care	1	5
Older siblings	4	20
Relative in child's home	6	30
Relative in the community	3	15
Unrelated babysitter in child's home	2	10
Unrelated babysitter in the community	1	5
Full-time nanny	1	5
Homemaker	1	5
Total	20	100.00%

obligations, 5% (1) required babysitters during periods of hospitalization and finally 5% (1) needed babysitters in order to attend medical appointments during the afternoons.

The situation under which the single mothers most often required child care arrangements involved the weekday evenings. A single mother explained her need to occasionally take time away from the home and the children: "I just need to get away sometimes, to talk with adults again. After the separation I didn't go out for two years but since then I've learned that you need people".

TABLE 16

Situations Under Which Child Care is Needed

Situations	Frequency	Percentage
Daily employment	3	15%
Shift work	1	5
Leisure time during the evenings	13	65
Leisure time during the weekends	1	5
Hospitalization	1	5
Afternoon appointments	1	5
Total	20	100%

The single mothers' level of satisfaction with their respective child care arrangements was sought. Of the total respondents, 85% (17) were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" while 15% (3) were either "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied".

The single mothers' perceptions of the positive aspects of their respective child care arrangements were also discussed. While 60% (12) were appreciative of the knowledge that their children were receiving adequate care, 20% (14) liked the fact that the children could be accommodated during the necessary hours. As well 10% (2) stated that their baby-sitters were conveniently located, 5% (1) mentioned the reasonable cost of their services and 5% (1) reported no appreciation for the child care arrangements they felt

TABLE 17

Level of Satisfaction with the Child Care Arrangements

Level of Satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage
Very satisfied	8	40%
Satisfied	9	45
Undecided	0	0
Dissatisfied	2	10
Very dissatisfied	1	5
Total	20	100%

compelled to use.

TABLE 18

Positive Aspects of the Child Care Arrangements

Positive Aspects	Frequency	Percentage
Conveniently located	2	10%
Reasonable cost	1	5
Availability	4	20
Trust in the arrangement	12	60
No positive aspects	1	5
Total	20	100%

The single mothers within this sample group were most appreciative of the knowledge that their children were receiving adequate attention from the substitute caretakers. As one mother stated: "When I know the kids are in good hands, I can go out and have a really good time. Otherwise I worry too much". One particular single mother was especially pleased with her child's participation in a day care centre: "I know what my child is learning and how she's growing both emotionally and physically. The centre calls me anytime there's a problem and I can always talk to the teachers about how she is doing".

The single mothers' dislikes regarding their child care arrangements were also explored. While 45% (9) stated that they were completely satisfied with the arrangements, the remaining 55% (11) of the sample group reported a wide variety of difficulties: coming home to a "messy house"; the delegation of too much responsibility to an older child; the unavailability of babysitters on short notice; the imposition on relatives; the over-indulgence of children by the babysitter; overseeing the babysitter's safe return home; the high cost of the service; the inaccessibility during necessary hours and the mistrust of the level of care provided. There was an almost equal number of single mothers who were completely satisfied with their child care arrangements as there were single mothers who had misgivings.

TABLE 19

Dissatisfaction with the Child Care Arrangements

Dissatisfaction	Frequency	Percentage
Messy house	1	5%
Responsibility on older children	1	5
Unavailability of babysitters	2	10
Imposition on relatives	2	10
Overindulgence of children	1	5
Babysitter's return home	1	5
High cost	1	5
Inaccessibility during the necessary hours	1	5
Mistrust of level of care	1	5
No dislikes	9	45
Total	20	100%

Government Transfer Programs The respondents who were recipients of government transfer programs were questioned as to the most important reason leading to their decision to remain at home on a full-time basis. Of the seventeen single mothers in receipt of either Mother's Allowance or municipal welfare, 47.06% (8) preferred the role of homemaker, 35.3% (6) were prevented from returning to work by the lack of suitable jobs, 11.76% (2) chose to remain at home due to medical reasons and 5.88% (1) believed they could not find employment due to their age. The mode of the single mothers chose to receive public funds as it enabled them to remain

at home with the children.

The single mothers who preferred the role of homemaker believed that their "place was in the home while the children were young". One respondent reported knowing her child better because of her decision to remain at home rather than seeking employment. The single mothers who stated the lack of suitable jobs as their main reason for remaining at home were taking into consideration their skills and education, the low wages, the odd working hours and the possibility of re-occurring layoffs. As one mother stated, "For me to get a job with good money in Windsor, I'd have to work in a factory and that means shift work and putting up with layoffs. I can't do that with young kids".

TABLE 20

Reasons for Assuming a Full-time Homemaker Role

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
Preference for role of homemaker	8	47.06%
Lack of suitable jobs	6	35.30
Medical Reasons	2	11.76
Age	1	5.88
Total	17	100.00%

In response to a question pertaining to the most positive aspect of the programs, the single mothers offered a variety of opinions. While 47.06% (8) were appreciative of the dependable income, 23.53% (4) referred to the medical and dental benefits as being invaluable and 11.76% (2) commented on the friendliness of the caseworkers. Of the respondents receiving public funds 5.88% (1) liked the opportunity to remain at home, 5.88% (1) believed that their income was greater by remaining on Mother's Allowance than by participating in the marginal labour force and 5.88% (1) made mention of the independence the program allowed the family.

TABLE 21

Positive Aspects of Government Transfer Programs

Positive Aspects	Frequency	Percentage
Dependable income	8	47.06%
Health care benefits	4	23.53
Friendliness of caseworkers	2	11.76
Opportunity to remain at home	1	5.88
Amount received in comparison to labour force	1	5.88
Independence it allows the family	1	5.88
Total	17	99.99%

Though it appears that the majority of the single mothers in receipt of public funds reported a drop in income at the time of the loss of their spouse (70.59%), the aspect of the

program that the most preferred was the reliable income. In comparing the irregularity of the family income prior to obtaining her single parent status to the reliability of the Mother's Allowance cheque, one single mother stated: "At least you know the cheque is coming in at the end of the month. When I budget I can make ends meet and it feels good to know that I can make it on my own without having to depend on my husband".

The single mothers were asked what they considered to be the biggest problem related to the government transfer programs. Of the total respondents, 52.94% (9) stated that the inadequate income was a source of constant worry, 11.76% (2) expressed concern about the social stigma associated with the programs and 11.76% (2) were annoyed with the invasion of privacy by the caseworkers. As well 5.88% (1) wished the program would allow the recipients to work a greater number of hours before their monthly cheque was affected, while 5.88% (1) were discouraged by the lack of incentive built into the program and 11.76% (2) reported no problems in relation to the program.

Clearly the largest number of single mothers receiving public funds were most concerned with the insufficient monies allocated to the families. Specifically the mothers felt they were not given enough money for groceries, clothing, recreation, emergency situations, and "the little extras". One mother spoke of the cost for most recreational activities: "What can you do that doesn't cost an arm and a leg? Going

TABLE 22

Problems Associated with the Government Transfer Programs

Problem	Frequency	Percentage
Inadequate income	9	52.94%
Social stigma	2	11.76
Invasion of privacy	2	11.76
Lack of incentive	1	5.88
Number of hours permitted to work	1	5.88
No problems	2	11.76
Total	17	99.98%

to a show or bowling is a major expense when there's one adult and four kids in the family to consider. How can I take them to a fair but not allow them to have goodies?" In terms of clothing for the children, one mother reported "I tried buying cheaper jeans for the kids but they won't wear them. Perfectly good jeans sitting in the closet because the kids say they are not in style. So I have to buy them Levis and that's a lot more money". Referring to the emergencies and the extras, the respondents made mention of needing money for the repair of household appliances, the children's birthdays and school trips.

The social stigma, the invasion of privacy and the lack of incentive experienced by the single mothers were also areas of criticism. Referring to the public's attitude

towards the recipients of the government transfer programs one single mother states: "People who aren't on Mothers' Allowance just look at you as if to put you in a category. . . Like we all abuse the system by living with a man and drinking". One single mother who had been very annoyed by the lack of privacy awarded to the recipients of Mothers' Allowance stated: "I can't just walk in and see them (Family Benefits caseworkers). If I have to make an appointment to see them, then they can give me some notice before they come out here. I have the same rights they do". Commenting on the demoralizing aspect of the program, a single mother stated: "It doesn't give you any incentive, the feeling of being somebody. . . you feel controlled by it. You can't get any better than you are".

Housing Of the total number of single mothers in the sample group, 34.38% had private ownership of their homes, 34.38% lived in subsidized public housing and 31.24% had privately rented accommodations. Obviously the single mothers were almost equally distributed between the three types of housing arrangements.

The respondents were asked to rate their particular housing arrangements according to their level of satisfaction. Of the total single mothers 78.26% (25) maintained that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with their housing arrangements, while 21.87% (7) reported being either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied.

TABLE 23

Type of Housing Arrangements

Housing Arrangements	Frequency	Percentage
Privately owned home	11	34.38%
Private rental of accommodation	10	31.24
Subsidized public housing	11	34.38
Total	32	100.00%

TABLE 24

Level of Satisfaction with Housing Arrangements

Level of Satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage
Very satisfied	9	28.13%
Satisfied	16	50.00
Undecided	0	0
Dissatisfied	6	18.74
Very dissatisfied	1	3.13
Total	32	100.00%

The single mothers were asked to discuss the positive aspects of their lodging according to their respective housing arrangement. Of the eleven respondents who were private home owners 27.27% (3) appreciated the fact that their homes were totally paid for and 27.27% (3) liked their homes as they

TABLE 25

Positive Aspects of Home Ownership

Positive Aspects	Frequency	Percentage
Homes are paid for	3	27.27%
Memories of times with their spouses	3	27.27
Physical structure	3	27.27
Location and neighbourhood	2	18.18
Total	11	99.99%

held many fond memories of their lives before the loss of their spouses. While 27.27% (3) liked the physical structure of the house, 18.18% (2) believed the location of the house and their neighbourhood to be a real asset.

Many of the single mothers who commented on the sentimental value of their homes had raised their children in this location and had often helped to build or renovate the physical structure of the house. A respondent who remained in her home after her husband's death stated: "All our memories are here. I didn't want to uproot the children". Commenting on the significance of her home to her, a mother stated: "I'm part of this house. I helped build it from pay cheque to pay cheque. I don't want to have to leave". Many of the single mothers mentioned the location of their homes as a real benefit as they appreciated their proximity to the schools and shopping centres.

TABLE 26

Dissatisfactions Related to Home Ownership

Negative Aspects of Home Ownership	Frequency	Percentage
Physical structure	3	27.27%
Home and yard maintenance	3	27.27
Expense.	3	27.27
Location and neighbourhood	2	18.18
Total	11	99.99%

The dissatisfaction of the single mothers pertaining to housing arrangements were also discussed. Of the total home owners, 27.27% (3) had dislikes which stemmed from the physical structure of the house, 27.27% (3) minded the home and yard maintenance, 27.27% (3) expressed concerns related to the financial aspects of home ownership and 18.18% did not like the neighbourhood or location of their homes.

The dislikes related to the physical structure of the house pertained mainly to the house being too large for the needs of the family and the number of construction projects that were left unfinished as a result of the husband's death. A respondent who found the upkeep of the house particularly difficult stated: "We had separated the chores: my husband did the outside work while I took care of the inside. Now I have to do it all. It's time consuming to cut the grass because the lot is so big and I have to depend on my family

to do the painting". The single mothers who stated the expense of home ownership as a serious problem were most perturbed about the increasing interest rates and the difficulty involved in meeting the mortgage payments on a monthly basis. The problems related to the neighbourhood and location involved a lack of privacy in a townhouse complex and the inaccessibility of most facilities for dwellers of a rural area.

Of the ten single mothers who privately rented their accommodation from landlords, 20% (2) liked the convenient location, 20% (2) appreciated the landlord's ability to adequately maintain the property and 10% preferred living in privately rented apartments rather than face the social stigma associated with public housing. However, 50% (5) did not express any appreciation for their dwelling place. An equal number of respondents found some merit with their housing arrangements as those who were totally displeased.

The single mothers who were living in privately rented accommodation also had a number of problems related to this choice. While 30% (3) complained of the crowded conditions existing within the apartment due to a lack of space, 40% (4) were appalled by the substandard conditions of the apartment that seemed to be further aggravated by a general lack of maintenance on the part of the landlord. In addition 30% (3) disliked living on the upper floor of a house or in an apartment building.

