

SINGLE MOTHERS BY CHOICE

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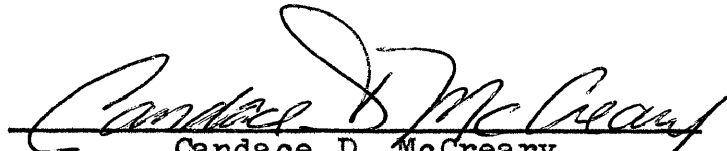
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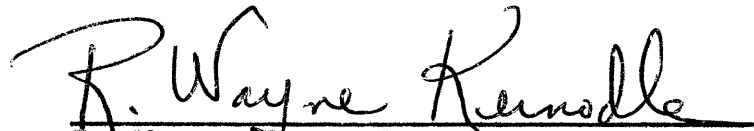
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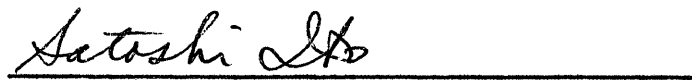
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine the social characteristics of single mothers who have chosen to become biological mothers outside of conventional marriage; and, why they have chosen this pattern over traditional marriage and parenting.

A nationwide survey was conducted through advertisements in two popular national magazines for respondents who fit this life style. Respondents were sent a seven-page questionnaire to be completed and returned to the researcher. Sixty-three percent of respondents returned the questionnaire.

The data suggest that these women appear to have some degree of cognitive dissonance concerning the roles of mother and wife in their lives. They seem to be substituting the role of mother for the role of wife since they had not been able to obtain the latter. The single mothers basically wanted both roles and had reached an age at which they felt they could no longer wait to have children; many went ahead and conceived because they did not want to miss the joys of motherhood, but they hope that marriage can still possibly occur.

Single mothers by choice do not fit the stereotype of the unmarried girl in trouble; but, rather, create a new type of life style among older women which represents a change in the cultural expectations underlying many of our social values.

SINGLE MOTHERS BY CHOICE

INTRODUCTION

In any society, there is a core of common beliefs, attitudes, values, norms, and behavior patterns which contribute to cultural and social solidarity. "Beyond these shared norms there are norms outlining the major roles expected for each sex. These sex differentiated norms give direction to the behavior of each sex in relation to the innumerable other demands of group life." (Martinson, 1960: 461)

As the rigid control formerly demanded by these norms has been modified or broken down, greater freedom of choice in sex related behavior has resulted. The choices people make about marriage and reproduction are no longer sanctioned as rigorously as in the past. While there are many acceptable choices available now regarding marriage, pregnancy, and adoption; for example, there still is not widespread acceptance of the emergent social phenomenon of single mothers by choice. It is this developing social pattern which this study will examine in an exploratory manner.

Single mothers by choice is defined in this case, as women who have purposely chosen to become biological mothers outside of the normative structure of marriage. It is the

purpose of this research to determine the social characteristics of these women, what they think and do, their ecological distribution, and why they have chosen this life style over traditional forms of marriage and parenting.

The limited information that has been collected on such women to date shows their clear rejection of the norms and attitudes which support legal marriage as a prerequisite to having children; nonetheless, they accept their primary roles of mothers. (Hodgetts, 1974: 96-7) These women do not fit the theoretical perspectives that were developed in previous research to describe unmarried mothers, since these women purposely choose to become pregnant and to maintain the single status; that is, to become nonmarried mothers by design or pre-planning; whereas, most unmarried mothers acquire their status by accident rather than by design.

The modification of traditional values regarding marriage, pregnancy, parenthood, and concomitant support for rights of both females and males in our society to express their individuality provides a climate of social acceptance and positive attitude and policy support for such women; with a social climate of acceptance of nonmarital pregnancy and an apparent trend toward understanding both in attitude and policy, past values may now mean less in our society. (National Council on Illegitimacy, 1971: 1)

CHAPTER I
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the last ten years, there has been a considerable and growing amount of research on alternate family forms and life styles. Some of these are: group marriage, swinging, single adopting parents, contract marriages, etc. (Streib, 1973; Duberman, 1974; Scanzoni and Scanzoni, 1976; Giele, 1977) Included in these incipient forms and alternate life styles is the form of single mothers by choice which is the "family type" studied in this particular research. To date, there has been no research found on this type and only a few references have been made to it, e.g., Scanzoni who states

[T]he unmarried, well-educated women who choose both singleness and a child will have high levels of resources, choose such a life style from a variety of alternatives, are well-equipped to provide the child with substantial benefits, and are likely to limit the number of children they will rear to only one or two. Where parenthood is voluntarily chosen by a single person equipped to provide the child with necessary resources, the experience can be beneficial to both parent and child. (1976: 157-8)

Bernard (1974) stated that single mothers by choice do not fit the stereotype of the unmarried mother in trouble but, rather, create a new type of life style which represents a change in the cultural expectations

underlying many of our social values and that this area needs to be explored since there is no available data on it. Consequently an extensive consideration of the antecedent literature would not provide much insight or basis for the development or support of working hypotheses on this particular phenomenon. However, a brief review of the literature on changing sexual behaviors and attitudes toward such behavior does provide some historical understanding.

[P]atterns of sexual behavior and morality have taken many diverse forms over the centuries....our contemporary sexual codes and mores, seen in historical perspective, would appear no less grotesque to people of other eras than theirs appear to us. Our attitudes...are meaningful only within the context of our own cultural and religious mores. (Juhasz, 1973: 98) Attitudes toward sexuality and the customs and rules which govern interpersonal relationships and behavior develop over a period of time. Changes in the mores of a society result when new needs lead to dissatisfaction and rebellion against old customs. In order to understand the diversities in sexual and behavioral patterns in Western society today, and the changes that have created them, we will examine customs as they were in the past.

Rarely is change a complete negation of all that is old, and the adoption of an entirely new system, and in no instance is this more true than in human sexual behavior. (Juhasz, 1973: 192)

Discrimination against unwed mothers and their children born outside the accepted family structure dates back many centuries in the history of mankind. Such persons were placed in a category which was inferior to that of legally married persons and persons born within the framework of the prevailing family pattern.

The various levels and trends of births out of wedlock

may be seen as a reflection of the patterns of human group life--the social structure--and the related beliefs, values and expectations--the culture of a whole society, or of a subcultural group within it at different times in history. (Hartley, 1975: 17)

It would be far too ambitious and, perhaps, impossible to give a complete picture of the historical evolution of the problem under study within all the various family systems which have existed. The purpose of the following presentation is much more modest. It is aimed at casting some light on the general approach to the subject of changing sexual mores in general as reflected in certain of the important systems of law or societies of the past and as these have implications for contemporary changes.

In primeval times, many tribes never considered a couple truly married until there were signs of pregnancy or until after the birth of the child; and, in some cases, marriage rites took place only after the birth. (Westermarck, 1925: 73) The reason for this pertained to the role of husband to protect, support, and care for his offspring. If a man refused to marry, the child would be killed, but there would be no retribution directed towards the mother. (Westermarck, 1925: 77) This more or less durable union of marriage "...is originally for the benefit of the young that male and female continue to live together. Therefore, marriage is rooted in the family rather than the family in marriage." (Westermarck, 1925: 72)

Family law in the United States is founded in Roman and English Common Law and the rule has been and still is that a person born out of wedlock is related to his mother for all purposes and is related to his father for limited purposes only. For example, as pointed out by Saario (1967) that

[0]ld common law of England denied rights to a child born out of wedlock. Such a child was called a "bastard" or filius nullius--nobody's child--a term that accurately described his legal status. Common law recognized no legal relationship between a father and his child born out of wedlock, nor, indeed, between the mother and her offspring. Unlike the legal systems of Europe, English law refused to allow a "bastard" child to be legitimated by the marriage of his parents after the birth, although canon law recognized legitimation. A person born out of wedlock could not acquire the status of a person born in wedlock except through a special Act of Parliament, this procedure was very rarely used because it was costly.

Because no legal relationship was held to exist between a "bastard" and his parents, a child born out of wedlock had no legal guardian, not even his mother, although she was regarded as having the natural right to the custody of such a child. The parents of such a child were under no civil obligation to maintain it, and the child had no right to inherit from either father or mother. In 1576, however, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, a law was enacted compelling the father to contribute to the support of his child born out of wedlock if his identity could be established. No important change was made in England's illegitimacy laws until recent times. In 1926, a Legitimacy Act was passed which reflected a marked alteration in popular sentiment regarding the child born out of wedlock and his rights of inheritance. More recent laws have confirmed this trend. (Saario, 1967: 5)

There appears to be a discrepancy between attitudes and real behavior since the value systems have been in constant change and undergoing steady modification. This change could be considered reorganization rather than a breakdown of standards. (Juhasz, 1973: 147; Lantz, 1977: 417)

The United Nations points out the discrepancies between actual behavior and attitudes in member countries and discusses the plight of the unwed mother and her illegitimate child.

It has often been said that a person born out of wedlock, the parents of the person (the mother much more so than the father), and sometimes the entire family of the mother, suffer a stigma as a result of the nature of the birth. Words as strong as "discredit", "disdain", "shame", "contempt" and "condemnation" have been used to describe that stigma. When it exists, it impairs the social position, not only of the person born out of wedlock, but also of the mother, thus constituting for her an obstacle to the realization of a normal life in the community in which she lives.

The degree of acceptance by the community of the fact of birth out of wedlock, and therefore of the unmarried mother, varies from one of total acceptance to complete rejection. Furthermore there exist a variety of attitudes which depend on various factors sometimes of a complex nature.

In a great number of countries the general approach is one of social discrimination against the unmarried mother. It should be noted also that within a same country where the overall approach is one of social discrimination, a disparity of attitudes may be observed depending on the level of development of the community. Sometimes the unmarried mother is less accepted in less developed communities and lower economic classes--usually rural areas--while on the contrary, in other cases there is a greater degree of acceptance in the lower economic classes of society.

[T]he attitude of the community towards the unmarried mother is, more often than not, one of social discrimination....social discrimination against the unmarried mother tends to disappear in those countries where equality of status between mother and father, irrespective of the nature of the birth of the child, has been achieved....the causes of discrimination are deeply rooted in the ethical beliefs and social concepts of a given community and are also related to its level of economic, social and cultural development. (United Nations, 1971: 56-60)

Further to support this concept of social discrimination, Goffman interprets the stigmatized unwed mothers' perception of herself from her past participation in the community.