TABLE 27

Positive Aspects of Private Rental

Positive Aspects of Private Rental	Frequency	Percentage
Maintenance	2	20%
Convenient Location	2	20
Better than public housing	1	10
No appreciation	5	50
Total	10	100%

TABLE 28

Dissatisfactions Related to Private Rental

Dissatisfaction Related to Private Rental	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of space	3	30%
Substandard conditions	4	40
Upper floor	3	30
Total	10	100%

The single mothers who complained of the lack of space within their homes had most often been forced to rent an apartment that did not have an adequate number of bedrooms to meet the family's needs. These financial restrictions often led the family to convert the living room into a bedroom at night. The substandard conditions of the apart-

ments included holes in the walls, leaky ceilings faulty plumbing and the presence of rats. The single mothers who lived in the upper apartment of a duplex or in an apartment building found it very inconvenient to carry the family's groceries up a flight of stairs. As well they were particularly concerned as their children did not have adequately fenced-in areas in which to play and therefore remained unsupervised for indefinite periods of time.

The positive aspects of subsidized housing were discussed. Of the eleven single mothers living in Windsor housing, 27.27% (3) favoured its convenient location, 18.18% (2) liked the spaciousness of their units, 27.27% (3) appreciated the fact that the rent is geared to income, 18.18% (2) believed their complex was well maintained and 9.09% (1) liked their property managers.

The single mothers who commented on the convenient location of their homes were referring to their proximity to shopping centres, medical services, schools, churches and recreation facilities. Referring to the spaciousness of her apartment a single mother stated: "I have ample room here. There are four people and four bedrooms, a large living room, kitchen and recreation room in the basement. Now, where else would I get that on the open market on my income?"

The problem most frequently encountered by the tenants of subsidized housing were explored. Of the eleven residents of public housing 63.63% (7) objected to the crowded conditions of the housing projects, 18.18% (2) disliked the racial

TABLE 29

Positive Aspects of Public Housing

Positive Aspects of Public Housing	Frequency	Percentage
Convenient location	3	27.27%
Spaciousness of unit	2	18.18
Geared to income rent	3	27.27
Well maintained complex	2	18.18
Property managers	1	9.09
Total	11	99.99%

TABLE 30

Problems Associated with Public Housing

Problems Associated with Public Housing	Frequency	Percentage
Crowded conditions of housing projects	7	63.63%
Racial confrontation	2	18.18
Waiting list	1	9.09
Project Managers	1	9.09
Total	11	99.99%

confrontations, 9.09% (1) were growing impatient with the lengthy waiting period as a requirement for a better unit and 9.09% (1) expressed discomfort with the judgemental

attitude of some of the project managers. Clearly the largest problem facing this group of single mothers was the over-crowding existing in the housing project.

There were a number of concerns related to the crowded conditions of the housing projects. Among the concerns that were most often enumerated were the lack of privacy, the vandalism, the fighting among the proportionally large number of children and the malicious intent of the gossip among the adult population. The racial confrontations involved the black and white teenagers in the project as well as the recently immigrated Indo-Chinese. Attempting to describe the judgemental attitude of a project manager a single mother stated: "You know how a man undresses a woman, well he does that with my house and it's so uncomfortable. He criticizes my housework, the vandalism done to the property. Am I to blame if the neighbourhood kids wrecked the clothesline? You really feel like you are being scrutinized by the worker".

A summary of the major findings regarding the practical problems of the single mothers may provide a profile of the typical difficulties encountered by the members of the sample group. Of the eleven single mothers who were employed, the majority were involved in the clerical field. While most of the respondents stated financial reasons for working, the major problems involved in the single mothers' decisions to work revolved around their limited time with the children. The child care arrangements, which were usually needed to allow the mothers a leisurely evening away from home, most

often entailed a relative babysitting in the child's home. Generally the mothers were satisfied with their child care arrangements and stated their trust in the babysitters as the main source of their satisfaction. Of the seventeen mothers who were recipients of government transfer programs, the majority stated their preference for the role of homemaker as the main reason leading to their decision to seek financial assistance from Family Benefits or Municipal Welfare. While the majority of the single mothers appreciated the reliability of their income, they also criticized the program for the inadequacy of their monthly payments. An almost equal number of single mothers owned their own homes as those who either rented from a private landlord or lived in subsidized housing. The majority of the mothers expressed satisfaction with their place of residence.

Psychosocial Problems

The following section serves to analyze the findings obtained from the second research question pertaining to the self perceived psychosocial experiences of the single mothers. More specifically consideration will be given to the social isolation, powerlessness, and loneliness of the single mothers.

Alienation In keeping with Seeman's typology of the possible usages and applications of the concept of alienation, a social isolation scale was selected as the instrument of measurement (Seeman, 1959). The social isolation scale consisted of eight items with the total scores ranging from

7, the highest level of social isolation to 0, the lowest level of social isolation. The median score was 5 indicating that one half of the scores fell above this point and one half below it. The social isolation scale yielded a mean score of 4.37 while the mode equalled a figure of 5. Table 31 provides an overview of the frequency of the scores obtained for the social isolation scale.

Based on the findings obtained from this particular scale the single mothers appeared to indicate a moderate level of social isolation. Thus in keeping with Finifter's definition of alienation (1972), it appears that the respondents may have experienced some discrepancy between their felt needs and aspirations and their chances of actually reaching their goals. While the single mothers did perceive such a discrepancy, the findings did not indicate that it was a pervasive or extremely disruptive feeling. Rather the moderate level of social isolation obtained from this measurement instrument may be interpreted as the respondents' discomfort with some aspects of their life situations while also striving to reach their greater goals.

A number of factors may have determined the moderate scores obtained on the social isolation scale. In the selection of the potential subjects for this study, the coordinators of the self help groups may have inadvertently chosen members who held higher profiles within the groups. As such many of the respondents may have already developed a larger and more adequate system of social networks thereby

TABLE 31
Scores Obtained from the Social Isolation Scale

Scores	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Zero	2	6.25%	6.25%
One	0	0.00	6.25
Two	2	6.25	12.50
Three	4	12.50	25.00
Four	6	18.75	43.75
Five	10	31.25	75.00
Six	6	18.75	93.75
Seven	2	6.25	100.00
Total	32	100.00%	100.00%

providing the single mothers with a greater number of opportunities in which they may fulfill their social needs. As well if the moderate level of social isolation seemed to indicate that the respondents were uncomfortable with some aspect of their present life situations, this may have provided adequate motivation for the single mothers to effect change. As the single mothers may take action to improve areas which they perceive as problematic, it follows that they may have a better chance of meeting their needs thereby reducing their self-perceived social isolation.

Powerlessness The second Guttman scale measured the degree of powerlessness experienced by the single mothers. The total scores ranged between 6, the maximum level of

powerlessness and 0, the optimum level of power thus setting the range of 6. The scale yielded a median score of 3 thus indicating that half of the scores fell above this point while the other half fell below. The scale also provided a mean score of 3 whereas the mode yielded a figure of 2 on the scale. Table 32 illustrates the frequency of scores along the range for the powerlessness scale.

TABLE 32
Scores Obtained on the Powerlessness Scale

Scores	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Zero	3	9.38%	9.38%
One	2	6.25	15.63
Two	9	28.13	43.75
Three	4	12.50	56.25
Four	7	21.88	78.13
Five	6	18.75	96.88
Six	1	3.13	100.00
Total	32	100.00%	100.00%

According to the findings which were based on a powerlessness scale initially designed by Neal et al. (1976), the respondents appeared to indicate a moderate level of powerlessness. In keeping with Seeman's definition of powerlessness (1959), it appears that the single mothers may not perceive their actions as being capable of controlling the course of events most directly affecting them. However

as the scale yielded a moderate rather than a high score, it appears that the single mothers may perceive themselves as being capable of influencing their life situations to some extent and are therefore not totally subjected to the extrinsic dependency of which Glasser speaks (1978).

The findings extrapolated from the powerlessness scale may be due to a number of factors. As the single mothers who took part in the research project may have been more likely to have been actively involved in the self help groups, it follows that they may have been more exposed to the legal and political channels through which formal requests are acknowledged and acted upon. Consequently the single mothers who have participated in such groups may have already acquired a sense of mastery over their lives as a result of seeing their needs met through their own actions. This is further accentuated by the fact that 22% of the sample group was drawn from a self help group which was initially organized to promote the rights of its membership.

Loneliness The final scale presented to the respondents measured their degree of self-perceived loneliness. The loneliness scale consisted of 7 items with the total scores ranging from 16, the highest level of loneliness, to 7, the lowest level of loneliness. Watson predetermined that the respondents scoring 13 or above could be considered lonely whereas those scoring below this figure were not lonely (1976). Using Watson's criteria, therefore, it appears that a median score of 7 and a mean score of 8.19 would indicate

a very low level of loneliness among the single mothers in the sample group. According to Lopata's definition of loneliness, these findings would indicate that the respondents are satisfied with the level of interaction they are presently engaged in. Table 33 gives an indication of the frequencies of the scores on the loneliness scale.

TABLE 33

Scores Obtained on the Loneliness Scale

Scores	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Seven	19	59.38%	59.38%
Eight	5	15.63	75.00
Nine	4	12.50	87.50
Ten	1	3.13	90.63
Twelve	1	3.13	93.75
Fifteen	1	3.13	96.88
Sixteen	1	3.13	100.00
Total	32	100.00%	100.00%

Though the researcher had initially anticipated a much higher degree of loneliness among the respondents, the findings are not totally surprising. In view of the definition of loneliness as an inadequate level of interaction with others, it is comprehensible that members of a self help group could have found enough people with whom they could share common interests in order to at least partially fill the void left by the absence of a spouse. In addition to

this factor, consideration must be given to the length of time the single mothers had held their present marital status. As the average length of time as a single mother was 5.72 years, it is very likely that many of the respondents had ample time to recover from the loss of the spouse and to create alternate relationships for themselves. As well, of the total respondents, 72.42% (21) were "satisfied" with the help and interaction provided by their families of origin and 79.31% (23) were "satisfied" with the relationship they shared with their friends. It may be suggested that the families and friends of the single mothers may have been able to provide the kind of quality interaction that the single mothers were seeking thereby reducing their level of loneliness. A final possibility that must be given consideration entails the respondents' conscious or unconscious wish to be perceived by the examiner as a "likeable" person who possesses the necessary traits to attract friends. Though a Lickert scale with its proven reliability was used to measure the concept of loneliness, the nature of the individual items may have rendered it possible for the respondents to provide answers which were more likely to indicate their satisfaction with their social network.

Single Mothers' Use of Self Help Groups

The following section will examine the findings obtained from the final three research questions pertaining to the single mothers' use of self help groups. More specifically three areas will be given special consideration: the single mothers' reasons for joining the self help groups; the extent of the self help groups' success in meeting the perceived needs of the single mothers; and the features, programs and techniques employed within the self help groups to permit the participants to meet their personal needs.

Reasons for Joining In order to determine the extent and quality of the single mothers' informal social support systems prior to joining the self help groups, the respondents' perceptions of their families' helpfulness immediately after the loss of their spouses was discussed. While 72.42% (21) of the respondents believed their families of origin to be either "very helpful" or "helpful", 17.24% (5) perceived their families to be either "unhelpful" or "very unhelpful" and 10.34% (3) were undecided regarding this issue. Three of the mothers reported not having contact with their families, friends, or professional services at the time of the loss of their spouses and could therefore not answer the question. Table 34 provides a further breakdown regarding the single mothers' perceptions of their families' helpfulness at the time of the loss of their spouses.

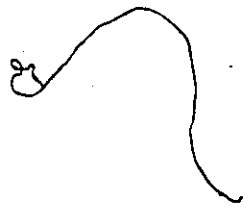


TABLE 34

Single Mothers' Perceptions of
Their Families' Helpfulness

Single Mothers' Perceptions	Frequency	Percentage
Very helpful	13	44.83%
Helpful	8	27.59
Undecided	3	10.34
Unhelpful	1	3.45
Very unhelpful	4	13.79
Total	29	100.00%

*By far the largest number of single mothers found their families to be very helpful immediately after the loss of their spouses. Many of the respondents expressed gratitude towards their families for the financial help they received at the time they were re-settling their homes. Among the concrete services provided were food, shelter, transportation and babysitting. However, of special importance to the respondents was their families' support and understanding during the ordeal. Referring to her family, a single mother stated: "They talked to me. When I was depressed, they gave me the emotional support. I was afraid of being on my own. I needed to talk. . .sometimes we talked two or three hours a day on the phone".