The stigmatized individual (in this case the unwed mother) tends to hold the same beliefs about identity that we do....the standards she has incorporated from the wider society equip her to be intimately alive to what others see as her failing, inevitably causing her, if only for moments, to agree that she does indeed fall short of what she really ought to be. Shame becomes a central possibility, arising from the individual's perception of one of her own attributes as being a defiling thing to possess, and one she can readily see herself as not possessing. (Goffman, 1963: 7)

The twentieth century is considered by many social scientists to be a transitional period of morality with attitudes, norms, and values having been constantly challenged and modified. Juhaz provides a paradigm of six major conflicting value systems which have existed side by side during this period. These value systems extend along a broad continuum ranging from extreme asceticism to a completely permissive anarchy. The major ones are

characterized as follows: (1) traditional repressive asceticism; (2) enlightened asceticism; (3) humanistic liberalism; (4) humanistic radicalism; (5) fun morality; and (6) sexual anarchy.

1. Traditional repressive asceticism--which is still embodied in most of our official codes and laws--proscribes any kind of sexual activity outside of the marriage relationship and accepts sex in marriage grudgingly, insisting upon the linkage of sex with procreation. This value system is intolerant of all deviations from restrictive patterns of heterosexual behavior, it places a taboo on public and scientific discussion and study of sex, and it conceives of sex morality solely in absolute terms of "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not."
2. Enlightened asceticism--as exemplified in the views of such spokesmen as David Mace--begins with a basic acceptance of the ascetic point of view. Mace sees asceticism as a safeguard against the "softness" to which we so easily fall prey in an age when opportunities for self-indulgence are so abundant. He sees youth as the time when invaluable lessons of self-control and discipline must be learned, with sex as one of the supreme areas in which self-mastery may be demonstrated, and he opposes any slackening of the sexual code. However, he takes neither a negative nor a dogmatic attitude toward sex and has been an ardent exponent of the "open forum" in which issues can be stated and weighed.
3. Humanistic liberalism has been best exemplified by the views of Lester Kirkendall. Kirkendall opposes inflexible absolutes and makes his prime concern the concept of interpersonal relationship. He sees the criterion of morality as not the commission or omission of a particular act, but the consequences of the act upon the interrelationships of people, not only the immediate people concerned but broader relationships. Kirkendall thus is searching for a value system which will help supply internalized controls for the individual in a period when older social and religious controls are collapsing.

4. Humanistic radicalism--exemplified best by the views of Walter Stokes--accepts the humanistic position of Kirkendall and goes further in proposing that society should make it possible for young people to have relatively complex sex freedom. He makes it clear that society must create certain preconditions before this goal may be achieved. He envisions "a cultural engineering project" which may take generations to achieve.
5. Fun morality has as its most consistent spokesman (Albert Ellis). Without compromise, he upholds the viewpoint that sex is fun and that the more sex fun a human being has, the better and psychologically sounder he or she is likely to be. He believes that, despite the risk of pregnancy, premarital intercourse should be freely permitted, and at times encouraged, for well-informed and reasonably well-adjusted persons.
6. Sexual anarchy has as its philosopher the late French jurist Rene Guyon. Guyon attacks chastity, virginity, and monogamy and calls for the suppression of all anti-sexual taboos and the disappearance of the notions of sexual immorality and shame. The only restriction he would apply is the general social principle that no one may injure or do violence to his fellows. (Juhasz, 1973: 207-209)

As mentioned before, the traditional repressive asceticism best fits the American culture, especially the attitudes, norms, and values that are found in it. It is these attitudes, norms, and values that create the guilt feelings and stigmatization that are applied to the unmarried mother. Many of the attitudes, norms, and values that are inherent to our culture today have developed over many centuries; i.e., the attitudes that women have a maternal instinct and the romantic ideal of love and marriage and that women are dependent on men. Some of the norms present in our culture are: (1) male dominance; (2) marriage is the only legal way

for two people to be together; (3) legitimacy; (4) that women should surrender themselves to only one man; (5) procreation should happen only after marriage; (6) motherhood is the supreme state for a woman; (7) "good girl"--nonpromiscuous; (8) against premarital sex. There are more such norms but those mentioned above are the most dominant. In the past, our culture valued virginity, chastity, marital fidelity; sexual intercourse is a private covert experience; marriage is lifelong; sexual fulfillment is found only in marriage, and that marriage is a unity or oneness. These attitudes, norms, and values have evolved from our American history because of certain peoples and events. A brief overview summary of sexual mores and behavior in the United States during the Colonial period, the Civil War, World War I and World War II, and to the present is presented below to provide some picture of the historical antecedents for the development of the present family alternatives and as a context within which to describe the pattern of single mothers by choice.

During the Colonial period in Puritan New England, the premarital sexual value was one of abstinence for both sexes; yet there was a practice found then called bundling. Bundling was to lie in the same bed with one's sweetheart without undressing. In regard to premarital sexual behavior, some conflict is found between the clearly stated norms and the actual behavior of some Puritans. A couple would be made to make a public confession before the congregation if a

child was born before the seventh month of marriage. (Bell, 1966: 18-21) It is the influence of the Puritans and their values which have been transmitted to today's society; the overall influence is difficult to assess, but it has had its impact. But yet at the same time, in the South, the premarital sexual value was one of permissiveness for the male and abstinence for the female.

In the face of wholesale violation of the sexual codes, the Puritans could not maintain the severe penalties which their laws provided; i.e., the punishment for adultery was death and whipping for fornication. Although cases of adultery occurred every year, the death penalty is not known to have been applied more than three times. (Gordon, 1973: 290) "The usual punishment was a whipping or a fine, or both, and perhaps a branding, combined with a symbolical execution in the form of standing on the gallows for an hour with a rope about the neck." (Gordon, 1973: 290)

In sum, the Puritan attitude toward sex, though directed by a belief in absolute, God-given moral values, never neglected human nature. The rules of conduct which the Puritans regarded as divinely ordained had been formulated for men, not for angels and not for beasts. God had created mankind in two sexes; He had ordained marriage as desirable for all, and sexual intercourse as essential to marriage. On the other hand, He had forbidden sexual intercourse outside of marriage. These were the moral principles which the Puritans sought to enforce in New England. But in their enforcement,

they took cognizance of human nature. Consequently, in the endeavor to enforce those laws, they treated offenders with patience and understanding and concentrated their efforts on prevention more than on punishment. (Gordon, 1973: 293)

While the sexual norms of the Puritans had been a single standard of abstinence, the values emerging in the post-Revolutionary War period were those of the double standard. The "natural" superiority of the male was seen as extending to his sexual nature, and it was often believed that his sexual needs could not be restricted to marriage. (Bell, 1966: 25)

The beliefs about the sexual nature of females were a part of the more general view of "female delicacy." The beliefs were reflected in the highly protective male attitude about "good" women who were, by being good, essentially sexless. The sexual morality of this period as applied to women was very repressive. (Bell, 1966: 26)

During this era, it was commonly believed that for "good" women the sexual relations of marriage were an unspeakable and unpleasant duty necessary for reproduction and on some occasions to satisfy the "animal" sexual needs of their husbands. Women were not expected to experience sexual pleasure and to do so often led to suspicion by the husbands and guilt by the wives. (Bell, 1966: 27)

The period between the Revolution and the Civil War was probably the most restrictive period in American history on the freedom of women. Yet, during this very period, certain forces of social change were developing that in time would lead to a revolution in male-female relationships. The Civil War gave great impe-

tus to industrial innovation and to the development of a new urban way of life. Also the westward expansion during this era made many of the traditional values of the East no longer acceptable or practical. It was during this historical period that the first steps in the women's rights movement in the United States were taken. In 1848, at Seneca Falls, New York, the first organized meeting took place to formulate a statement on the rights of women. The convention resolved that women should work towards equality because "women had too long rested content in the narrow limits worked out for her by corrupt customs and a perverted application of the scriptures." (Bell, 1966: 28)

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Protestant Ethic and its related morality was in full bloom. The world was dominated by men and the institutions of the family, religion, and business were mutually supportive of the Protestant Ethic.

This period, then was dominated by a strongly defined patriarchal view of the world. As in earlier eras, the prevailing belief of many men was that in business, social life and sexual interest men were significantly different from women and therefore had rights not available to women. The belief in the special sexual needs of men led them most often to prostitutes, who were thereby a means of controlling the double standard of sex. The effectiveness of the male control of sex is illustrated by the fact that American history has been as poor in great sex scandals as it has been rich in great financial ones. (Bell, 1966: 29)

Whatever the view by women of the double standard of sex morality, the situation forced many of them to stifle completely any personal interest in sex and to treat sex as if it did not exist. As a result, premarital sexual chastity for the female was a value rarely ever questioned by either men or women. (Barrett, 1929: vi)

It was during the Victorian era that the National Florence Crittenton Missions (1883) were established for unwed mothers. The fundamental principles of this organization were deviant from that of the dominant culture's beliefs; that in practically all cases the mother and child should not be separated but should be kept together as a family unit, incomplete though it may be. (Barrett, 1929: 89) Remembering the norm that motherhood is the supreme state for a woman, it can be understood how the principles of the National Florence Crittenton Missions developed. "The unwed mother, although violating some moral standards, has fulfilled important American values and may be less condemned than tolerated, and more accepted than understood..." (Rains, 1971: 89)

The first World War may have served to trigger the emerging social forces which resulted in the new social patterns of the 1920's. With respect to sexual behavior, there was a decline in the "sinful" view of sex among many, along with the new arguments for the positive effects sexual expression provided by science. Also during this period, the increasing knowledge and reliability of contraception led to an increasing view of sexual intercourse as an end in itself rather than a mere means to a procreative end. (Bell, 1966: 33)

World War I was the first American war to bring large numbers of young men into primary contact with other cultural

values. Along with the internal social changes that occurred during the war, there also was a reduction in American provincialism and an increased questioning of traditional values. The period following the first World War was also one of new living patterns due to the new urban setting.

(Bell, 1966: 33) Ira L. Reiss points out that the relative anonymity of the city "helped destroy many of the older sexual standards and made possible the growth of newer, more liberal and equalitarian standards." (Reiss, 1960: 67)

The period between the two world wars did not bring forth a complete replacement of the old values with new ones. During the 1920s the old Protestant Ethic, with its close ties to religion, continued to dominate. It was during this era of Prohibition (1920-1933) that sexual values were really challenged by the behavior of the "flappers." However, during this period between the two world wars, there emerged in the United States an increasingly important social force--the intellectual community. The intellectual movement with the greatest importance for values of sexual behavior centered around the Freudian view of human behavior. (Gordon, 1973: 322) While, during the earlier stages of science, Social Darwinism was used to support the traditional views of male dominance and morality; in the 1920s, many of the interpretations of Freudianism seemed "to provide scientific sanction for defiance of conventional standards and morals." (Bell, 1966: 34) With society becoming more secular and science contesting religious dogma, one

result was that in many groups the traditional sanctions for existing morals were greatly weakened. "It was common to attribute the rebellion of youth to the social disorganization brought about by the war rather than to the influence of new philosophical beliefs." (Bell, 1966: 35)

After the second World War, the attitudes, norms, and values regarding sexual behavior changed at a more accelerated rate than ever before in the history of humankind. The factors that have had the greatest impact on challenging and changing these attitudes, norms, values, and behavior have been urbanization, migration or mobilization, civil rights, the women's liberation movement, the student revolution, the Vietnam War, literary sources, fashion trends and styles.

Because of self-hypnotic indulgences and fantasies about middle-class values and the American way of life, there has been a reluctance to tamper with the status quo. There are those, besides the blacks, who are beginning to see things differently. They are providing an in-house challenge to middle-class America, and their youthful protest is being heard much more quickly than years of similar black protest. Despite the recoil from this protest, it has been given names like "new morality"--and this "new morality" experiments with different family forms and communal living. (National Council on Illegitimacy, 1971: 16)

American society no longer has one set of harmonious and consensual attitudes and social practices concerning sexual or any other kind of behavior. (Vincent, 1961: 3)

It is for this reason the societal phenomenon of unmarried mothers keeping and raising their children has become a publicized and a more open and acceptable practice.

American society has become pluralistic with values and norms ranging from different experiences and behaviors. After social scientists had "claimed for 50 to 60 years that the great Americanization process was proceeding apace to grind down, assimilate and absorb, co-opt and otherwise diminish distinctive styles of life" (Manning, et al., 1972: 49), there was a realization of the persistent pluralism of our society. Along with this realization has come an increased tolerance of variation.

The 1970s are likely to be to the second half of the twentieth century what the 1920s were to the first half. The 1920s established the form of our family system for a society that had just passed the 50 percent urban residency line and a nation that had only recently taken its place as one of the major powers in the Western World. The older courtship, marriage, and family norms had been transformed radically in the decades preceding the 1920s, and the 1920s consolidated and generalized those changes. Divorce rates grew at an unprecedented rate between 1914 and 1920, premarital intercourse rates for women who started to date in 1915 and shortly thereafter doubled, and full legitimization of a courtship system wherein young people selected their own mates was well established. In these and many other ways the 1920s saw the culmination of the change to a modern urban, industrial society. The 1970s are the culmination of those changes leading to the post-industrial society, . . . Changes in our family system today are in conformity with values held by many generations in our society, values such as equalitarianism, individualism, hedonism, and the pursuit of happiness. (Reiss, 1972: 1)

In the past, popular magazines stereotyped unmarried mothers as young women who do not purposely become pregnant but rather "get into trouble" out of "ignorance," "promiscuity," "irresponsibility," "exploitation," and "love," and who are usually poor and from an ethnic minor-

ity group. (Shiller, 1969) Past studies on unmarried mothers have not entirely negated this stereotype since it still persists in many areas.

In the early 1970s, attitudes toward unmarried mothers were changing. These attitudes were more tolerant and accepting and were reflected especially in the popular magazines. (Harper's Bazaar, March 1975; Harper's Bazaar, March 1976; Ladies Home Journal, October 1977; Mademoiselle, January 1975; MS., February 1974; Ramparts, April 1973; Redbook, June 1977; Time, September 6, 1971; U.S. News and World Report, July 16, 1973) Reiss (1960) and Pope and Knudsen (1965) suggest that there have been changes in premarital sexual standards since the 1920s and their data support this. The norms have evolved from abstinence until after marriage or the "double standard" to norms of "permissiveness with affection" and further to "permissiveness with contraception." Reiss believed that

[T]he new post-war generation is far enough removed from the puritanical past, and deeply enough involved in the permissive tradition to take it for granted, and they will complete the consolidation process started by their grandparents and also start a more overt, public, and formal acceptance of standards which allow person-centered petting and coitus. (1960: 238-9)

There have been four major changes according to Pope and Knudsen (1965) that have produced these norms: reliable contraception, legalization of abortion, adoption, and post-pregnancy marriage.

These changes have also affected changes in the sex roles, the marital roles, and in the traditional marriage

and family form. The proliferation of variant marriage and family forms during the past decade is supported by Sussman and Cogswell (1972). Giele (1977) states that relationships of women and men have changed from patriarchal to egalitarian.

Where once it was the husband who went out to work and the wife who stayed at home, both now are more likely to work, and both are free to pursue leisure at home. Family life flourishes because the household is the primary unit of consumption and leisure. As a result the roles of men and women both as producers and consumers are becoming symmetrical. (Giele, 1977: 261)

Scanzoni (1976) concludes that men and women now play four marital-parental roles. First, there are those men and women who have a traditional marriage and who enjoy raising children; they believe in the "joys of parenthood." Second, there are those couples who remain voluntarily childless; children do not fit into their life style nor are they wanted. This type of couples, traditionally, has been classified as deviant for rejecting the norm of parenthood following marriage. (Veevers, 1975; Duberman, 1974) The third category is those men and women who want neither marriage nor children. (Scanzoni, 1976) "In our society, adulthood has been synonymous with marriage and parenthood, to the extent that the good life is defined as marriage... any living arrangement is wrong that may make any marriage-able individual forego marriage." (Mead, 1967: 29) Hence, the prevailing attitude that those who remain single are deviant or in some way inadequate for normal adult roles. (Kuhn, 1955; Stein, 1977)

There is, however, an emergent new style of singlehood that opposes the generally held view that single people are not single by right or by choice; rather, that single people do indeed have a choice and a growing number of them are exercising that choice consciously and voluntarily, in order to pursue life styles that will meet their needs for human growth and supportive interpersonal relationships. The emergence of singlehood as a life style is seen as a developmental phenomenon in response to the dissatisfaction with traditional marriage. (Stein, 1977: 517)

The trend toward the erosion of the ideological and economic bases for traditional marriage is such that men no longer (have) to marry to get sex and women no longer (have) to marry to get financial support, and given the development of the women's liberation movement and its stress upon self-fulfillment through means other than wifehood and motherhood, as well as the impact of other social movements such as communal living, open marriage, and gay liberation, there is clear evidence that conventional marriage is no longer inevitable or even necessarily desirable. More and more people are postponing or rejecting marriage in favor of independence. (Stein, 1977: 519)

The fourth category is men and women who do not want marriage but do want children. The two options open to these people are (1) adopt, which more singles are doing (Kopecky, 1977); and (2) for single women to go through the normal processes of conception and birth, which is currently gaining momentum. (Scanzoni, 1976; Duberman, 1974; Klein, 1973) This phenomenon reflects the growing recognition that many people who want to have children do not want to be married or find themselves single. (Duberman, 1974)

The available literature on alternative life styles and experimental family forms covers every possible type with the exception of single mothers by choice. This research is the beginning of compiling information to fill the existing void created by this alternative family form.

CHAPTER II

METHODS

This chapter provides a review of methodological questions, including research design, population, survey instrument, the independent and dependent variables, operational hypotheses, and the statistical methods used.

Population and Sample

This study is a survey analysis of data collected from non-married mothers obtained through their responses to an advertisement in the May 1978 issue of MS. and Psychology Today magazines. The advertisement reads:

Participants needed for survey on women choosing to have children outside of marriage.
P.O. Box 743, Williamsburg, VA 23185

MS. and Psychology Today magazines were chosen to carry the advertisement due to the number of articles concerning this topic which have appeared in them and their reader profiles. It was expected that the two magazines would reach a sizeable population of single mothers by choice. Also, other popular magazines do not carry this type of personal advertising in them. Reader profiles match suggested characteristics of single mothers found in previous research.

Psychology Today's Marketing Department reader profile for 1978/79 was done by Opinion Research Corporation with a study base of 2,088. The following data are what they found to describe their readership.

The Psychology Today Subscriber in Profile

By Sex

| | |
|--------|-------------|
| Male | 40.3% |
| Female | <u>59.7</u> |
| | 100.0 |

By Age

| | |
|---------|-------------|
| 18-34 | 59.6% |
| 18-49 | 84.5 |
| 18-24 | 22.5 |
| 25-34 | 37.1 |
| 35-49 | 24.9 |
| 50 plus | <u>13.9</u> |
| | 98.4* |

Median Age 31

By Household Income

| | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Under \$10,000 | 16.0% |
| \$10,000-\$14,999 | 14.3 |
| \$15,000-\$24,999 | 31.5 |
| Over \$25,000 | <u>33.3</u> |
| | 95.1* |

Median Household Income \$20,000

By Education

Highest Level Obtained

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| Less than High School Graduate | 4.6% |
| High School Graduate | 25.8 |
| Attended College | 34.4 |
| Graduated from College | 15.4 |
| Postgraduate Study | 13.4 |
| Postgraduate Degree | <u>21.8</u> |
| | 115.4* |

Locality Type

| | |
|----------------|-------------|
| Metro Central | 37.6% |
| Metro Suburban | 46.3 |
| Non-Metro | <u>16.0</u> |
| | 99.9* |

By Occupation

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Total Professionals | 48.1% |
| Professionals-Education | 18.2 |
| Other Professionals | 29.9 |
| Total Executive/Managerial | 16.2 |
| Executives | 9.6 |
| Managers | 6.6 |
| Professional/Managerial | 64.2 |
| Clerical/Sales | 9.3 |
| Other Employed | 9.5 |
| Not Employed | <u>12.1</u> |
| | 95.1* |

Geographic Area

| | |
|-----------|-------------|
| Northeast | 23.8% |
| Central | 21.6 |
| South | 29.7 |
| West | <u>24.9</u> |
| | 100.0 |

Marital Status

| | |
|----------------|-------------|
| Married | 49.0% |
| Single | 37.3 |
| Div./Wid./Sep. | <u>13.7</u> |
| | 100.0 |

* It is known by the author that the data provided by the Psychology Today Marketing Department does not total 100% in all cases.

The following data are a profile analysis of Psychology Today's total female readership compared against the total United States female population.