Also discussed were the single mothers' perceptions of their friends' abilities to provide support when it was most

needed. Of the total respondents 79.31% (23) believed that their friends were either "very helpful" or "helpful" while 17.24% (5) stated that their friends had either been "unhelpful" or "very unhelpful" and 3.45% (1) remained undecided.

TABLE 35

Single Mothers' Perceptions of their Friends' Helpfulness

Single Mothers' Perceptions	Frequency	Percentage
Very helpful	12	41.38%
Helpful	11	37.93
Undecided	1	3.45
Unhelpful	3	10.34
Very unhelpful	2	6.90
Total	32	100.00%

As Table 35 indicates, the majority of the single mothers believed their friends to be supportive during the crisis period. Many of the separated and divorced mothers stated that their friends had known of the marital conflict and had therefore been accepting of the respondents' need to re-establish an alternate lifestyle. The single mothers were most appreciative of their friends' understanding and willingness to listen at a time when they felt the need to talk.

However a minority of the single mothers also reported

dissatisfaction towards the help provided by their families and friends after the loss of their spouses. The negative reactions of the families and friends of some of the divorced, separated and never married mothers ranged from mild disapproval to criticism of the quality of care given to the children and finally to a belief that the children should be removed from the mothers' homes. The widowed mothers encountered an array of different problems in terms of maintaining a meaningful relationship with their families and friends. It appears that the general public's discomfort in dealing with the subject of death was felt by many of the widowed mothers. A widowed mother reported: "They were afraid to hear me talk of the death. . .but a bereaved person needs to talk of it". In describing her friends' reactions to her situation a widow stated: "They were saying so many meaningless things. They were telling me how lucky I was to have the kids and the house. . .But I didn't feel lucky at all".

In addition to their relationships with their families and friends, the single mothers were questioned regarding their contacts with professional services. While 59.38% (19) of the respondents had received help from a professional service, 40.63% (13) had not been in contact with any such services. Among the professionals contacted were social workers associated with a wide variety of agencies, priests, medical doctors, psychiatrists and psychologists. Among the respondents who contacted professionals for help, 63.13%

(12) were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the service, 31.58% (6) were either "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" and 5.26% (1) were undecided.

TABLE 36

Level of Satisfaction with the Professional Services

Level of Satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage
Very satisfied	7	36.84%
Satisfied	5	26.32
Undecided	1	5.26
Dissatisfied	3	15.79
Very dissatisfied	3	15.79
Total	19	100.00%

In the discussion pertaining to the factors rendering the services of the professionals satisfying, the single mothers identified the warmth and understanding of their helpers, the opportunity to talk to an attentive listener, and the faith the workers displayed in the respondents' abilities as positive components of the therapeutic relationship. Many of the single mothers were also appreciative of the opportunity to make their own decisions while also receiving the emotional support of their workers. This is exemplified in the following statement by a respondent who was never married: "She (social worker) didn't push herself on me. She would ask me if there was anything she could

help me with".

Regarding the negative aspects of the services provided by the professionals, the single mothers mentioned the judgemental attitude of some of the workers and the psychiatrists' tendency to prescribe medication without offering any supportive treatment. The single mothers' feelings that they were pressed for time during the interviews were reflected in such statements as "I think she (social worker) was more interested in going for lunch than seeing me. . . . She (social worker) always seemed to have too many appointments scheduled for the same time. Our sessions always seemed rushed, almost as if she expected you to have a prepared statement before you went in to see her".

In reviewing the single mothers' contacts with their families and friends and the professional services, the findings indicate a fairly high degree of satisfaction with the help received immediately after the loss of the spouses. Though some criticisms were heard, the respondents were predominantly appreciative of the emotional support provided by those closest to them. As well many of the respondents acknowledged the concrete help they received on a daily basis in such areas as offering shelter, transportation and baby-sitting services. In view of these findings it appears that the majority of the single mothers considered their informal support systems to be very satisfying in terms of helping them to cope with the practical problems as well as providing them with the needed emotional support. As such it appears

that the single mothers did not seek the help of their respective self help groups because of a lack of support received from their families, friends or professional helpers but rather to supplement this support system.

The single mothers were questioned as to the manner in which they had initially heard of the self help groups to which they belonged. While 53.10% (17) of the respondents reported that they had heard of the group through friends, 12.5% (4) responded to newspaper advertisements, 9.38% (3) had heard of the group from various members of their families and 9.38% (3) had had the groups recommended to them by social workers. As well 6.25% (2) of the single mothers were responding to advertising flyers sent to their homes while 3.13% (1) had heard of the group from a doctor, 3.13% (1) had been told of the group by V.O.N. nurses and 3.13% (1) had heard of their self help group through another church affiliated bereavement group. Table 37 clearly illustrates that the majority of the single mothers had initially heard of the groups through personal friends.

The situation under which the single mothers chose to join the self help groups was also discussed. While 37.5% (12) of the respondents joined the self help group as they perceived it to be the best service to meet their personal needs, 28.12% (9) acknowledged that others had strongly recommended that they seek out the help of the self help group, 25% (8) stated that the self help group had been the easiest service to locate and 9.38% (3) maintained that no

TABLE 37

Manner in which Self Help was Initially Heard of

Manner of Hearing	Frequency	Percentage
Friend	17	53.10%
Newspaper advertisement	4	12.50
Family	3	9.38
Social worker	3	9.38
Advertising flyer	2	6.25
Doctor	1	3.13
V.O.N. nurse	1	3.13
Another bereavement group	1	3.13
Total	32	100.00%

TABLE 38

Situations under which the Respondents
Joined the Self Help Groups

Situations	Frequency	Percentage
Best service to meet needs	12	37.50%
Others strongly recommended that I join	9	28.12
Easiest service to find	8	25.00
No other service available	3	9.38
Total	32	100.00%

other service could provide the kinds of help they were searching for. Prior to joining the self help groups the majority of the respondents had assessed the groups as being the most appropriate service to meet their self-perceived needs.

The respondents were then questioned pertaining to the specific reasons leading to their decision to join their respective self help groups. The single mothers were provided with a list of nineteen items and were asked to indicate how important or unimportant each item was in their decision to join the self help group.

The items could be classified according to the following three categories: Social hedonistic goals; process goals and endstate goals (Lieberman, Borman, 1979). The social hedonistic goals referred to the single mothers' search for some relief from their personal problems by participating in social activities and creating a new set of friends. Social hedonistic goals were reflected in the scale by such statements as "to make friends", "to get out of the house" and "to have fun". The process goals referred to the respondents immediate expectations regarding the experiences they hoped to have as a result of participating within the group. The process goals were further subdivided into seven categories according to the type of experience they related to. This classification scheme included goals pertaining to such experiences as the sharing of thoughts, the acquisition of new information and the development of new social and

emotional ties. Such statements as "to get emotional support" and "to get information about a variety of topics" exemplified the process goals. The endstate goals referred to the single mothers' expectations regarding eventual changes in their lives. Subdivisions of the endstate goals included changes in such areas as mental health, self awareness and interpersonal relationships. The endstate goals were represented on the scale by such statements as "to deal with specific problems I was experiencing" and "to get out of my shell".

The percentages of each item having been evaluated as "very important" in the respondents' decision to join the self help group were computed. The total scale including all nineteen goals was then divided into two parts with the items indicating a higher percentage and therefore a higher degree of importance among the respondents being located within the first part of the scale while the items having been allocated a lesser degree of importance among the respondents fell within the second half of the scale. It was found that 83.33% of the social hedonistic goals were represented within the first half of the scale while 16.66% were found in the second half. Whereas 44.44% of the process goals were contained within the first half of the scale, 55.55% were found in the second half. Finally of the total endstate goals, only 25% appeared within the first half of the scale while 75% were found within the second half. Table 39 illustrates the specific percentage of the respondents listing each item as "very important" in their decision to

join a self help group.

As indicated in Table 39 the social hedonistic goals were more frequently considered to be "very important" in the single mothers' decision to join the self help group. A number of factors may be involved in this situation. Though the single mothers did not specifically refer to their practical problems of daily living as problems from which they needed relief, the findings of this study indicate that difficulties were encountered in these areas. While 72.73% acknowledged having problems pertaining to employment, 55% had encountered difficulties in the area of child care arrangements, 88.24% had experienced some setbacks in dealing with government transfer programs and finally 21.88% felt some dissatisfaction with their housing arrangements. In view of the single mothers' recognition of their practical problems and their expressed reasons for joining the self help groups, which most often related to social hedonistic goals, it seems plausible that the single mothers were seeking some relief from the daily pressures of their roles as single parents. This might explain the frequency with which statements such as "to have fun" and "to get out of the house" were rated as being "very important".

In addition to the practical problems of daily living, the single mothers may have also been searching for some respite from the isolation of their homes and the ensuing loneliness. In part, this may account for the popularity of such social hedonistic goals as "to make friends" and "to

TABLE 39

Single Mothers' Stated Reasons for Joining Self Help Groups

Statements Outlining Reasons for Joining Self Help Groups	Type of Goal	Frequency of being Considered "Very Important"
To discuss my thoughts and feelings with others who had similar experiences	Process goal (similarity communion)	56.25%
To make friends	Social hedonistic goal	50.00
To learn how other single parents cope with their problems	Process goal (modeling)	48.39
To deal with specific problems I was experiencing	Endstate goal (mental health)	43.75
To get involved in social activities	Social hedonistic goal	43.75
To get out of the house	Social hedonistic goal	40.63
To get advice	Process goal (cognitive informational)	38.71
To meet someone I could talk to when I'm upset	Process goal (linkage)	38.71
To do something different	Social hedonistic goal	35.48
To have fun	Social Hedonistic goal	35.48
To get relief from feelings I have that trouble me	Endstate goal (mental health)	35.48

Table 39 - continued

Statements outlining Reasons for Joining Self Help Groups	Type of Goal	Frequency of being Considered "Very Important"
To spend more time helping others	Process goal (altruistic)	35.48
To get information about a variety of topics	Process goal (cognitive-informational)	34.38
To get emotional support	Process goal (support)	30.00
To get out of my shell	Endstate goal (life-style)	29.03
To get more involved within a group concerned about the rights of a single parent	Endstate goal (social-political)	25.81
To have a chance to grieve with others who understood my feelings	Process goal (abreactive-cathartic)	25.81
To get spiritual guidance	Process goal (cognitive-informational)	15.63
To meet someone I might date	Social hedonistic goal	12.90

N

get involved in social activities". Of the single mothers who elaborated on the reasons for joining a self help group, one respondent stated: "I was looking for something but I didn't know what. You're looking for a place to go alone as a woman where you can meet people without feeling like a fifth wheel".

Success in Meeting the Needs In evaluating the success of the self help groups according to the perceptions of the single mothers, a variety of factors were considered. The length of time the single mothers had maintained their membership in the self help groups, their stated level of satisfaction with the groups' abilities to provide help and their intentions regarding their future affiliation with the groups were reviewed.

In discussing the length of time that the single mothers had participated in the groups, it was found that 68.74% (22) had been members between one to four years, 15.63% (5) had been members for less than one year and 15.63% (5) had maintained their membership for five to nine years. The average or mean length of time as a member of a self help group for the single mothers participating in this study was 2.86 years. Table 40 illustrates that the majority of the single mothers had been members from one to four years.

The single mothers were questioned regarding the self help groups' abilities to help them deal with the problems for which they had initially sought help. Of the total respondents 53.13% (17) stated that the self help group had

TABLE 40

Length of Time as Members of Self Help Groups

Length of Time	Frequency	Percentage
Less than one year	5	15.63%
One to four years	22	68.74
Five to nine years	5	15.63
Total	32	100.00%

"very much" helped, 43.74% (14) reported that the groups had helped some, and 3.13% (1) maintained that the groups had not helped at all. Table 41 indicates that the majority (mode) of the single mothers believed that the groups had been very useful in providing the type of help that had been required.