Profile Analysis Total Women*

| | <u>Total U.S. Population Comp.</u> | <u>Psychology Today Composition</u> |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Age 18-24 | 17.7 | 32.9 |
| Age 25-34 | 21.4 | 37.9 |
| Age 35-49 | 22.9 | 20.0 |
| Age 50 plus | 38.1 | 9.1 |
| Age 18-34 | 39.1 | 70.9 |
| Age 18-49 | 61.9 | 90.9 |
| Att./Grad. College | 25.7 | 62.5 |
| High School Graduate | 41.1 | 32.0 |
| Less than High School | 33.2 | 5.5 |
| Professional/Managerial | 10.9 | 33.4 |
| Clerical/Sales | 19.2 | 23.1 |
| Other Employed | 16.2 | 10.6 |
| Not Employed | 53.7 | 32.9 |
| Household Income \$25,000+ | 16.7 | 24.2 |
| Household Income \$20,000+ | 28.6 | 44.2 |
| Household Income \$15,000+ | 44.6 | 58.6 |
| HHI under \$15,000 | 55.4 | 41.4 |
| Live in Central City | 32.1 | 35.1 |
| Live in Suburban | 40.7 | 47.4 |
| Live in Non-Metro Area | 27.2 | 17.5 |
| Married | 62.4 | 48.1 |
| Unmarried | 37.6 | 51.9 |

* Data from Psychology Today was provided by the Marketing Department of Psychology Today through personal communication on June 4, 1979.

The profile analysis data provided by Psychology Today as compared with the total United States population indicates that the majority of the female readership is unmarried (51.9%), between the ages of 18-34 (70.9%), attended or graduated from college (62.5%), possess a professional/managerial career (33.4%), have a household income of \$15,000 plus (58.6%), and live in a suburban area (45.4%). Those findings are consistent with and parallel to the findings in this study of single mothers by choice. The above statistics give support to the analysis that the readers of this magazine and the participants of the study possess middle class status.

MS. magazine was also contacted for their readership profile but never responded to the request. There has also never been anything published by MS. magazine describing their readership profile.

Survey Instrument

Each respondent was asked to complete a seven-page questionnaire dealing with a range of personal background and familial factors. The basic method for data collection through the mail was the transmission of a questionnaire accompanied by a letter of explanation and a stamped return envelope (Appendix A). The respondent was requested to complete the questionnaire and return it to the researcher through the mail, using the envelope provided for that purpose by a certain date. There was follow-up of another

complete package to those respondents who did not return the first questionnaire mailed out to them exactly two weeks after expiration of the ten-day period.

The key stimulus items of the questionnaire are:

Did you purposely get pregnant?
When did you decide to become a single mother,
prior to or following conception?
Briefly describe your reasons for choosing to
have a child.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is the actual decision and act of conceiving a child outside of marriage.

Independent Variables

The independent variables are: present age of the single mother, age at birth of child, education, occupation, education of the parents, occupation of the parents, estimated class levels of self and parents, marital status, race, geographic area where the single mother grew up and area now living in, religious affiliations of the single mothers and their parents, birth order, number of siblings, illegitimacy, parents' marital status and happiness, parent-child relationships, methods of discipline and rewards, and degree of closeness to parents.

Statistics

The ideal format for presenting the data would be the reporting of all individual responses. This would provide the fullest details of the data, but it would also be cumbersome to analyze. The researcher will instead report the

data in aggregate.

The most important variables are considered to be ordinal. The most generally useful statistic for ordinal data and the one most commonly employed by sociologists is Goodman and Kruskal's Coefficient of Ordinal Association, or simply, Gamma. It is a ratio of the amount predominance of agreement or inversion between two sets of rankings to the maximum possible agreement or inversion. The test of significance is based on the Chi-square test.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the methods in my study. The sample (N) consisted of 47 women from across the United States. The questionnaire was structured around two choice response items and a free response item, tapping if the pregnancy was purposely chosen and the reasons for it.

Using this information, the following characteristics are proposed: *hypotheses*

Characteristics

Single women who have chosen to have children outside of marriage are more likely:

1. To be in the age bracket of 25-35.
2. To be highly educated.
3. To have middle class occupational status.
4. To have an occupation that permits her to balance her time between work and family.
5. To rate themselves middle to upper class.
6. To be white.

7. To be from and/or living in an urban area.
8. To be less religious.
9. To be either first born, first born female sibling, or only children.
10. To have grown up perceiving her parent's marriage as unhappy and becoming discouraged about marriage from that experience.
11. To have had a distant or not close parent-child relationship growing up.
12. Not to have any illegitimate siblings or to be illegitimate themselves.
13. To have had few dating experiences.
14. To have had few friends of either sex.
15. To have a good self-concept concerning one's appearance and personality.
16. Never to have had the opportunity to get married.

It should be noted at this point that there is a flaw in the design of this survey--there was no control comparison group. These characteristics were developed from past stereotypes about "unwed mothers" and suggested beliefs about these single women choosing motherhood.

The past stereotypes and beliefs about unwed mothers have been that they are: ignorant, immature, psychologically disturbed, promiscuous, morally depraved, being from broken homes, having little education, having minority group membership, and coming from a poverty level environment. (Davis, 1939; Reiss, 1960; Clark, 1961)

It is believed by the author that single mothers by choice cannot be compared to "unwed mothers" or to married mothers due to the differences by which they achieved motherhood. (Vincent, 1961; Scanzoni, 1976) Unwed mothers have achieved motherhood through accident, by ignorance of fact and/or of prevention, and their pregnancies, in most cases, are not intentionally planned. Married mothers fall into two categories: (1) of planned or intentioned motherhood and (2) of accident. Married mothers, either planned or accidentally pregnant, will have no social stigma applied to them since they are within the normal, accepted parameters of marriage. Therefore, data from other surveys and demographic studies will be introduced in lieu of a time control group.

CHAPTER III

SINGLE MOTHERS BY CHOICE: THEIR SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND GEOGRAPHIC BACKGROUNDS

This chapter introduces these descriptive correlates of the single motherhood by choice: present age of the single mother, age at birth of child, education, occupation, education of the parents, occupation of the parents, estimated class level of self and of parents, marital status, race, geographic area where the single mothers live now and where they grew up. The predicted characteristics of single mothers by choice receive statistical support. It is also evident that single mothers by choice and unwed mothers reflect dissimilar backgrounds.

Age

Women who returned useable questionnaires ranged in age from 19 to 40 which corresponds substantially with the natural child bearing age of women. The women's ages were widely distributed throughout the age range; the only major clustering was at the age of 24 (Table 1).

TABLE 1
AGE OF WOMEN IN SAMPLE

| Age | Frequencies | Percent |
|------|-------------|------------|
| 19 | 2 | 4.3 |
| 20 | 3 | 6.4 |
| 21 | 1 | 2.1 |
| 22 | 2 | 4.3 |
| 23 | 1 | 2.1 |
| 24 ✓ | 8 ✓ | 17.0 ✓ |
| 25 | 1 | 2.1 |
| 26 | 2 | 4.3 |
| 27 / | 5 | 10.6 |
| 28 | 1 | 2.1 |
| 29 | 4 | 8.5 |
| 30 | 3 | 6.4 |
| 31 | 3 | 6.4 |
| 32 | 2 | 4.3 |
| 33 | 4 | 8.5 |
| 34 | 1 | 2.1 |
| 35 | 1 | 2.1 |
| 37 | 1 | 2.1 |
| 38 | 1 | 2.1 |
| 40 | <u>1</u> | <u>2.1</u> |
| | 47 | 100.0 |

Women, at the time they had given birth to their first child outside of marriage, ranged in age from 18 to 33. Once again, there was no clustering at particular ages for childbirth. Five of the respondents were either pregnant or trying to conceive at the time when they answered the survey (Table 2).

TABLE 2
AGE AT FIRST CHILD'S BIRTH

| Age | Frequencies ^a | Percent |
|-----|--------------------------|---------|
| 18 | 3 | 6.4 |
| 19 | 5 | 10.6 |
| 20 | 5 | 10.6 |
| 21 | 1 | 2.1 |
| 22 | 2 | 4.3 |
| 23 | 6 | 12.8 |
| 24 | 2 | 4.3 |
| 25 | 2 | 4.3 |
| 26 | 4 | 8.5 |
| 27 | 2 | 4.3 |
| 28 | 2 | 4.3 |
| 29 | 1 | 2.1 |
| 30 | 1 | 2.1 |
| 31 | 2 | 4.3 |
| 32 | 3 | 6.4 |
| 33 | 1 | 2.1 |

N=47; five respondents had not yet gone through childbirth.

a. Some women had several children, either from previous marriages or as single mothers, so the ages were chosen at the birth of the first child born outside of marriage.

One of the most consistently emphasized points in conventional descriptions of unwed mothers is their extreme youth. This survey shows a clear departure from this behavior. Single mothers by choice clearly represent more mature women. In Table 3, there is a comparison of Vincent's (1961) study of unwed mothers' ages to the single mothers' ages in this survey.

TABLE 3

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE
MOTHERS (1978) AND UNWED MOTHERS (1961) BY AGE^a

| Ages | Percent | |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | Single Mothers | Unwed Mothers* |
| 17 and Younger | 0.0 | 31.0 |
| 18-19 | 4.3 | 21.0 |
| 20-21 | 8.5 | 17.0 |
| 22-25 | 25.5 | 18.0 |
| 26 and Older | <u>61.7</u> | <u>13.0</u> |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 |

* (Vincent, 1961: 60)

- a. Data that are comparable and available from Clark Vincent's study in 1961 are used to show differences or similarities between unwed mothers and single mothers. Not all the data from Vincent's study were included in his book. Much of the questionnaire data had been excluded. In early March 1979, the author wrote to Clark Vincent, trying to get some of the excluded data. Vincent replied that over the past twenty years, it had been discarded and that before this request, there had been no earlier requests for the original data from his study.

Examining the Birth and Fertility Rates for States and Metropolitan Areas on illegitimacy rates by age of mother, it has been reported by the United States Department of Health Education and Welfare that 27.2% of all births were illegitimate in 1970-71. The report further breaks down the ages. The age group with the highest percentage of illegitimacy is 20-24 years with a rate of 40.4%. The next highest is 36.3% for the 25-29 years group followed by 24.7% for the 30-34 years group and the 15-19 years group next with 23.9% illegitimacy. The last group of 35-44 years old

had 7.8%, the lowest of all the illegitimacy rates. (United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1977: 10) Comparing the single mothers' data on age at birth to the above national data, the single mothers' data follow the same pattern of 20-24 years old group having the highest relative frequency of 34.8%, followed by the 25-29 years old, 23.9%, and then the 19 years or younger, 17.4%, and finally the 30-34 years old group, 15.2%.