Though few of the single mothers were able to specifically state their intentions regarding their future membership with the groups in a matter of years or months, 68.75% acknowledged their wish to remain actively involved with the group unless their life situations dramatically changed. However 31.25% of the respondents maintained that they would probably be leaving the groups within the next year. The mode of the respondents were planning to remain members of their self help groups.

Of the single mothers who were seeking to renew their membership, many reported that they enjoyed the programs offered through the groups and felt they could still benefit from the help provided. The single mothers who believed they

TABLE 41

Single Mothers' Perceptions of the
Helpfulness of the Groups

Single Mothers' Perceptions	Frequency	Percentage
Group helped "very much so"	17	53.13%
Group helped "some"	14	43.74
Group helped "not at all"	1	3.13
Total	32	100.00%

would cancel their membership within the following year often expressed satisfaction with the help provided by the groups to which they belonged but stated that "it was time to move on". Some mothers felt they had been able to work through much of the grief or anger that they had felt following the loss of their spouses while others had made plans to remarry. In describing her need to sever the ties with the self help group, a single mother stated: "It's (the group) not something forever. It's for when something is hurting and you want to share that with others who are in the same boat. But I've outgrown it now. It's time for me to start living my life again".

In view of the average length of membership within the groups being 2.86 years, the stated satisfaction of the majority of the respondents with the groups' abilities to meet their perceived needs and the plans of the majority of

the single mothers to retain their membership, it appears that the self help groups have met with some success in meeting the needs of most of the respondents.

Features, Programs and Techniques In order to gain further understanding into the success of the self help groups it was necessary to review the programs operating within the groups as well as the specific help-giving techniques that were most frequently employed among group members. Though variations were found to exist among the groups, there were also a number of similarities that permitted the researcher to analyze the main features of the groups according to the respondents' preferences.

With the use of a scale provided, the respondents were asked to rate eleven features of self help groups according to their level of helpfulness. The characteristic that was most often selected as being "very helpful" pertained to the group members' responsibility for their own actions within the group (67.74). This selection may have reflected the respondents' wish to retain their sense of individuality and freedom of choice within the group setting. The second feature considered most helpful referred to the indigenous nature of the leadership (54.84%), while the third position was held by the feature which highlighted the easy-going style of the communication (53.13%). Whereas the first feature may have sought to reaffirm the independence of group members, the second and third characteristics considered most helpful may have expressed the single mothers' identification

and comfort with the informal support system found in the self help group.

However at the other end of the scale the respondents chose the group principle pertaining to doing rather than talking as the least helpful of the eleven items provided (31.25%). Many of the single mothers expressed the need to talk and heralded the merits of ventilating angry and bitter feelings in order to eventually find some resolution to their problems. The second least favoured feature stating that all group members shared the same goals (35.48%) may have been considered in a negative light by the respondents as it may have been interpreted to undermine the individual's sense of independence and uniqueness. Though the group members seemed to recognize that they were "all in the same boat", they appeared eager to re-affirm the singularity of their future goals as prescribed by their families' needs. The third feature to have been attributed little recognition in terms of its helpfulness pertains to the group members' role in helping to educate the public and thus bringing about social change (36.67%). It appears that the majority of the respondents were most concerned with the dynamics occurring within the group as opposed to directing their attention to the impact that the self help groups may have on the larger society. Table 42 provides a further elaboration of the single mothers' selection of the most helpful features of the self help groups.

The single mothers' selection of the features of self

TABLE 42

Single Mothers' Selection of the Most Helpful
Features of Self Help Groups

Features of the Self Help Groups	Percentage of Respondents Considering Features as "Very Important"
Everyone is responsible for his own actions in the group	67.74%
Leaders are chosen by the group members	54.84
The communication between group members is very easy-going	53.13
Group members get personal satisfaction from helping someone else	53.13
Group members are encouraged to use "common-sense" to solve personal problems	53.13
Everyone tries to help one another	51.61
Everyone in the group is equal	48.39
The group is small and everyone knows each other	43.33
Group members play an important part in helping to educate the public and bring about social change	36.67
Everyone in the group shares the same goals	35.48
The emphasis is placed on "doing" rather than "talking"	31.25

help groups that were most helpful to their situation appears to have re-affirmed their sense of individuality while also expressing their identification with one another. The main concerns seem to revolve around the resolution of personal problems within a framework of mutual support as opposed to

the promotion of social change in areas pertaining to single parenthood.

The single mothers were encouraged to discuss the programs offered by the groups that they most appreciated. While 43.75% (14) of the respondents appreciated the opportunity to participate in discussion groups or listen to speakers addressing a variety of topics, 28.13% (9) preferred the adult activities. Of the total respondents' 18.75% (6) favoured the committee work and 9.38% (3) retained their links to the self help groups because of the children's activities. Table 43 indicates that the mode of the single mothers were more interested in the discussion groups and guest speakers.

TABLE 43

Programs Most Favoured by Single Mothers

Programs	Frequency	Percentage
Discussion groups and guest speakers	14	43.75%
Adult activities	9	28.13
Committee work	6	18.74
Children's recreation	3	9.38
Total	32	100.00%

Many of the single mothers who chose discussion groups as their favoured program mentioned the merits of getting together with "someone who was in the same boat" in order to

share thoughts and feelings. One respondent spoke of the courage it took for her to speak during the discussion groups and went on to describe the eventual rewards.

Everyone is so open. It takes a lot to spill your guts but the people in the group did it and I was able to do it. It took a lot to do it but it helped. You know what was nice about it: they were my friends not my husband and my friends. I made the effort to meet those people. It was me. I wasn't my husband's wife or my kids' mother. They accepted me for me.

Among the guest speakers and special programs, many of the single mothers expressed interest in the practical lectures most related to their status as single parents. Topics such as "know your mechanic", "home repairs", and "nutrition" were often considered beneficial as they enabled the respondents to feel more self-sufficient and could potentially save the family some money. However some of the single mothers stated that they would have appreciated a greater emphasis on such practical but difficult areas as explaining the father's death to young children and providing leadership and guidance to sons as they approach their teenage years. It appears that while some mothers were satisfied with the help provided in areas pertaining to their practical problems of daily living, others wished the groups would offer more.

The single mothers also expressed a great deal of enthusiasm towards the adult activities. Among the most popular activities were dances after group meetings, field trips, picnics, evenings to the theatre or restaurant and small house parties. However many of the respondents also made

special mention of the friends they had acquired since joining the groups. One mother commented on the comfort that could be felt in the company of fellow group members: "When I sit at home alone, I can get really down. But then I come here and always find someone around to talk to and the tension just seems to disappear". In addition to the pleasure obtained from the warmth and caring components of the friendships, the single mothers often commented on the services that were exchanged among group members. While one respondent seemed very appreciative that fellow group members had recently helped her to move, others commented on the benefits of their child care arrangements in that various group members would babysit one another's children in order to allow themselves an inexpensive evening away from home. Though no formal arrangements of this type of service exchange were evident in any of the self help groups studied, it appeared that the single mothers were attempting to help one another cope with their practical problems through informal, less structured channels.

The third program to draw the attention and interest of the single mothers was the work to be done on the various committees overseeing the functioning of the groups. Referring to the groups' ideology regarding the need of group members to work together as a unit, a single mother commented: "You each have your own area to work on but you really work together and volunteer for anything needing to be done. And I think that's what keeps the group going". However many of

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the respondents recognized the merits of committee work in a personal way: "The skills I've acquired as a committee member have really helped me in other areas. I've gained a lot of self-confidence and I can even do some public speaking now without getting really nervous".

Finally a minority of the respondents stated that they most enjoyed organizing the recreational activities for the children. A single mother who had become involved in the local action group for her housing complex summarized it best: "I joined the action centre so I could get more involved with my children. . .to help them with their education. . .to help them cope with public housing and to help them see the positive side of it. . .On Mother's Allowance I can't afford much recreation for the kids but the action centre provides them with that chance".

Thus it appears that the programs offered by the self help groups fulfill a multiplicity of needs while also providing a number of services. The single mothers seemed to recognize the merits of the formal and concrete services of the groups but also acknowledged the personal gains they had experienced as a result of their participation within the groups and their contacts with others who were in similarly placed situations.

In addition to the positive aspects of the self help groups, some consideration was given to the problematic areas. Among the most frequently stated problems were the cliques existing within the groups, the "fighting and backbiting"

among members in the most influential positions, the diminishing interest and the poor attendance at general meetings, the lack of organized transportation to the meetings and the cost for most of the adult and children's recreational activities. A number of additional concerns were also mentioned: the suspicion that many of the group members were in search of sexual partners, the pairing of many of the members thus giving the group the appearance of a "couples club", the irrelevance of some of the topics chosen for group discussions, the poor or questionable image of some of the groups in the public's eye and the non-support of the general membership leaving much of the work to be done by a small but resourceful group of individuals. Though many of the respondents were quite verbal in their criticisms of the groups, most also stated that they intended to retain their memberships with the groups as they still found enjoyment in some aspect of the program.

The final area that was given consideration in terms of analyzing the self help groups' abilities to meet the needs of the single mothers was the specific techniques used between group members in order to provide help. The single mothers were presented with a scale containing twenty eight items and were asked to rate each item according to its degree of helpfulness. Each statement contained within the scale was representative of a psychological technique such as empathy, modeling, self-disclosure and behavioural rehearsal. Each item was then listed in order of priority with the

techniques having obtained the highest percentage of recognition as "very helpful" heading the list while the items with the lowest percentage closed the list. To facilitate the further analysis of the scale and to obtain some impressions regarding the single mothers' preferred help-giving techniques, the scale was divided into three parts. The first contained the following ten help-giving activities: catharsis, empathy, mutual affirmation, positive reinforcement, justification, sharing, normalization, functional analysis, behavioural prescription and modeling. In contrast to this first list the last third of the activities include behavioural rehearsal, encouragement of shaping, explanation, requesting feedback, punishment, offering feedback, extinction, reflection and paraphrase and confrontation. Table 44 provides a further breakdown of the help-giving techniques and the level of helpfulness attributed to these by the single mothers.

Interesting observations can be drawn from the contrast existing in the nature of these two opposite ends of the scale. In the first half of the scale such activities as empathy and mutual support indicate an accepting and supportive environment while positive reinforcement and sharing promote a free and uninhibited communication pattern. However the activities located within the last third of the scale were found to be much less supportive. While many of the techniques were behaviourally oriented, such activities as punishment and confrontation suggested a controlling and even coercive method.

TABLE 44
Single Mothers' Selection of the Most Helpful Help-Giving Techniques

Help-Giving Techniques	Statements Provided to the Respondents	Percentage of Respondents Considering Techniques as "very helpful"
Catharthis	Group members encourage one another to express their feelings freely and honestly	64.52%
Empathy	Group members let one another know that they understand and share feelings	58.06
Mutual affirmation	Group members assure one another that they are worthwhile	54.84
Positive reinforcement	Group members praise one another for attempting to deal with personal problems in the right way	48.39
Justification	Group members let one another know that they have a right to feel as they do	48.39
Sharing	Group members share past or present experiences with one another	45.16
Normalization	Group members assure each other that even though their feelings may seem strange, they are normal	45.16
Functional analysis	Group members try to understand a problem by breaking it down and looking at the entire situation	45.16

Table 44 - continued

Help-Giving Techniques	Statements Provided to the Respondents	Percentage of Respondents Considering Techniques as "very helpful"
Behavioural prescription	Group members suggest things to do about a specific problem	38.71
Modeling	Group members show how they would personally deal with a problem if they were faced with it	38.71
Self disclosure	Group members discuss personal feelings that they would not normally discuss elsewhere	38.71
Discrimination training	Group members try to understand how their present way of dealing with problems is different than in the past	38.71
Reassurance of competence	Group members reassure each other that they can handle their problems	35.48
Morale building	Group members reassure one another that things will be all right	35.48
Consensual validation	Group members check with each other to see if their way of seeing things is right	35.48
Establishing group goals	Group members discuss group goals	32.26
Personal goal setting	Group members set personal goals and keep track of their progress	29.03

Table 44 - continued

Help-Giving Techniques	Statements Provided to the Respondents	Percentage of Respondents Considering Techniques as "very helpful"
Behavioural prescription	Group members suggest things to avoid when dealing with a specific problem.	25.81
Reference to group norms	Group members often refer to the group's rules guiding the actions of group members	25.81
Behavioural rehearsal	Group members practice behaving a certain way in the group so they can try it out later when dealing with the actual problem	22.58
Encouragement of sharing	Group members question one another in order to get more information about a problem	22.58
Explanation	Group members offer explanations for each other's behaviour and thoughts	19.35
Requesting feedback	A group member asks how someone else feels about him	16.13
Punishment	Group members criticize behaviour that is considered wrong	12.90
Offering feedback	Group members state how they feel about someone else face to face	12.90

Table 44 - continued

Help-Giving Techniques	Statements Provided to the Respondents	Percentage of Respondents Considering Techniques as "very helpful"
Extinction	Group members ignore the behaviour of a person when they think it is wrong	9.68
Reflection and paraphrase	Group members repeat what others have said but use different words and emphasize the feelings involved	6.45
Confrontation	Group members challenge one another's behaviour in a demanding way	3.33

Thus the order in which the single mothers selected the most satisfying help-giving techniques may suggest a preference for an accepting, supportive environment rather than the more threatening situation indicated by the latter part of the scale. It is interesting to note that the qualities of the self help groups that were most appreciated by the single mothers were very similar to the characteristics of the families and friends who were considered the most helpful. It appears that the single mothers in the sample group were in search of a nurturing atmosphere where they could attempt to deal with their problems at their own pace.