Education

The education statistics on single mothers by choice do vary significantly from the National Vital Statistics of 1977 on all women, and also vary from the statistics that Vincent compiled on unwed mothers in 1954. Table 4 presents these data. The women in the study appear to be more highly educated when compared against the National Vital Statistics and much moreso than the unwed mothers from Vincent's study.

TABLE 4

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS,
UNWED MOTHERS, ALL WOMEN BY EDUCATION

| <u>Education</u> | <u>Single Mothers</u> | <u>Unwed Mothers*</u> | <u>National Vital Statistics (all women)**</u> |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Graduate or Professional School | 14.9 | 0.0 | 15.4 |
| Completed College | 17.0 | 9.0 | |
| Attended College | 46.8 | 20.0 | 13.4 |
| Completed High School | 21.3 | 26.0 | 36.1 |
| Attended High School | 0.0 | 41.0 | 15.2 |
| Eight Years or less | <u>0.0</u> | <u>4.0</u> | <u>19.9</u> |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

* (Vincent, 1961: 64)

** (Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1978: 160)

Socioeconomic Status

The single mothers by choice were predominantly of the middle and working classes. Evidence is provided by the following data about the single mothers' occupations, their parents' education, their parents' occupations, and by their descriptions of their own socioeconomic level, and their parents' socioeconomic level.

By occupational grouping, the single mothers represented

46% of Professional and Managerial which is twice that for the national norm of the female labor force. In the Clerical and Sales grouping, the single mothers represented 15% while the national norm for the female labor force is 42%, almost three times greater than the survey data (Table 5). Therefore, over 60% of the single mothers were working in white collar occupations. There were 13% in working class positions and the remaining 26% were listed as others (homemakers and students).

TABLE 5

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS BY OCCUPATIONAL GROUPING AS COMPARED WITH THE NATIONAL FEMALE LABOR FORCE.

| <u>Occupation</u> | <u>Single Mothers</u> | <u>National Vital Statistics*</u> |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Professional and Managerial | 45.7 | 23.1 |
| Clerical and Sales | 15.2 | 42.0 |
| Craftsmen and Operatives | 4.3 | 14.5 |
| Service Workers | 8.7 | 18.3 |
| Others | <u>26.1**</u> | <u>2.1***</u> |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 |

* (Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1978: 304).

** Homemakers, Students.

*** Farmers, Laborers.

TABLE 6
 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE
 MOTHERS BY PARENTS' EDUCATION

| Education of the Single Mothers' Parents | Father | Mother |
|---|--------|--------|
| Attended Graduate or Professional School | 9.1 | 2.3 |
| Completed College | 18.2 | 22.7 |
| Attended College | 11.4 | 13.6 |
| Completed High School | 34.1 | 52.3 |
| Attended High School | 11.4 | 2.3 |
| Eight years or less | 15.9 | 6.8 |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Examining the percent distribution of the single mothers by their parents' education, 38% of both the fathers and mothers had attended college (Table 6). More mothers (52%) than fathers (34%) completed high school. From these data, we can infer that the single mothers had an influencing role model in their mothers. This can be further supported when examining the data on the parents' occupations. When comparing the distribution of the single mothers' occupations to the mothers' occupations, the findings are similar; the single mothers had 61% represented in Professional and Managerial and Clerical and Sales, and their mothers had 60% represented in the same categories, while their fathers only had 52% represented in these categories (Table 7).

TABLE 7
 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE
 MOTHERS BY PARENTS' OCCUPATIONS

| <u>Occupations</u> | <u>Father</u> | <u>Mother</u> |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Professional and Managerial | 45.4 | 35.6 |
| Clerical and Sales | 6.8 | 24.4 |
| Craftsmen and Operatives | 41.0 | 4.4 |
| Serviceworkers | 2.3 | 2.3 |
| Others* | <u>4.5</u> | <u>33.3</u> |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 |

* Others: Fathers-retired
 Mothers-homemakers

When the single mothers were asked to estimate their own and their parents' socioeconomic levels, the two were very similar. The daughters had continued in their parents' footsteps (Table 8).

TABLE 8

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SELF-ESTIMATED SOCIOECONOMIC LEVEL OF SINGLE MOTHERS AND THEIR PARENTS

| <u>S.E.S. Levels</u> | <u>Single Mothers</u> | <u>Parents</u> |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Upper | 4.4 | 4.3 |
| Middle | 53.4 | 60.9 |
| Working | 33.3 | 32.6 |
| Lower | <u>8.9</u> | <u>2.2</u> |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Marital Status

The single mothers in the survey were predominantly women who had never been married and those who had chosen to become single mothers after their spouses were no longer present.

TABLE 9

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE
MOTHERS BY MARITAL STATUS

| <u>Status</u> | <u>Single Mothers</u> |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| Never married | 66.0 |
| Married* | 4.3 |
| Divorced** | 27.7 |
| Separated** | <u>2.0</u> |
| | 100.0 |

* These women married after their child had been born.

** These women chose to have children after their spouse was relocated or deceased.

Race

The single mothers were predominantly white (85%), and this shows a bias in sampling of women responding to the survey. The others include Black (2%), Hispanic (2%), Asian-American and combinations of the races (11%), e.g., one woman was half white and half black and considered herself other. There could be another reason for some races not to be represented; it could be non-acceptance in their culture for this type of behavior.

Geography

By region, the single mother respondents came from throughout the United States of America with a slight over-representation from the Pacific States. Table 10 shows the distribution of these women.

TABLE 10
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS
BY GEOGRAPHIC AREA

| <u>Geographic Area*</u> | <u>Single Mothers</u> |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| New England | 6.4 |
| Middle Atlantic | 19.1 |
| East North Central | 17.0 |
| West North Central | 4.3 |
| South Atlantic | 8.5 |
| East South Central | 0.0 |
| West South Central | 10.6 |
| Mountain | 8.5 |
| Pacific | <u>25.5</u> |
| | 100.0 |

* New England--Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island; Middle Atlantic--New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania; East North Central--Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio; West North Central--Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas; South Atlantic--Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, District of Columbia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida; East South Central--Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi; West South Central--Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Texas; Mountain--Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Nevada.

Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico; and Pacific--Washington, Oregon, California, Hawaii, and Alaska.

The single mothers were also asked what size area they grew up in until the age of 15. They tended to grow up in large cities and metropolitan areas. Table 11 shows the distributions. According to the National Vital Statistics (1978), the majority of the population is found in large

TABLE 11

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS
BY GEOGRAPHIC AREA SIZE UNTIL THE AGE 15

| Area Size as Categorized by U.S. Census Bureau | Single Mothers |
|---|----------------|
| 500,000 and over | 25.5 |
| 100,000 to 500,000 | 17.0 |
| 10,000 to 100,000 | 10.6 |
| 2,500 to 10,000 | 21.3 |
| Under 2,500 | 8.5 |
| Suburbs | 12.8 |
| Other* | <u>4.3</u> |
| | 100.0 |

* Military Bases

cities and metropolitan areas. These types of areas provide an atmosphere of anonymity (Wirth, 1934) and could be catalysts for this life style due to the reason of varying attitudes, values found in these areas.

Summary

The first expected characteristic that single mothers by choice are likely to be in the age bracket of 25-35 is supported by 57.4% of the survey participants being between these ages. Women older than 35 comprised only 6.4% of the participants and women younger than 25 comprised 36.2% of the survey respondents.

That single mothers are expected to be highly educated was also supported by the data. When the single mothers were compared to the National Vital Statistics (1977) of women completing the different education levels, the women in this study were more highly educated than the national statistics (1977) for all women.

That single mothers would be more likely to have occupations that permit them to balance their time between work and family was not supported. Prior to classifying each occupation into the occupational categories found in Table 5 each occupation had been specified exactly by the respondents and the majority were full-time occupations. Many of the single mothers commented to an open-ended question that they had encountered problems with work and raising their children, but, through day care centers and babysitters, they managed.

The fourth correlated characteristic predicted was for these women to have middle class occupational statuses. This characteristic held true; 60.9% of the single mothers fell into either Professional and Managerial or Clerical

and Sales occupational statuses.

The fifth prediction that these single mothers would rate themselves middle to upper class was supported by 57.8% of the participants in that category; 33.3% rated themselves as working class, and 8.9% rated themselves as lower class.

The sixth characteristic was that single mothers by choice will more likely be white; strong support is indicated by 85.1% being white in this study. This may not reflect the actual population due to possible bias from the method used to obtain the sample.

The seventh characteristic of single mothers was that they would be from and/or living in an urban area. This was supported (Table 11) by the data of single mothers by geographic area size until the age 15--53.1% of the women had lived in an urban area (10,000 to over 500,000) until the age of 15.

CHAPTER IV

SINGLE MOTHERS BY CHOICE: THEIR FAMILIAL BACKGROUNDS

This chapter deals with parent-child relationships of the single mother with her parents, family structural variables and selected structural and cultural background factors possibly influencing the single mother's decision to become a mother.

Religion

Some single mothers received conservative religious teachings from their parents and attended church each week. Some got moderate and liberal religious teachings from their parents and attended church infrequently. Others received minimum religious teaching from their parents and were not affiliated with any church or religious group.

The change between the single mothers and their parents in religious affiliations showed a drop in organized religions for the single mothers leading to an increase of no religious affiliation. Over half (55.3%) of the single mothers never attend services now (Table 13).

TABLE 12

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS
AND THEIR PARENTS BY RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION ✓

| <u>Affiliation</u> | <u>Single Mothers</u> | <u>Father</u> | <u>Mother</u> |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Protestant | 38.3 | 48.9 | 51.1 |
| Catholic | 12.8 | 29.9 | 36.2 |
| Jewish | 4.2 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| None | 31.9 | 17.0 | 8.5 |
| Other (eastern religions) | 12.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Missing Data | <u>0.0</u> | <u>2.1</u> | <u>2.1</u> |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

TABLE 13

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS' RELIGIOUS
ATTENDANCE GROWING UP AND ATTENDANCE NOW AS AN ADULT ✓

| <u>Attendance</u> | <u>Growing Up</u> | <u>Now</u> |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Weekly | 63.8 | 19.1 |
| 2-3 Times a Month | 17.1 | 8.5 |
| Monthly | 2.1 | 0.0 |
| 3-4 Times a Year | 6.4 | 12.8 |
| Never | 10.6 | 55.3 |
| Missing Data | <u>0.0</u> | <u>4.3</u> |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Birth Order

According to past studies using birth order as a variable--only children and eldest children displayed strong leadership and independency traits. It was thought that to decide to become a single mother these traits were necessary to make this type of decision. The majority of the women in this study fell into either being eldest or middle children, but the only child category had the lowest number of responses.

TABLE 14

DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS BY BIRTH ORDER

| <u>Birth Order</u> | <u>Frequency</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|--------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Only Child | 7 | 15 |
| Eldest Child | 16 | 34 |
| Middle Child | 16 | 34 |
| Youngest Child | <u>8</u> | <u>17</u> |
| | 47 | 100 |

Number of Siblings

The majority of single mothers (53.2%) had one to three siblings; 14.9% were only children; while 23.4% of the respondents had four to six siblings in their family. Larger families with seven or more siblings were found among 8.5% of the respondents (Table 15).

TABLE 15

DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS BY NUMBER OF SIBLINGS

| <u>Number of Siblings</u> | <u>Frequency</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|---------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| None | 7 | 14.9 |
| 1-3 | 25 | 53.2 |
| 4-6 | 11 | 23.4 |
| 7-9 | <u>4</u> | <u>8.5</u> |
| | 47 | 100.0 |

Parents' Marriage

The single mothers reported almost every possible variation in the source and type of broken and unbroken homes, degrees of parents' marital happiness, and combinations of dominance--submissiveness and authoritarianism--egalitarianism in their parents' marital relationships. The data do favor more positive parent marital relationships, with 38.3% of the single mothers describing their parents' marriage as happy to very happy. Thirty-four (34%) percent of the single mothers describe their parents' marriage as average and only 25.5% described their parents' marriage as unhappy to very unhappy (Table 16).

TABLE 16

DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS BY PARENTS' MARITAL HAPPINESS

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Very happy or happy | 18 | 38.3 |
| Average | 16 | 34.1 |
| Unhappy or very unhappy | 12 | 25.5 |
| Missing data | <u>1</u> | <u>2.1</u> |
| | 47 | 100.0 |

TABLE 17

DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS
BY NUMBER OF PARENTS' MARRIAGES

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|-----------|-------------|
| First marriage for each | 27 | 57.40 |
| First marriage for mother, second for father | 7 | 14.90 |
| First marriage for father, second for mother | 5 | 10.65 |
| Second or more marriages for each | 5 | 10.65 |
| Other | <u>3</u> | <u>6.40</u> |
| | 47 | 100.00 |

The single mother's parents appear to be happily married to their first spouse, they sometimes argue, the father is the decision-maker in the family, neither parent appears to be dominant and there is little to moderate open conflict in their marital relationship (Tables 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21).

TABLE 18

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS
BY FREQUENCY OF PARENTS' ARGUMENTS

| <u>Frequency of Argument</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|----------------------------------|----------------|
| Rarely | 25.5 |
| Sometimes | 42.6 |
| Frequently | 19.2 |
| Most of the time | 10.6 |
| Missing data | <u>2.1</u> |
| | 100.0 |

TABLE 19

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS
BY DECISION-MAKER IN PARENTS' FAMILY

| <u>Decision-Maker</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| No one in particular | 23.4 |
| Father | 46.8 |
| Mother | 25.5 |
| Someone else | <u>4.3</u> |
| | 100.0 |

TABLE 20
 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS
 BY DOMINANT PARENT

| <u>Dominant Parent</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|--|----------------|
| Father definitely dominant to dominant | 31.9 |
| 50-50 | 31.9 |
| Mother definitely dominant to dominant | 31.9 |
| Too young to know | <u>4.3</u> |
| | 100.0 |

TABLE 21
 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS
 BY RELATIONS BETWEEN PARENTS

| <u>Type</u> | <u>Percent</u> |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| Constant open conflict | 14.9 |
| Moderate open conflict | 23.4 |
| Little open conflict | 25.5 |
| No open conflict | 17.0 |
| No open conflict but unhappy | 8.5 |
| Too young to remember | 4.3 |
| Other* | <u>6.4</u> |
| | 100.0 |

* Parents divorced.

These single mothers appear to have come from traditional middle class families, rather than the stereotype

of homelife for unwed mothers--of broken homes, low class environment, and dominant mothers. Vincent (1961), in his study on unwed mothers, did not find support for this belief either.

Illegitimacy

It was thought that past exposure to illegitimacy would create an attitude that would make it a less unacceptable behavior for these women. The majority of the single mothers had never been exposed to illegitimacy in their own families and the traditional attitudes concerning illegitimacy did not seem to matter to them (Table 22).

TABLE 22

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS
BY PAST EXPOSURE TO ILLEGITIMACY

| | Yes | No | Total |
|--|-----|------|-------|
| Were any of your siblings illegitimate? | 6.4 | 93.6 | 100.0 |
| Were you illegitimate? | 2.1 | 97.9 | 100.0 |

Parent-Child Relationship

Traditionally, it has been interpreted that unwed motherhood has been an acting out of unresolved emotional conflicts and an attempt to resolve psychological disturbances whose genesis was in the mother's early relationship with one or both parents. This same attitude was used as a hypothesis to explore these explanations with single mothers.

What was found in this investigation was that these women's parents spent time with them in activities other than normal living situations which was defined as living, eating and sleeping in the same house. The mothers spent more time with their daughters than did the fathers (Table 23). The mothers also tended to be the disciplining parent even though the mothers (64%) worked outside of the parents' home (Table 24).

TABLE 23

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS
BY TIME EACH PARENT SPENT WITH THEIR DAUGHTER

| Hours Per Week | Percent | |
|----------------|------------|------------|
| | Mother | Father |
| None | 4.3 | 17.0 |
| 1-6 | 36.2 | 51.1 |
| 7-12 | 21.3 | 12.8 |
| 13-18 | 8.5 | 2.1 |
| 19 or more | 23.3 | 8.5 |
| Do not know | 4.3 | 6.4 |
| Missing data | <u>2.1</u> | <u>2.1</u> |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 |

TABLE 24

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS
BY THEIR DISCIPLINING PARENT

| | Percent |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Father 0% - Mother 100% | 12.8 |
| Father 25% - Mother 75% | 34.8 |
| Father 50% - Mother 50% | 23.4 |
| Father 75% - Mother 25% | 17.0 |
| Father 100% - Mother 0% | 0.0 |
| Was not disciplined | 4.3 |
| By someone else | <u>8.5</u> |
| | 100.0 |

When the single mothers described their relationship with their parents 55.3% and 44.7% described their relationship very close to close with their mothers and fathers, respectively (Table 25). The somewhat close group was 25.5% and 21.3% for mothers and fathers, respectively. The group of single mothers who described their parent-child relationship as not close to distant were 19.2% with their mothers and 31.9% with their fathers (Table 25).

TABLE 25

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS
BY THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR PARENTS

| Their Parents Degree of Closeness | Percent | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| | Mother | Father |
| Very close - close | 55.3 | 44.7 |
| Somewhat close | 25.5 | 21.3 |
| Not close - distant | 19.2 | 31.9 |
| Missing data | <u>0.0</u> | <u>2.1</u> |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 |

TABLE 26

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS
BY PARENT CONSISTENCY IN DISCIPLINING

| | Percent | |
|------------------------------|------------|------------|
| | Mother | Father |
| Very consistent - consistent | 59.6 | 57.4 |
| Consistent - changeable | 17.0 | 14.9 |
| Changeable - very changeable | 21.3 | 23.4 |
| Missing data | <u>2.1</u> | <u>4.3</u> |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 |

The single mothers describe their parents' disciplin-
ing methods (59.6% and 57.4%) as consistent for their
mothers and fathers, respectively. A very small propor-
tion of the single mothers reported their parents to be
changeable in their disciplining methods (Table 26).

Overall, it can be assumed that the majority of the single mothers had good relationships with their parents.

Summary

Single motherhood is not the result of any one type of intra-familial relationship or social situation. This is a truism which could have been stated before the study was commenced. However, the prevailing conventional notions about the causes of illegitimacy require the examination of the significance of them.

The characteristics examined in this chapter were:

Single women who have chosen to have children outside of marriage are more likely:

- to be less religious.
- to be either first born, first born female sibling or only children.
- to have grown up perceiving her parents' marriage as unhappy and becoming discouraged about marriage from that experience.
- to have had a distant or not close parent-child relationship growing up.
- not to have any illegitimate siblings or to be illegitimate themselves.

There was support that these women are less religious now than when they were children.

That the single mothers would be either first born, first born female sibling or only children did have support for the first born (eldest) and the first born female

sibling but not for only children.

There was no support for the prediction that single mothers perceived their parents' marriage as unhappy and becoming discouraged about marriage from that experience. In fact, these women came from homes that had happy relationships which have reinforced marriage as desirable. In the next chapter, a section on future chances of marriage for single mothers is discussed.

There was no support for the expectation that single mothers tend to have had a distant or "not close" parent-child relationship growing up. These women were close to their parents, and only 19.2% were not close or distant to their mothers and 31.9% were not close or were distant to their fathers.

The last prediction pertaining to this section of data did find support. These women (93.6%) did not have any illegitimate siblings and 97.9% were themselves not illegitimate.

The causal relationship among given familial and social factors and illegitimacy is in the way these factors are combined or configured in the individual single mother's experience.

The causal significance of a given configuration of factors for single motherhood is related to the degree to which the configuration either prevents the internalization of traditional sex mores or minimizes the effectiveness of these mores after they have become internalized.

This generalization is particularly relevant in our highly industrialized-urbanized society, in which females are exposed to a wide variety of value systems by mass communication media and in multiple reference and membership groups. Sex enticement and fun morality themes are being proffered and learned in a variety of "differential association" and "differential identity" contexts.

CHAPTER V

SINGLE MOTHERS BY CHOICE: THEIR REASONS

This chapter deals with the factors on past and present dating behavior, friends, their own self-concept, future marriage possibilities, decision for pregnancy, and family support.

Dating

The single mothers appear to have similar dating patterns now as they did in high school in frequency of dates.

TABLE 27

DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS BY
FREQUENCY OF DATES IN HIGH SCHOOL AND NOW

| <u>Number of Dates</u> | <u>High School</u> | <u>Now</u> |
|-------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Never | 12 | 15 |
| Once a month | 11 | 6 |
| 2-4 times a month | 4 | 9 |
| 5-8 times a month | 1 | 3 |
| 9 or more times a month | 3 | 4 |
| Went steady | 14 | 4 |
| Missing data | <u>2</u> | <u>6</u> |
| | 47 | 47 |

There is a slight increase in never dating. The major decrease was in going steady now from when they were in high school, which could be attributed to the values that high school students have when they are in high school because they do place important status upon those who do go steady.