Summary

The foregoing chapter has served to present and analyze the findings pertaining to the problems and experiences of the single mothers as well as their use of self help groups. A description of the sample group was provided followed by a discussion of the practical problems and psychosocial experiences of the single mothers. The reasons leading to the respondents' decisions to join the self help groups and their level of satisfaction with the groups' abilities to help them meet their needs were reviewed. The features, programs and help-giving techniques operating within the groups were examined.

In describing the sample group, it was found that the majority of the single mothers were either divorced or widowed, between the ages of 25 to 44 and had received some high school education. While the majority of the respondents were in

receipt of government transfer programs and had an average income of \$8,840.00, they had also suffered a loss of income at the time of the loss of their spouse. In addition, the majority of the single mothers had two children and had maintained their present marital status between one to four years.

The practical problems encountered by the single mothers were analyzed according to four areas: unemployment, child care arrangements, government transfer programs and housing. Of the 36.67% of the mothers who were working, the majority were employed in the clerical field and maintained their positions in the labour force for financial reasons. The prevalent child care arrangement involved the use of a relative to babysit in the child's home. Generally the respondents expressed satisfaction with their child care arrangements and most believed that their babysitters could be trusted to care for their children in a competent manner. Of the 56.67% of the respondents who were dependent on the government transfer programs for their income, the majority had chosen this alternative as they wished to maintain their roles as full-time homemakers. Finally an almost equal number of single mothers were home owners as there were mothers who either lived in subsidized housing or rented from private landlords.

Generally, the scores obtained on the three psychosocial scales indicated fairly low levels of social isolation, powerlessness and loneliness. In an attempt to understand the possible reasons for these findings, a number of factors were

given consideration: the very nature and selection of the sample group, the experiences of the single mothers within their respective self help groups, the length of time since the mothers had lost their spouses and the support provided by the respondents' families and friends.

The single mothers' level of satisfaction with the support received from the families and friends as well as the professional services with which they were in contact was also discussed. The respondents were generally satisfied with the help received from their personal social networks prior to joining the self help groups. While the concrete services such as the provision of shelter and babysitting were appreciated, the single mothers also expressed gratitude for their families and friends' willingness to provide the needed emotional support. Thus it appears that the single mothers did not join the self help groups in search of support that they missed from families and friends but rather to supplement their already existing support systems.

With the use of a scale provided, the single mothers were asked to rate in order of importance their reasons for joining their respective self help groups. The findings indicated that the single mothers most frequently chose social hedonistic goals in order to explain their decisions to join the self help groups. Thus it appears that the respondents were in search of relief from their personal problems while also hoping to develop new friendships from which they could draw emotional support. Generally the respondents expressed satisfaction with

the groups' abilities to meet their personal needs.

The features, programs and techniques intrinsic to the self help groups were also discussed. The features that were selected by the respondents as being most helpful reflected the single mothers' wishes to retain their sense of individuality while also identifying with the group. The most popular program offered by the self help groups seemed to be the discussion groups followed by the adult activities. The respondents seemed most appreciative of the emotional support and the social links developed within the groups as a result of these programs. The specific help-giving activities that were considered most helpful indicated a preference for a nurturing and supportive environment as opposed to the more rigid or demanding methods advocated by the behavioural or cognitive processes.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter will serve to present conclusions and recommendations based on the data analysis and findings of this study. Furthermore the researcher intends to integrate the findings of this research project with the theoretical framework presented in the literature review. In reviewing the implications and recommendations, consideration will be given to the limitations inherent in the study. Finally recommendations for future research and the expansion of present resources will be offered in light of the implications for the field of social work.

Conclusions

Practical problems The first research question was concerned with the practical problems encountered by the single mothers on a daily basis. Special consideration was given to the difficulties present in the areas pertaining to employment, child care arrangements, government transfer programs and housing.

In regard to the respondents' principle source of income, the findings indicated that over half drew their income from government transfer programs whereas slightly over one third were members of the work force. Though single mothers have

often been criticized and depicted as recipients of public funds, it is interesting to note that a substantial percentage of the single mothers in the sample group were supporting their own families with the income obtained from their participation in the labour force. This finding is supported by two major research studies (Ferri, 1976; National Council of Welfare, 1976) in which the participants were almost equally represented in the labour force as in the rolls of the government transfer programs.

Based on these findings, it appears that the stereotype of the single mother as a recipient of public funds may only be partially true. While it may be recognized that a sizeable proportion of the single mothers are exercising their rights to receive governmental assistance in order to support their families, many others are choosing to remain active members of the labour force.

The findings pertaining to the single mothers' reasons for working drew some interesting conclusions. Of the single mothers who were employed it was found that the majority (63.64%) reported working for financial reasons. Many of these mothers reported having sought employment prior to the loss of their husbands as they had either enjoyed working outside of their home or had wanted to supplement their family income. However following the loss of their spouses, many of the single mothers maintained that their predominant reason for working related to the financial security that it could provide the family. Based on these findings, it appears that

the practical and financial aspects of single parenthood seemed to influence many of the mothers' perceptions regarding their work. Though they had previously thought of their work as a secondary provider of self-fulfillment and additional income, after the loss of their husbands the single mothers perceived their work and steady income as the means by which their families could survive. Thus it appears that the pragmatic concerns of the single mothers may have influenced their perceptions and attitudes regarding their work.

The problems that the single mothers most often reported in regard to their choice of employment reflected difficulties which seemed to be intrinsic to the one parent families. The majority (54.54%) of the single mothers mentioned difficulties which involved finding enough time either to spend with the children or complete all of the necessary household tasks. In view of the fact that these problems were related to the single mothers' limited time to fulfill all of their parental responsibilities, it seems appropriate to surmise that the problems which may seem manageable in a two parent family where the resources of two adults can be combined may become insurmountable in a one parent family where one person must assume the total workload.

The findings pertaining to the single mothers' child care arrangements also provided interesting material from which conclusions will be drawn. Of the types of child care arrangements most often used by the single mothers, the vast majority (65%) reflected the mothers' dependence on either their

families or friends to care for their children. The popularity of such arrangements may be partially explained by the mothers' trust in their families and friends' abilities to provide adequate care for their children. The literature offers additional reasons by addressing the issue of the high cost of formal day care in comparison to the mothers' low wages earned in the marginal labour force (Guyatt, 1971). Thus these findings serve to illustrate the extent to which the mothers depended on their families and friends to provide concrete help in the form of babysitting services in the absence or unavailability of community services.

A second point that may be drawn from the findings pertaining to child care arrangements revolved around the situations under which the single mothers were in need of babysitters. The majority (70%) of the respondents stated their need for leisure time away from the children during which they could enjoy the company of other adults as the predominant reason for needing babysitters. It appears that the single mothers were not only dependent on their families and friends for the tangible services they could offer but also for the friendship they could share. Such findings appear to illustrate the need to recognize the value of the respondents' informal support systems in relation to their roles as single parents.

Conclusions were also drawn in regard to the single mothers' usage of government transfer programs. The findings indicated that a sizeable percentage (47.06%) of the

respondents who were recipients of government transfer funds believed that their children would benefit from having their mothers assume the role of full-time homemaker. It is interesting to note that even though countless mothers in two-parent families have made similar decisions, it has been the single mothers in receipt of public funds who have most often been criticized for remaining at home as opposed to seeking employment. This may be further substantiated by Knight's point that single mothers are subject to two basic societal prejudices which stipulate that while the woman's place is at home with her children, she should not expect to receive financial assistance without providing something in return (Knight, 1980). Thus it appears that even though the single mothers in receipt of public funds may have chosen their lifestyles in consideration for their children, they may have nevertheless felt the scrutiny of a society which does not believe that an individual should receive "something for nothing".

This point was further reflected in the single mothers' responses regarding the problematic aspects of the government transfer programs. While the majority (58.82%) of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the inadequacy of the funds provided or the potential for earning additional monies to supplement their income, a substantial percentage of single mothers (29.40%) were annoyed with the negative psychological effects that the program may have on them. However, these two areas seemed to be related in a number of

ways. First the single mothers' lack of incentive may be linked to the minimal number of hours they may work before their benefits are reduced and secondly the recipients' relatively low income which forces many to take up residence in substandard residential accommodations may be related to the social stigma they often feel subjected to. Thus it appears that the concrete as well as the abstract problems associated with the government transfer program appear to further isolate the single mothers from the mainstream of society.

In spite of the problems most often associated with the government transfer programs, the single mothers also recognized that a number of difficulties were inherent in the employment opportunities available to them. The respondents enumerated a variety of problems associated with most jobs that they felt qualified to apply for: shift work, low wages, minimal benefits and re-occurring layoffs. These findings were found to be consistent with the information provided by the National Council of Welfare in which it was stipulated that the majority of single mothers were forced to participate in the "marginal" or "pink collar" labour force. This work force is characterized by low wages, irregular working hours and little chance of advancement (1977). Thus it appears that the single mothers face an additional bind in that they must either cope with the minimal income or social stigma most often associated with the government transfer programs or the limited employment opportunities offered within the labour force.

A finding that the researcher had not initially anticipated but proved to be interesting pertained to the single mothers' positive regard for the government transfer programs as well as subsidized housing. While recognizing the drawbacks of these two forms of governmental assistance, the single mothers also seemed to be appreciative of a number of factors involved such as the dependable income, the health care benefits, the spaciousness of the housing units and the geared-to-income rent.

In attempting to understand the mothers' expressed satisfaction with their present financial and housing arrangements, it appears that the respondents' type of arrangements prior to the loss of their husbands may be of some value. Of the respondents who expressed satisfaction with their financial or housing arrangements, many acknowledged that the monthly allowance they had received from their husbands for the family's necessities had been inadequate while others described their former dwelling places as a "slum", a "shack", and in one case as "cockroach haven". Thus it appears that even though the respondents were well aware of the negative aspects of the government transfer programs or the housing projects in which they lived, most reported that their needs and aspirations could be met within the limits of the programs much more readily than if their previous lifestyle had been maintained. This point leads the researcher to a further conclusion. The single mothers may have been inclined to accept their present situation as being "satisfying" in view

of the fact that it was the best possible alternative available to them at the present time. Though the respondents may have been receptive to the premise that a better lifestyle existed, there also seemed to be a recognition that they should accept their living conditions as these represented the optimal situation given their present economic means. The single mothers' satisfaction with their financial and housing arrangements may have been indicative of a certain level of maturity on their part as it implies a search for happiness and self-fulfillment within the scope of the plausible alternatives.

An interesting finding was obtained in relation to the various problems usually associated with subsidized housing. The problems most often enumerated by the single mothers such as the vandalism, the lack of privacy, the fighting among children and the gossip among the adult population was substantiated by the 1973 Toronto study in which the tenants of public housing projects expressed dissatisfaction with the social and physical aspects of their neighbourhood. The study went on to identify the overcrowded conditions of the complexes as an area of major concern (Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1973). The single mothers' complaints in relation to the problematic aspects of the housing projects seemed to also accentuate the crowded conditions of the neighbourhood. In reference to this problem one mother stated: "I hate the summers in the project. It's so hot and there are so many kids and they seem to fight constantly. But you have to

expect that when they pack so many people in (such a small area) like sardines". Thus it appears that even though the residents of the public housing projects, and especially the row housing, are often stigmatized as "gossips" and "fighters", the real problem may lie with the crowded conditions of the complexes. This seems to be further evidenced by the fact that the single mothers who lived in the scattered housing units did not seem to complain of the crowded conditions or the social stigma as their units were located in the community and could not be readily identified as subsidized housing.