The dating patterns did not start especially early for these women; 42% had their first date at either age 13 or 14. Only one respondent dated earlier than 10 years old; one dated at 11 and three started dating at age 12. For those who started dating later, only 15% started dating at age 15, 17% at age 16 and age 18 or older was represented by 15% (Table 28).

TABLE 28

DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS BY AGE AT THEIR FIRST DATE

| <u>Age</u> | <u>Frequency</u> |
|-------------|------------------|
| Under 10 | 1 |
| 10 | 0 |
| 11 | 1 |
| 12 | 3 |
| 13 | 9 |
| 14 | 11 |
| 15 | 7 |
| 16 | 8 |
| 17 | 0 |
| 18 or older | <u>2</u> |
| | 47 |

The single mothers as a group preferred to "go steady" now rather than date the field. This preference could be attributed to the traditional belief of marrying one person for life and wanting to find a mate. (Bernard, 1974)

TABLE 29

DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS BY DATING PREFERENCE NOW

| <u>Preference</u> | <u>Frequency</u> |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Dating the field | 11 |
| Going steady | 34 |
| Missing data* | <u>2</u> |
| | 47 |

* One woman did not answer the question; the other stated that she was gay and it did not apply.

Friends

On a group basis, these women as adolescents did not appear to have any more problems making friends with the opposite sex than with their own sex. At least 40% encountered none or little difficulty in making friends with either sex (Table 30).

TABLE 30

DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS BY DIFFICULTY IN MAKING FRIENDS AS ADOLESCENTS WITH OPPOSITE AND SAME SEX

| Degree of Difficulty | Percent | |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Boys | Girls |
| Very great - great | 34.1 | 27.6 |
| Average | 25.5 | 29.8 |
| Little - very little | 23.4 | 25.6 |
| None | <u>17.0</u> | <u>17.0</u> |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 |

N=47

Of the single mothers, 75% responded that they now feel confident or very confident in associating with men as opposed to their earlier years. Only 25% felt little or no confidence (Table 31).

TABLE 31

DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS BY CONFIDENCE NOW IN ASSOCIATING WITH THE OPPOSITE SEX

| Degree of Confidence | Percent |
|----------------------|------------|
| Very confident | 36.2 |
| Confident | 38.3 |
| Little confidence | 21.2 |
| No confidence | <u>4.3</u> |
| | 100.0 |

Self-concept

The majority of the single mothers considered themselves above average to superior in their self-concept. In Table 32, only about 6% thought of themselves as below average or poor, with the rest, 19% as average.

TABLE 32

DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS BY
THEIR RATING OF THEIR SELF-CONCEPT

| <u>Rating</u> | <u>Frequency</u> |
|---------------|------------------|
| Superior | 9 |
| Above average | 26 |
| Average | 9 |
| Below average | 2 |
| Poor | <u>1</u> |
| | 47 |

These women also rated themselves high in physical appearance; 51% rated themselves as above average in looks to unusually good looking. A group of 40.5% rated themselves as average in looks and only 6.5% rated themselves as below average (Table 33).

TABLE 33

DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS BY THEIR
RATING OF THEIR PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

| <u>Appearance</u> | <u>Frequency</u> |
|------------------------|------------------|
| Unusually good looking | 3 |
| Above average in looks | 21 |
| Average | 19 |
| Below average | 3 |
| Missing data | <u>1</u> |
| | 47 |

Future Marriage Possibilities

When these women were asked if they ever wanted to get married, 59.6% said yes and 36.1% replied no, with 4.3% not responding.

The single mothers were also asked if they ever had the opportunity to marry and 87.2% said yes with 12.8% answering no.

The women were then asked if they ever thought about their chances of having a successful marriage. Forty-five percent replied that they thought about it frequently, 34% said they thought about it occasionally, and 21.3% rarely or never thought about it.

Decision for Pregnancy

The women were asked if their pregnancy had been on purpose; 53.2% said they had purposely become pregnant, and 46.8% said that it was a chance event. Another question was asked to check the validity of the above response; it was asked if they had decided prior to or following conception to have a child. There was a difference in response to this question--27 responded prior and 20 said following which is a difference compared to the previous question. I feel that the second question was misinterpreted by some of the respondents, thinking that the term conception is the same as the time when the child was born.

Using the data concerning whether the pregnancy was a chance event or on purpose and cross-tabulating it with education and occupation, it is found that the majority of women who purposely became pregnant were college educated with white collar positions. Then, the next largest group was a chance event pregnancy--college educated with white collar positions (Table 34).

A three-way cross tabulation was run on the variables of intent of pregnancy, education, and occupation (x_1 =education, x_2 =occupation, x_3 =intent of pregnancy). Gamma was first requested for education and occupation, not controlling for any other variables, and was found to be -0.484. This indicates that the relationship is fairly strong. Partial gamma was then used to measure the relationship between education and occupation controlling for intent

of pregnancy. By comparing the zero-order gamma for two variables with the partial gamma, it can be seen how the control variable affects the relationship between the two variables. The partial gamma for education and occupation when controlling for intent of pregnancy is -0.622 . The relationship between education and occupation is partially due to educational differences in intent of pregnancy attainment.

TABLE 34

THREE-WAY CROSS TABULATION OF THE SINGLE MOTHER
BY INTENT OF PREGNANCY, EDUCATION, AND OCCUPATION

| | | High School or less | College or more |
|---------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Intentional Pregnancy | White Collar | 1 | 15 |
| | Blue Collar | 2 | 7 |
| Chance Event Pregnancy | White Collar | 3 | 8 |
| | Blue Collar | 4 | 5 |

Missing Data=3

$x_1x_2 = -0.484$

x_1x_2 control $x_3 = -0.622$

Family Support

The single mothers were asked to describe their parents' support prior to and following the birth of the child; 23 sets of parents were supportive prior to and 34 sets following the birth. There were 17 sets of parents who were non-supportive prior to the birth of their daughter's baby; this number decreased to 6 sets after the birth (Table 35). This change in parents' attitudes can be explained in terms of the Nunn, et al. (1978) discussion on tolerance for non-conforming behavior.

Changes in tolerance levels have occurred in every major social category...although some people changed more markedly than others. ...citizens who are most supportive of civil liberties have emerged as the majority in our society--and they are not a "silent majority." ...there is rather sweeping evidence that social forces and modern institutions, especially education, are at work and are likely to generate even greater tolerance levels. (Nunn, et al., 1978: 2)

"One child in six in the United States is already in custody of a single parent, divorced, widowed, or unmarried." (Francoeur, et al., 1976: 155)

...there are "great social, economic, and technological forces" in American society that facilitated tolerance...the modernization process that increasingly presents different values, ideas, and styles of behavior to people. Not only are people exposed to this greater variety, the modern context structurally imposes an interdependency that makes heterogeneous relationships nearly unavoidable. Such contacts often lead to greater tolerance as people realize that differences in other people are not so threatening as they first thought and that they must find a way to get along. This process is aided by the fact that members of complex societies typically have multiple roles and group affiliations that

weaken the hold of more homogeneous group memberships. (Nunn, et al., 1978: 9-10)

TABLE 35

DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS BY THEIR PARENTS' SUPPORT PRIOR TO AND FOLLOWING THE BIRTH OF THEIR CHILD

| | Prior | Following |
|----------------|----------|-----------|
| Supportive | 23 | 34 |
| Non-supportive | 17 | 6 |
| Missing Data | <u>7</u> | <u>7</u> |
| | 47 | 47 |

TABLE 36

DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS BY COMBINATIONS OF PARENT SUPPORT OF DAUGHTER'S PREGNANCY

| Prior | Following | Frequency | Percent |
|-------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| 0 | 0 | 6 | 12.8 |
| 0 | 1 | - | - |
| 0 | 2 | 1 | 2.1 |
| 1 | 0 | - | - |
| 1 | 1 | 22 | 46.8 |
| 1 | 2 | 1 | 2.1 |
| 2 | 0 | 1 | 2.1 |
| 2 | 1 | 12 | 25.6 |
| 2 | 2 | <u>4</u> | <u>8.5</u> |
| | | 47 | 100.0 |

0=missing data, 1=support, 2=non-support

Single Mothers' Reasons

The single mothers were asked to briefly describe their reasons for having a child out-of-wedlock. The following are some of the responses:

Enjoy mothering

I love having babies. I feel wonderful in the role of mothering--really enjoy giving love unconditionally, unselfconsciously, being uninhibited emotionally--feeling totally involved, needed.

My children have been such a source of satisfaction to me. I think they are the most real, vital, and joyous part of my life. Though the responsibility is sometimes awesome, it is the one responsibility I have always taken seriously. Children give a purpose to my life that no other thing (job, status, marriage, etc.) has ever been able to provide. I like myself as a mother better than I like myself in any other capacity.

This response was expressed by a woman thirty-two years of age, a fourth grade school teacher, who had two children after she had been divorced.

I have always looked forward to motherhood, have always expected to have at least one child. But I have known since I was eighteen that I am homosexual, so I knew I would never have a "successful" heterosexual relationship. I continued to play "straight games" because I so longed for a child to nurture, to share my life and love with. I now have my child, and I love him with my whole heart and soul. He has freed me from the need to play games, and I am in the process of coming out; though I have not revealed my homosexuality to my parents.

The woman who expressed this is twenty-five, a lawyer and has never been married.

I think it has a lot to do with basic biological needs (above and beyond sex urges). Much is culture's influence--most of my friends have children.

Culture pressure

There is a feeling related to immortality in knowing that one has contributed something that will (hopefully) live beyond one's own lifetime (especially, as in my case, when one may not be likely to contribute a great work

of art or some such thing). I think too, that many of us feel there is a challenge in raising another human being to be a useful member of society.

Last, but not least, there is a desire for love companionship, respect, admiration, etc. that only a child can give. (Adults can give many of these feelings, also, but usually from a different perspective, and more reservedly.)

The woman who gave this response was thirty-one, a book-keeper and was divorced and chose to have a child afterwards.

When I was 18 years old I got pregnant accidentally. I gave the baby up for adoption but I never got over this loss. I expected that someday I would marry and have a family, but eventually, gradually, resolved to have a child even if I did not marry. Aside from my feeling of loss, I have always loved children and felt my life would be more meaningful if I had at least one. This has proven to be true and I'm very grateful to have my little girl.

children even if don't marry

This woman is thirty-four, never married, has one child; she attended college and is now a midwife.

I have always doubted my ability to remain faithful to one man over any long period of time. Because of this I am determined not to marry unless, of course, something or someone changes my mind. I do not feel that because I have chosen not to marry that I should be denied the possibility of reproducing.