Psychosocial Problems The following conclusions pertain to the second research question regarding the psychosocial experiences of the single mothers. The findings of this study indicated that the single mothers, all of whom had been members of a self help group, scored moderate levels of social isolation and powerlessness on the Guttman scales while demonstrating a low level of loneliness on the Lickert scale. A number of conclusions can be drawn from these findings.

Finifter's definition of alienation stipulates that it involves a discrepancy between the aspirations and needs of the individual and his perception of the chances of ever meeting these (1972). Following a similar train of thought, Reiner has stated that an individual may develop feelings of irrelevance and subsequent powerlessness when he repeatedly perceives himself as being unable to meet his personal needs (1979).

In view of these definitions and the respondents' moderate

levels of alienation and powerlessness, an interesting conclusion may be drawn. It appears that the majority of the single mothers in the sample group perceived themselves as being capable of at least partially meeting their needs and aspirations. While attempting to describe the rewards of single parenthood, Murdock refers to the mothers' pride and happiness as a result of being able to sustain clear and open channels of communication with the children. The maintenance of a close relationship with the children seems to be a priority for the single mothers (Murdock, 1980).

Though the respondents had lost their roles as wives when their spouses were no longer with them, all of the women in the sample group had maintained their roles as mothers. Expanding on their present lifestyles, many of the respondents commented on their need to be good mothers and to provide good homes for their children. Though many of the respondents commented on the frustrations of their lifestyles, most maintained that they were capable of meeting their primary need: that of being a good mother for their children. Thus it may be concluded that this factor has played a major part in helping to reduce the alienation and powerlessness of the single mothers.

Referring to the potential loneliness of the single mothers, two factors may be taken into consideration. First, a definition of the term loneliness as applied in this study must be reviewed. Weiss (1973) and Lopata (1969) have defined loneliness as the individual's perception that his level of

meaningful interaction is inadequate. The Lickert scale that was selected to measure the level of the single mother's loneliness permitted the respondents to consider the meaningful interaction they had maintained with their families and friends since before the loss of their spouses as well as the relationship they may have developed since assuming their present marital status. Though the researcher did not specifically seek to establish the extent to which the single mothers had secured meaningful relationships with a male friend since the loss of their husbands, it appears that many of the respondents seemed particularly appreciative of the support they received from individuals they were dating. Thus it may be concluded that the mothers may have been moderately satisfied with the interaction they had with both their families, friends and in some instances with a person they were dating.

In drawing conclusions from the respondents' low level of loneliness, a second point must be considered. The National Council of Welfare reports that generally single mothers may feel lonely as they do not necessarily share the same experiences as the majority of people who are members of two parent families (1976). However as the respondents were members of self help groups, an additional factor must be considered. According to Katz, the self help groups involved in this study were intended to provide an alternate lifestyle or environment for its members (1976) and therefore focused on meeting the specific needs of the single parent.

Thus it appears that the respondents' loneliness may have been lessened as the groups offered some respite from the values and expectations placed upon them by a couples-oriented society.

Self help groups The first research question pertaining to the single mothers' use of self help groups addressed the reasons for which they chose to join their respective groups. In order to provide a more accurate portrayal of the single mothers' support systems prior to their membership into the self help groups, the respondents' level of satisfaction with the help received from their families, friends and professional services was explored. It appears that the respondents were generally satisfied with the help they had received from their families, friends and professional helpers but nevertheless wished to supplement this support with a peer group who shared common experiences. Such conclusions from the study are consistent with the findings of Bankoff's 1979 study in which it was found that the members of Naim were in search of a social network in which they could depend for both emotional support and social contacts (Lieberman and Borman, 1979).

The single mothers' stated reasons for joining their respective self help groups were predominantly classified as "social-hedonistic goals". Such goals reflected the mothers' need to seek some relief from the pressures imposed by their roles as single parents by developing a more adequate social network. It appears that the respondents were in search of friends in similarly placed positions with whom they could

share leisure activities. Such findings are again consistent with Bankoff's Chicago-based study in which the majority of the Naim membership stated "making friends" and "spending time with people in whose company they felt comfortable" as their main reasons for joining the self help group.

An interesting point revolves around the very small recognition awarded to the endstate goals in the single mothers' stated reasons for joining self help groups. It appears that the majority of the respondents did not consider personal growth or the resolution of personal problems as motivating forces behind their decision to join the self help groups. In fact while one particular respondent vehemently refused to discuss any "problems" that may have played a part in her decision to join the self help group, she quite eloquently enumerated the "hassles" that led to her eventual membership into the group. Thus it appears that in stating their reasons for joining the self help groups, the respondents acknowledged their wish to make friends and to participate in leisure activities with others who were in similar life situations while also minimizing the presence of any personal problems with which they may require help.

The fourth research question pertained to the single mothers' level of satisfaction with the self help groups' abilities to meet their needs. A large majority of the respondents reported that the groups had been helpful in meeting their needs thus indicating that single mothers had been successful in their efforts to make friends and acquaintances with whom they could enjoy leisure activities.

The final research question sought to establish the manner in which the single mothers perceived the self help groups as being able to meet their needs. Pertaining to the programs, the majority of the single mothers expressed a preference for the discussion groups and the appearance of guest speakers as they found that these events provided the opportunity to interact with others who were "in the same boat" and to deal with issues which they felt were pertinent to their situation. Similarly the respondents expressed appreciation for the adult activities (as this program permitted them to further develop the friendships they had recently made within the group setting.

The help-giving techniques that proved to be the most popular among the single mothers seemed to complement the programs that were most often preferred. It appears that the help-giving techniques that the single mothers considered most helpful were indicative of a supportive environment in which an informal communication style was fostered. The respondents seemed to express discomfort with the more highly structured help-giving activities which would serve to dictate the behaviour expected of group members.

Thus it appears that the single mothers' stated reasons for joining the self help groups were congruent with the programs and help-giving activities that the respondents considered most helpful. While the respondents stated that their main reasons for joining self help groups involved the wish to make friends and to participate in leisure activities, the single mothers also expressed particular interest in the

programs which were conducive to making friends and to providing opportunities for social interaction. The single mothers' selection of the most beneficial help-giving techniques also reflected their wish for a supportive environment which would promote an easy-going interchange of ideas among group members.

Though it must be acknowledged that the single mothers seemed to be in search of a supportive peer group, this does not necessarily preclude any wish among the respondents to deal with personal problems or to enhance personal growth. In fact many of the respondents who had been members of the groups for some time acknowledged the change that had taken place in them as a result of their participation in the groups. While some of the single mothers felt that they were "in better touch" with their feelings and could therefore cope with their status as single parents in a more satisfying manner, another respondent felt she had gained self-confidence while still another felt better prepared to help her children cope with the absence of their father. Thus it appears that even though the single mothers did not specifically express growth-oriented goals upon joining the self help groups, the respondents have acknowledged the effects that their participation in the groups may have had on them personally.

Lieberman and Borman substantiate this point by stating that members of self help groups do appear to want to effect change but will do so

on their own terms and as a result of their own initiative and efforts rather than those of others. Most people may believe that they can take charge of their own lives and

be the agents of their self-change, if they are provided with the support and other resources they need--and it may be this belief that is expressed in the pattern of help giving we have found in self-help groups. (Lieberman and Borman, 1979, p. 266)

Thus it appears that the single mothers in the sample may have been expressing a wish to bring about personal change and may have been seeking to improve the quality of life for their families. It seems clear that the respondents wished to set their own goals and to work toward the attainment of these objectives within a supportive and non-threatening framework of their own choosing.

Finally, interesting conclusions can be drawn from discussions pertaining to the role that self help groups play in regard to the single mothers' search for female friends who share similar experiences as opposed to their wish for developing new relationships with potential dating partners. As previously mentioned, the self help groups studied in this research project may be classified as groups which provide "alternate patterns of living" (Katz, 1976, pp. 37-38) for their membership and as such seek to provide an environment in which a single person may feel comfortable. In view of the purpose of the groups, it is not surprising that many of the single mothers expressed annoyance as members of the groups began pairing off, leaving them once again to fend for themselves in a community oriented toward couples. In fact, only a very small percentage (12.90%) of the respondents acknowledged that the prospect of finding someone they might date was even vaguely related to their reasons for joining a self help group.

Therefore it seems paradoxical to observe that many of the single mothers who expressed satisfaction with the groups also made mention of the special relationship they enjoyed with a male member of the same self help group. This situation was also reversed as one mother stated that she had been hurt on different occasions by the men she had met through the group and was therefore apprehensive about returning to the adult activities sponsored by the group.

This deduction is supported by Weiss's 1973 study of a PWP Chapter. Weiss concluded that the members' main reason for joining the group was to obtain some relief from the loneliness brought about by the responsibilities of single parenthood. Recognizing that many of the group members were seeking to establish "new emotional attachments", Weiss reported that almost one half of the female subjects who had been group members for six months or more had dated men who were also group members. However in spite of these findings, the organizers of the group maintained that the presence of potential dating partners was not a feature of the group (Weiss, 1973).

Thus it appears that the group members' choice to occasionally seek one another out as dating partners goes unrecognized by the administrators of the self help groups. The group members seem to reflect this omission by neglecting to acknowledge the possibility of finding persons whom they may date as motivating factors influencing their decision to join the self help groups. However it seems that in spite of this reasoning some of the single mothers in the sample group

had developed meaningful relationships with male group members while others maintained their single status and enjoyed the opportunity to interact with others in a community that was predominantly geared toward meeting the needs of the single parents.

Recommendations

Based on the preceding conclusions, a number of recommendations may be advanced. Recognizing the limitations inherent in this study, the researcher intends to present recommendations for future research. Recommendations regarding the development or expansion of resources will necessarily take into consideration the implications for the field of social work.

The researcher's first recommendation entails the replication of this study using a larger sample. The researcher recognized that the findings of this study may not be generalized to the larger population as the size of the sample and the nature of the sampling technique would caution against it. However the replication of such a study would serve to enhance the reliability of the findings.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher chose to concentrate on the similarities existing between the self help groups involved. However additional research geared toward establishing the differences between the groups available to the single parents may yield some interesting findings regarding the nature of the groups' memberships and the dynamics of the group processes.

Though the literature abounds with material based on the empirical research pertaining to the single mothers' practical problems, there seems to be a lack of information regarding the psychosocial experiences of alienation, powerlessness and loneliness as they relate directly to the single mothers. Thus it is recommended that further research into the dynamics of these psychosocial experiences be undertaken with an emphasis on the manner in which these affect the single mothers and consequently the daily lives of the entire single parent families.

While the literature pertaining to the psychosocial experiences of the single mothers concentrated mainly on the sociological perspective, there is a paucity of research into the manner in which self help groups have been used by single mothers. The nature of the help provided by families and friends as well as professional services requires additional research in order to determine the specific aspects of the intervention that are perceived to be most useful or detrimental by the single mothers. Such research may also prove to be interesting as it may provide additional information regarding the extent to which the type of help received by the single mothers from their families, friends and professional helpers influenced their decisions to join the self help groups.

Though the single mothers' initial reasons for joining the groups pertained to their wish to make friends, they indirectly acknowledged receiving assistance in terms of helping them to resolve personal problems and promote self-

worth. Therefore it may be appropriate to recommend a longitudinal study in which newcomers to the groups are studied during the initial period of their membership into the groups. Data comparing the single mothers' initial expectations of the groups with their later perceptions of the groups' abilities to help them meet their needs may yield some interesting findings. Such a study would enable the researchers to determine the extent of the self help groups' success in helping their members to achieve their goals as well as providing additional information regarding the features and help-giving activities present in the group.

Though many of the group organizers and members recognized the importance of the newly created friendships developed among group members of the same sex, very few formally acknowledged the role that the groups might play in introducing members of the other sex to one another. Further research into this area may be of benefit as it would provide insight into the motivational forces influencing the single mothers' decisions to join the groups as well as their on-going expectations of the groups.

In addition to recommendations for further research, a number of recommendations pertaining to the development or expansion of services for the single mothers may be made. The single mothers identified a number of additional services that the self help groups may offer to ease the pragmatic difficulties they most often encountered: an organized manner of pooling services so that a man may offer to fix a stove for a woman if she takes his teenage daughter shopping

for clothes, the formation of a babysitting service whereby mothers could take turns to care for the children and the provision of occasional transportation for the mothers who do not own a car if they are in a position to reciprocate the favour in some other way. Though many of these services were offered within the groups on an informal basis, many of the respondents felt that such services could be much more beneficial to group members, and especially to newcomers, if they were better organized and more visible within the structure of the group.

As previously mentioned, the number of single mothers is increasing at a fairly rapid rate. As such, social workers should strive to gain a clear understanding of the needs, problems and experiences which are specific to the single mothers and their families. However the field of social work should not limit itself to learning about the demanding and frustrating aspects of single parenthood but rather should also focus on the coping mechanisms adopted by the single parents. Obtaining a well rounded view of the single mothers' situations, which includes the problems and the rewards, enables the social worker to be a better helper for the single mothers who have recently acquired this marital status.

Though the philosophy of the self help groups demands that professional helpers do not assume leadership roles in their professional capacities, there does appear to be a need for a clearer communication between the social work community and the self help groups. It seems that many social workers' knowledge of the services provided by the self help groups is

limited to a recognition of their existence. However if the social service agencies and the self help groups hope to provide a complete service for the client systems they serve, the mere recognition of the self help groups' existence will prove to be inadequate. Not only must the social workers familiarize themselves with the services rendered by the self help groups but they must also gain competence in the area of assessing and referring individuals who might benefit from the support provided by these groups.

Our society has traditionally perceived the two parent family as the basic unit from which children are born and raised. The one parent family has often been viewed with suspicion as it appears to threaten societal values and norms. However in recent years, with the growing number of single mothers, society has been forced to acknowledge the presence of the motherled family and to recognize the skills and competence possessed by the heads of these families. In order to fully integrate the single mothers into the mainstream of our society, it will be necessary for the general populace to recognize the special needs of the single mothers and their families while also applauding their abilities and skills to cope in spite of a difficult situation.

A final point of interest entails the single mothers' need to have access to resources from which they may draw the necessary emotional support. Self help groups which are specifically intended to meet the needs of the single mothers have provided their membership with a much needed support system. It is often this informal social network that

provides the support enabling the single mothers to continue in their roles even when the pressures are at their greatest.

It is hoped that society will eventually be able to view the motherled family as a variation of the nuclear family and self help groups as a potential resource serving the needs of the single mothers. In view of the fact that traditional families require the total efforts of both parents to make the family a cohesive unit, it is imperative that society recognize that the motherled family, in the absence of one parent, may require additional help in order to cope with an already difficult situation.

A society which accepts the transitional nature of the family unit must be held responsible for providing the necessary assistance thus permitting the single mothers and their children to strive for the attainment of their goals.

APPENDIX A



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TELEPHONE: AREA CODE 519
253-4232

December 19, 1980.

Mrs. Donna Gamble,
Downtown Action Centre,
495 Glengarry,
Windsor, Ontario.

Dear Mrs. Gamble,

This is to confirm our conversation of October 19, 1980 in which we discussed single mothers and their use of your service, the Downtown Action Centre. At this time, I am formally requesting your support in the search for a small sample group of single mothers who have either previously or are presently making use of the services offered by a self help group.

In talking with the mothers, it is my intention to specifically look at the kinds of problems they have encountered. Such problems may include loneliness, the lack of day care facilities and difficulties in securing employment. I wish to determine what led the mothers to self help groups and what help they have received.

I would like to interview five single mothers who have at some time been connected to a self help group. As I hope to begin interviewing by the first of February, I would like the opportunity to meet with you in January to discuss the selection of the sample group.

I will be in contact with you shortly after the Christmas holidays. Thanking you for your cooperation in this regard.

Sincerely,

Joanne McCarthy
Mrs. Joanne McCarthy



UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR

WINDSOR, ONTARIO N9B 3P4

TELEPHONE: AREA CODE 519
253-4232

December 19, 1980.

Mrs. Louise Allen,
Mental Health, Windsor Essex,
1226 Ouellette Avenue,
Windsor, Ontario.

Dear Mrs. Allen,

This is to confirm our conversation of November 20, 1980 in which we discussed single mothers and their use of your service, the Widows and Widowers Group. At this time, I am formally requesting your support in the search for a small sample group of single mothers who have either previously or are presently making use of the services offered by a self help group.

In talking with the mothers, it is my intention to specifically look at the kinds of problems they have encountered. Such problems may include loneliness, the lack of day care facilities and difficulties in securing employment. I wish to determine what led the mothers to self help groups and what help they have received.

I would like to interview five single mothers who have at some time been connected to a self help group. As I hope to begin interviewing by the first of February, I would like the opportunity to meet with you in January to discuss the selection of the sample group.

I will be in contact with you shortly after the Christmas holidays. Thanking you for your cooperation in this regard.

Sincerely,

Joanne McCarthy
Mrs. Joanne McCarthy



UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR

WINDSOR, ONTARIO N9B 3P4

TELEPHONE: AREA CODE 519
253-4232

December 19, 1980.

Mrs. Margaret West,
Big Sisters Association,
2260 University West,
Windsor, Ontario.

Dear Mrs. West,

This is to confirm our conversation of November 3, 1980, in which we discussed single mothers and their use of self help groups. At this time, I am formally requesting your support in the search for a small sample group of single mothers who have either previously or are presently making use of the services offered by a self help group.

In talking with the mothers, it is my intention to specifically look at the kinds of problems they have encountered. Such problems may include loneliness, the lack of day care facilities and difficulties in securing employment. I wish to determine what led the mothers to self help groups and what help they have received.

I would like to interview five single mothers who have at some time been connected to self help groups. As I hope to begin interviewing by the first of February, I would like the opportunity to meet with you in January to discuss the selection of the sample group:

I will be in contact with you shortly after the Christmas holidays. Thanking you for your cooperation in this regard.

Sincerely,

Joanne McCarthy
Mrs. Joanne McCarthy



UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR

WINDSOR, ONTARIO N9B 3P4

TELEPHONE: AREA CODE 519
253-4232

February 5, 1981.

Ms. Marlene Sweet,
Parents Without Partners,
395 University East,
Apt. 204,
Windsor, Ontario.

Dear Ms. Sweet,

This is to confirm our conversation of January 22, 1981 in which we discussed single mothers and their use of your service, Parents Without Partners. Since then, I have continued to work on my research project that is intended to fulfill a requirement for my completion of the Master of Social Work programme at the University of Windsor. At this time, I am formally requesting your support in the search for a small sample group of single mothers who have either previously or are presently making use of the services offered by a self help group.

In talking with the mothers, it is my intention to specifically look at the kinds of problems they have encountered. Such problems may include loneliness, the lack of day care facilities and difficulties in securing employment. I wish to determine what led the mothers to self help groups and what help they have received.

I would like to interview five single mothers who have at some time been connected to Parents Without Partners. The interview would take approximately two hours to complete. A copy of the questionnaire would be made available to the mothers prior to the interview. A copy of the final thesis would be given to the Parents Without Partners Organization.

As I am seeking the cooperation of the Parents Without Partners Organization in the search for volunteers to complete the interview, I am prepared to approach the Board of Directors to provide further information. I would like the opportunity to meet with you in the near future to discuss the study.

I will be in contact with you shortly and wish to thank you for your cooperation in this regard.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Joanne McCarthy

APPENDIX B

Single Mothers and Self Help GroupsPersonal Information

- 1/ What is your present marital status?
1. _____ Separated
 2. _____ Divorced
 3. _____ Widowed
 4. _____ Never Married
- 2/ How long have you been a "single mother"? (_____)
1. _____ Less than 1 year
 2. _____ 1 to 5 years
 3. _____ 6 to 10 years
 4. _____ 11 to 15 years
 5. _____ 16 to 20 years
 6. _____ 21 to 25 years
 7. _____ More than 26 years
- 3/ Before becoming a single mother, how long had you been married? (_____)
1. _____ Never have been married
 2. _____ Less than 1 year
 3. _____ 1 to 5 years
 4. _____ 6 to 10 years
 5. _____ 11 to 15 years
 6. _____ 16 to 20 years
 7. _____ 21 to 25 years
 8. _____ More than 26 years
- 4/ How old are you? (_____)
1. _____ Under 20 years
 2. _____ 21 to 30 years
 3. _____ 31 to 40 years
 4. _____ 41 to 50 years
 5. _____ 51 to 60 years
 6. _____ Over 60 years
- 5/ What was the highest grade in school that you completed? (_____)
1. _____ grade school
 2. _____ high school
 3. _____ community college
 4. _____ vocational college
 5. _____ university
 6. _____ post-graduate
 7. _____ other
- 6/ How many children do you have?
- | | | | |
|------|---------|------|-------|
| age: | 1 _____ | sex: | _____ |
| | 2 _____ | | _____ |
| | 3 _____ | | _____ |
| | 4 _____ | | _____ |
| | 5 _____ | | _____ |

- 7/ Since becoming a single parent, has your family income
1. _____ increased
 2. _____ decreased
 3. _____ remained the same
- 8/ What are your present sources of family income?
1. _____ Full time job
 2. _____ Part time job
 3. _____ Unemployment Insurance
 4. _____ Family Benefits
 5. _____ Municipal Welfare
 6. _____ Support Payments from Spouse
 7. _____ Family Allowance
 8. _____ Canada Pension Plan
 9. _____ Estate of Late Spouse
 10. _____ Other (specify: _____)
- 9/ What is your present total family annual income? (_____)
1. _____ Less than \$4,999
 2. _____ \$5,000 to \$9,999
 3. _____ \$10,000 to \$14,999
 4. _____ \$15,000 to \$19,999
 5. _____ \$20,000 to \$24,999
 6. _____ Over \$25,000
- 10/ What changes in your lifestyle have been brought about by the difference in the family's income?

Employment

11/ Are you presently employed outside the home?

1. _____ full time
2. _____ part time
3. _____ unemployed

If you are presently unemployed, proceed to Question 18.

12/ What is your present occupation? (_____)

1. _____ professional and technical
2. _____ clerical
3. _____ sales
4. _____ transportation and communication
5. _____ service and recreation
6. _____ craftsmen
7. _____ production process
8. _____ other

13/ How many years have you had your present job?

1. _____ under 1 year
2. _____ 1 to 5 years
3. _____ 6 to 10 years
4. _____ 11 to 15 years
5. _____ 16 to 20 years
6. _____ over 20 years

14/ Did you acquire this job?

1. _____ before becoming a single parent
2. _____ after becoming a single parent

15/ What is the most important reason leading you to work at the present time?

1. _____ financial reasons
2. _____ sense of achievement
3. _____ sense of independence
4. _____ to get out of the house
5. _____ to be with friends
6. _____ other (specify: _____)

16/ What is the biggest problem concerning your decision to work outside of the home?

1. _____ minimal pay
2. _____ inconvenient working hours
3. _____ finding appropriate child care arrangements
4. _____ being away from the children for long periods of time
5. _____ exhaustion at the end of the day
6. _____ limited personal leisure time
7. _____ coordinating transportation of self and children
8. _____ other (_____)

17/ Can you further describe your present job in terms of its rewards and limitations?

Child Care Arrangements

- 18/ What are your present child care arrangements?
1. _____ licensed municipally administered day care
 2. _____ privately owned but subsidized day care (ABC)
 3. _____ family day care
 4. _____ older children in the home babysit the younger children
 5. _____ a relative in your home
 6. _____ a relative in the community
 7. _____ an unrelated baby-sitter in your home
 8. _____ an unrelated baby-sitter in the community
 9. _____ no help needed
 10. _____ other (specify: _____)
- 19/ Your need for child care arrangements would best be described by which of the following statements?
1. _____ to allow me to work daily from about 9:00 to 5:00
 2. _____ to allow me to work shifts
 3. _____ to allow me to work weekends
 4. _____ to allow me to work during the summer months
 5. _____ during the evenings to allow me to get away from the house from time to time
 6. _____ during the weekend to allow me to take the occasional holiday
 7. _____ during the summer months to allow me to take the occasional holiday
 8. _____ no need for child care arrangements
 9. _____ other (specify: _____)
- 20/ Are you satisfied with the child care arrangements you are presently using?
1. _____ very satisfied
 2. _____ satisfied
 3. _____ undecided
 4. _____ dissatisfied
 5. _____ very dissatisfied
- 21/ What do you like most about your present child care arrangements?
1. _____ conveniently located
 2. _____ cost is within reasonable limits
 3. _____ can accomodate children during the necessary hours
 4. _____ knowledge that the children are properly cared for
 5. _____ other (_____)

22/ What do you dislike most in regards to your present child care arrangements?

1. _____ inconveniently located making transportation difficult to coordinate
2. _____ high cost.
3. _____ cannot accomodate the children during all of the necessary hours
4. _____ not knowing if the children are properly cared for
5. _____ other (specify: _____)

23/ Can you further expand on the positive and negative aspects of your present child care arrangements?

Government Transfer Programs

If you are employed full time, proceed to Question 28.

24/ What would you consider to be the most important reason leading to your decision to remain at home as a full-time homemaker.

1. _____ preference for assuming the role of full-time homemaker
2. _____ the lack of child care arrangements
3. _____ the high cost of child care arrangements
4. _____ the lack of suitable jobs
5. _____ the low wages any job would give me
6. _____ the negative attitude of the employers regarding single mothers
7. _____ the difficulty in arranging transportation for self and children
8. _____ the lack of necessary training
9. _____ re-training is too expensive
10. _____ re-training is too time consuming
11. _____ other (specify: _____)

25/ What do you like most about (the social assistance program).

1. _____ the dependable income
2. _____ the opportunity to remain home and care for the children
3. _____ the health care services
4. _____ the monthly allowance is greater than what could be earned in the work force
5. _____ the independence it allows the family
6. _____ other (specify: _____)

26/ What would you consider to be the biggest problems related to (the social assistance program)

1. _____ inadequate monthly income
2. _____ not enough health-related services
3. _____ the limited number of hours that a single mother is allowed to work part-time
4. _____ the lack of subsidy for transportation
5. _____ the lack of information regarding potential services and recipients' rights
6. _____ the social stigma associated with the program
7. _____ the invasion of privacy by the agency workers
8. _____ the frustrations of dealing with a governmental agency
9. _____ other (specify: _____)

35/ With the use of the scale provided, indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the following items.

1. Sometimes I feel all alone in the world.
Strongly agree___ Agree___ Disagree___ Strongly disagree___
2. Most people are not really sincere in their relations with others.
Strongly agree___ Agree___ Disagree___ Strongly disagree___
3. The way things are now, a person has to look out pretty much for himself.
Strongly agree___ Agree___ Disagree___ Strongly disagree___
4. Real friends are easy to find.
Strongly agree___ Agree___ Disagree___ Strongly disagree___
5. The world we live in is basically a friendly place.
Strongly agree___ Agree___ Disagree___ Strongly disagree___
6. People are just naturally considerate and friendly.
Strongly agree___ Agree___ Disagree___ Strongly disagree___
7. Most people seldom feel lonely.
Strongly agree___ Agree___ Disagree___ Strongly disagree___
8. People just can't seem to do things together these days.
Strongly agree___ Agree___ Disagree___ Strongly disagree___

36/ Each item consists of a pair of statements. Please select the one statement of each pair (and only one) which you more strongly believe to be true. Be sure to check the one you actually believe to be true, rather than the one you think you should check or the one you would like to be true. This is a measure of personal belief; obviously, there are no right or wrong answers.

1. I think we have adequate means for preventing run-away inflation.
 There's very little we can do to keep prices from going higher.
2. Persons like myself have little chance of protecting ourselves from big businesses or strong governments.
 I feel that we have adequate ways of coping with big businesses or strong governments
3. A lasting world peace can be achieved by those of us who work toward it.
 There's very little we can do to bring about a permanent world peace.
4. There's very little persons like myself can do to improve our situations.
 I think each of us can do a great deal to improve our situations.
5. This world is run by the few people in power, and there is not much the little guy can do about it.
 The average citizen can have a lot of influence on government decisions.
6. It is only wishful thinking to believe that one can really influence what happens in society at large.
 People like me can change the course of world events if we make ourselves heard.

- 37/ With the use of the scale provided, indicate whether you are satisfied, a little dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied in regards to the following items.

Do you feel you know people with whom:

1. You can carry on an interesting conversation?
Satisfied___ A little dissatisfied___ Very dissatisfied___
2. You can have fun or go out for a good time?
Satisfied___ A little dissatisfied___ Very dissatisfied___
3. You can talk-over old times or old experiences?
Satisfied___ A little dissatisfied___ Very dissatisfied___
4. You can turn to for warmth and affection?
Satisfied___ A little dissatisfied___ Very dissatisfied___
5. You can share your thoughts and feelings?
Satisfied___ A little dissatisfied___ Very dissatisfied___
6. You can tell your deepest troubles or worries?
Satisfied___ A little dissatisfied___ Very dissatisfied___
7. You can really turn for help when you need it?
Satisfied___ A little dissatisfied___ Very dissatisfied___

Self Help Groups

38/ Immediately after the loss of your spouse would you describe your family as being

1. _____ very helpful
2. _____ helpful
3. _____ undecided
4. _____ unhelpful
5. _____ very unhelpful

39/ Immediately after the loss of your spouse would you describe your friends as being

1. _____ very helpful
2. _____ helpful
3. _____ undecided
4. _____ unhelpful
5. _____ very unhelpful

40/ Have you received help from a professional social work agency?

1. _____ before joining a self help group
2. _____ before and after joining a self help group
3. _____ after joining a self help group
4. _____ no contact with a professional social work agency

If there has not been any contact with a professional social work agency, proceed to Question 42.

41/ Would you describe your contact with the professional social work agency as

1. _____ very satisfying
2. _____ satisfying
3. _____ undecided
4. _____ dissatisfying
5. _____ very dissatisfying

42/ Can you further comment on your contact with your family, friends, and professional social work agency after the loss of your spouse in terms of receiving emotional support?

43/ How long after the loss of your spouse did you join the self help group?

1. _____ less than 6 months
2. _____ 6 months to 1 year
3. _____ 1 to 2 years
4. _____ 2 to 5 years
5. _____ 5 to 10 years
6. _____ more than 10 years

44/ How did you hear about this particular self help group?

1. _____ family
2. _____ friends
3. _____ social worker
4. _____ church
5. _____ other (specify: _____)

45/ Which of the following would best describe the situation under which you decided to join a self help group?

1. _____ no other service could provide the kinds of help I wanted
2. _____ a self help group was the best service to meet my personal needs
3. _____ a self help group was the easiest service to find
4. _____ others strongly recommended that I join a self help group
5. _____ other (specify: _____)

46/ How long have you been a member of the self help group?

1. _____ less than 6 months
2. _____ 6 months to 1 year
3. _____ 1 to 2 years
4. _____ 2 to 5 years
5. _____ 5 to 10 years
6. _____ more than 10 years

47/ Do you feel that the self help group has been able to help you deal with the problem for which you initially sought help?

1. _____ very much so
2. _____ some
3. _____ not at all

47/ Can you further expand on your feelings regarding the self help group's ability to help you deal with the problem for which you initially sought help?

48/ How long do you plan to stay as a member of the self help group?

1. _____ less than 1 year
2. _____ 1 to 2 years
3. _____ 2 to 5 years
4. _____ 6 to 10 years
5. _____ more than 10 years

49/ Would you ever consider joining another self help group?

1. _____ yes
2. _____ no
3. _____ maybe

50/ What leads you to believe that you would ever consider joining
(or not joining) another self help group?

The following is a list of possible reasons for joining a self help group. With the use of the scale provided, indicate how important or unimportant each item was in your decision to join the self help group.

Scale:

Very Important 1

Important 2

Undecided 3

Unimportant 4

Definitely Unimportant 5

1. _____ To deal with specific problems I was experiencing
2. _____ To discuss my thoughts and feelings with others who had similar experiences
3. _____ To get out of the house
4. _____ To get involved in social activities
5. _____ To get information about a variety of topics
6. _____ To get spiritual guidance
7. _____ To get more involved with a group concerned about the rights of a single parent
8. _____ To do something different
9. _____ To have fun
10. _____ To get advice
11. _____ To learn how other single parents cope with their problems
12. _____ To make friends
13. _____ To get emotional support
14. _____ To get out of my shell
15. _____ To get relief from feelings I have that trouble me
16. _____ To meet someone I might date
17. _____ To have a chance to grieve with others who understood my feelings
18. _____ To spend more time helping others
19. _____ To meet someone I could call to talk to when I'm upset

The following is a list of statements describing the way in which members of a self help group may help one another. Using the scale provided indicate which item you consider to be most helpful for your present situation.

Scale:

Very helpful 1 Helpful 2 Undecided 3 Unhelpful 4 Very Unhelpful 5

1. _____ Everyone in the group is equal
2. _____ Everyone tries to help one another
3. _____ Everyone in the group shares the same goals
4. _____ Leaders are chosen by the group members
5. _____ The emphasis is placed on "doing" rather than "talking"
6. _____ The communication between group members is very easy-going
7. _____ Everyone is responsible for his own actions in the group
8. _____ Group members get personal satisfaction from helping someone else
9. _____ Group members are encouraged to use "common sense" to solve personal problems
10. _____ The group is small and everyone knows each other
11. _____ Group members play an important part in helping to educate the public and bring about social change

The following is a list of help-giving activities that are often used in a self help group. Using the scale provided, indicate which item you consider to be most and least helpful for yourself.

Scale:

Very Helpful 1 Helpful 2 Undecided 3 Unhelpful 4 Ver. Unhelpful 5

1. _____ Group members suggest things to do about a specific problem
2. _____ Group members suggest things to avoid when dealing with a specific problem
3. _____ Group members practice behaving a certain way in the group so they can try it out later when dealing with the actual problem.
4. _____ Group members praise one another for attempting to deal with personal problems in the right way
5. _____ Group members criticize behaviour that is considered wrong.
6. _____ Group members ignore the behaviour of a person when they think it is wrong
7. _____ Group members show how they would personally deal with a problem if they were faced with it
8. _____ Group members discuss personal feelings that they would not normally discuss elsewhere
9. _____ Group members share past or present experiences with one another
10. _____ Group members challenge one another's behaviour in a demanding way
11. _____ Group members question one another in order to get more information about a problem
12. _____ Group members repeat what others have said but use different words and emphasize the feelings involved
13. _____ A group member asks how someone else feels about him
14. _____ Group members state how they feel about someone else face to face
15. _____ Group members reassure each other that they can handle their problems
16. _____ Group members let one another know that they have a right to feel as they do
17. _____ Group members assure one another that they are worthwhile
18. _____ Group members let one another know that they understand and share feelings
19. _____ Group members assure each other that eventhough their feelings may seem strange,,they are normal

20. ___ Group members reassure one another that things will be all right
21. ___ Group members set personal goals and keep track of their progress
22. ___ Group members discuss group goals
23. ___ Group members often refer to the group's rules guiding the actions of group members
24. ___ Group members check with each other to see if their way of seeing things is right
25. ___ Group members try to understand a problem by breaking it down and looking at the entire situation
26. ___ Group members try to understand how their present way of dealing with problems is different than in the past
27. ___ Group members offer explanations for each other's behaviour and thoughts
28. ___ Group members encourage one another to express their feelings freely and honestly

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VITA AUCTORIS

Joanne McCarthy (nec Lalonde) was born on March 29, 1955, in Cornwall, Ontario. She attended Nativite elementary school, Jean XXIII Junior High School and Saint Lawrence High School, all of which are located in Cornwall, Ontario. In 1977 she obtained a B.A. (Psychology) from the University of Windsor. Later that year, Joanne married Patrick McCarthy. During the course of her studies at the University of Windsor, she was employed as an assistant child care worker for the Roman Catholic Children's Aid Society of Windsor, Ontario.

Following the completion of her B.S.W. program in 1978, Joanne was employed at the Oxford Regional Centre in Woodstock, Ontario for two years. She returned to the University of Windsor in the fall of 1980 where she entered the M.S.W. program. She has since accepted employment with the Bridgeway Program in London, Ontario.