The woman who expressed this is twenty-four, attended college, never married but has one child.

I wanted to raise a child, I felt competent to do a very good job of it, I found myself willing to accept the total responsibility and not willing to wait until I had the perfect relationship with a warm, open, caring man. I felt I would be a good mother and after $4\frac{1}{2}$ years at it, I still feel it to be true.

This woman is thirty, has one child, has a master's degree, works for a social service agency and has never married.

A baby would always love me and be my friend. Being an unwed mother, in Boston, in 1963 before it became fashionable, was tremendously difficult but I enjoyed it because I wanted my child and loved him. Today, I am a single parent and there is a vast difference between an unwed mother and a single parent.

This response is from a thirty-three year old woman who is a pharmacy technician, has one child, and has never been married.

With or without marriage I wanted children, felt I was strong enough to handle it myself, I had two children totally alone. It was very hard, and I would not recommend it to anyone, but the rewards are just as satisfying as I expected. After the second child I realized I never wished marriage as I had no use for it, and refused it many times from the father and others.

This woman is thirty, has never been married, has one year of college and has two children.

I am 27 years old now, I don't seem to be able to find a compatible life-mate. I desire not to be alone always. I need company, and I have the time, finances and love that is needed to bring up a child. I am very confident in my ability to do well as a mother. If I should happen to find someone who is right for both me and my child, then so much the better. If not, that's OK too. I really don't feel as if I need a husband.

This woman is a forklift operator; she has a high school education, and she chose to have her child after she was divorced.

It is hard to answer this question honestly. Now, after seven years I feel that I really wanted a child, I did then and I do now--I needed to feel needed and needed something for my own...although I realize that that is not a healthy need.

This was expressed by a twenty-seven year old woman who works as a waitress; she has a high school education and

now has two children. The first child was born out-of-wedlock; the second was born after she was divorced. Neither child belongs to the man to whom she was married.

I love children and giving; to have a centering effect on me and to fulfill the motherhood role.

This woman is thirty-one, has never been married, has one child and is a psychiatric social worker with a M.S.W. degree.

All my life as early as I can remember I have wanted and loved children. I had a bad marriage with no children. I am now 31 with no prospect for marriage. I really feel that I should not be stopped from having a child because I'm not married. I would still like to marry but time is running out for having a healthy child. So--it's now or never.

This woman is thirty-one and was pregnant at the time she took the survey. She had attended college and works as a hospital laboratory technician.

Summary

Some of the single mothers started dating before they were twelve; others did not date until they were eighteen. Some consistently went steady; others, just as consistently, dated the field. Only about 26% of the sample said they never dated in high school and about 32% said they never date now. There was no overwhelming support for the expectation that stated single women who have chosen to have children outside of marriage are more likely to have had few dating experiences.

The single mothers did not appear to have difficulty in making friends with girls or boys when they were adolescents;

because of this, the expectation stating that single women who have chosen to have children outside of marriage are more likely to have had few friends of either sex did not find support. Of the sample, only about 34% had difficulty making friends with boys and about 28% had difficulty making friends with girls. Possibly, if there had been a control group, there could have been a better comparison to see if these women had greater or less difficulty in making friends as adolescents.

The majority of women had evaluated themselves as above average to superior in physical appearance and self-concept. Those who had poor self-concept and thought they were below average in looks only represented about 13% of the sample. These data then support the prediction that single women who have chosen to have children outside of marriage are likely to have a good self-concept concerning their appearance and personality. These data may be limited by the self-fulfilling prophecy. That is, the respondents' awareness of given attitudes toward and conventional descriptions of single mothers and unwed mothers may have influenced them to attempt, in their answers, either to validate or to repudiate such attitudes and descriptions.

The last characteristic to be considered is that single women who have chosen to have children outside of marriage are more likely never to have had the opportunity to get married. This did not prove to be the case; there was

overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Over 87% of single mothers had an opportunity to marry while the remaining 13% have not had the opportunity.

The question still remains how these women, single mothers, have had their internalization of the traditional sex mores prevented or minimized. I propose two generalizations concerning the minimization or prevention of the effectiveness of traditional sex mores presumed to have been internalized at an earlier period in the individual's life.

(1) Traditional sex mores internalized earlier tend to become ineffectual, though probably never discarded, when the individual subsequently perceives and/or experiences that equally great or greater values and rewards are associated with non-traditional than with traditional sex behavior. "Previously internalized and superimposed value and behavior systems both modify and are modified by the individual's current experiences, needs, and roles." (Vincent, 1961: 183)

(2) Traditional sex mores that have been internalized tend to be ineffectual if primarily inculcated on the basis of negative sanctions that the individual later perceives to be faulty; e.g., men only marry "nice" girls, fear venereal disease and the threat of eternal damnation.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the last decade, a new phenomenon has become more evident; some women are choosing to have children outside of marriage. This phenomenon was supported by research that found there are women who use men as studs so they can conceive but not to marry to be mothers. Famous women were seen as a part of this new phenomenon--Mia Farrow, Vanessa Redgrave, Geraldine Chaplin, and Bernadette Devlin. A major television station is also portraying this life style in a new series introduced in the spring of 1979--"Miss Winslow and Son."

This phenomenon can be interpreted by Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance. The basic notion of the theory of cognitive dissonance is that there is a tendency toward cognitive consistency. Dissonance exists between two cognitions when the opposite of one follows from the other. Cognitions are anything a person is aware of or has knowledge of. They may be facts, beliefs, opinions, or anything else and may be stated in terms of the person's knowledge or awareness. The consistency or inconsistency that exists between two cognitions is defined entirely in terms of the psychological implications for

the individual.

Dissonance can arise because of inconsistencies between beliefs, between beliefs and behaviors, or between behaviors. Some of these will be logical inconsistencies and some will not be. The crucial and necessary condition for the production of dissonance is that psychologically the two elements are inconsistent in the sense that the opposite of one follows from the other. This definition relies on the individual's own psychological structure and states that when inconsistency exists for the individual, dissonance is aroused. Festinger (1957) continues that dissonance varies in magnitude, that individuals can experience a little dissonance or a lot. Two factors determine the magnitude of dissonance--the number of dissonant elements that exist relative to the number of consonant ones and the importance of these elements.

The basic assumption is that when dissonance exists, there is a tendency to reduce it; this reduction is then a function of the magnitude of dissonance. According to Festinger (1957), there are three major ways to reduce dissonance: by reducing the importance of the dissonant elements, by adding consonant elements, or by changing one of the dissonant elements so that it is no longer inconsistent with the other.

Bell states that the pressures for marrying can produce dissonance.

In the United States, the social pressures to marry are overwhelming. They are transmitted from the time of birth not only within the institutional context of the family but also by such other institutions as religion, education, and occupations. The force for marriage is not only in the importance attached to personal needs being met and opportunities for individual achievement but also because all known societies have had some form of marriage and it therefore is assumed to be a necessary condition for society. (Bell, 1979: 111)

Motherhood is more than the biological process of reproduction. As an institution, it consists of customs, traditions, conventions, beliefs, attitudes, mores, rules, laws, precepts, and the host of other rational and non-rational norms which deal with the care and rearing of children. (Bernard, 1974) Women, as little girls, have been indoctrinated with their vocation from the earliest years. (de Beauvoir, 1952: 306) The vocation being a wife and mother. This vocation was stressed to women as being the fulfillment to seek. (Friedan, 1963: 11) Little girls learned what was expected of them through direct and subtle socialization on all levels--parents, school, peers, church, and the media. "All they had to do was devote their lives from earliest girlhood to finding a husband and bearing children." (Friedan, 1963: 11-12) Therefore, women have been socialized with two cognitions of success--one of marriage and the second of bearing children.

On the level of cultural values, men have no freedom of choice where work is concerned; they must work to secure their status as adult men. The equivalent for women has been maternity. There is considerable pressure upon the growing girl and young woman to consider maternity necessary for a woman's fulfillment as an individual

and to secure her status as an adult. (Reiss, 1972: 298)

Even out-of-wedlock pregnancies are acceptable. A woman can violate every moral canon provided she bears children. That one act redeems her. (Bernard, 1974)

When women become of age to marry, there is a span of time allowed to find a husband before they are considered a failure, traditionally an "old maid." These women who do not marry are looked down upon and made fun of because they do not know the self-fulfillment of being a wife and mother. (de Beauvoir, 1959: 175)

Traditionally, a woman has been considered to be successful if she has found a husband and become a mother. There is also a romantic notion in our culture that one should marry a person with whom one is in love, rather than marry just anybody. (Goode, 1959)

...the American woman in the past has been socialized to believe marriage and motherhood were her only real options as an adult. Because social values have always asserted that marriage is a necessary condition for motherhood, remaining single generally represented failure to achieve the desirable adult roles. This view is changing, with options available for many young women-- postpone marriage or in some cases not marry at all. The economic and sexual liberation of the young working woman is diminishing her need for marriage. (Bell, 1979: 117)

In this study, 59.6% of the women would eventually like to marry; 87.2% of the women have had the opportunity to marry but have not; and 78.7% wonder about their chances of having a successful marriage.

It appears for the women in this study rather than

being considered failures for not having found the right "Mr. Right," they have opted to become mothers and have, therefore, only failed at finding a husband. This choice of motherhood has reduced some of the dissonance they have for not being traditionally successful, but they still have the hope of finding a husband.

If they should or should not find a husband, they have chosen single motherhood by choice as their life style. It is no longer so unacceptable to have a child and not have a husband since many divorced and separated women are raising families on their own, and many states no longer designate legitimacy or illegitimacy on birth certificates.

There is need for further study in this area. If a more sensitive, comprehensive measuring instrument directed towards measuring attitudinal beliefs and values were developed, more support would be found for this thesis conclusion.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY ON SINGLE MOTHERS BY CHOICE

Thank you for responding to my advertisement in MS. or Psychology Today magazine as a volunteer to participate in a nationwide study of single women who have chosen to become mothers.

Enclosed is a questionnaire which has been designed to obtain information that will provide an objective study of this significant change in our society about which very little is known. All information in this study will be confidential and anonymous.

The study is being done under the auspices of the Department of Sociology at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia.

It is important that you answer all the questions; otherwise your questionnaire cannot be used. Please be as brief and organized as possible; but if you run out of space, continue your answer on the back of the page. (Be sure to give number of the question.)

If you have any comments or information you would like to give that were not asked for in the questionnaire, feel free to add them on at the end of the questionnaire. Please answer the questionnaire as soon as possible and return it

in the enclosed self-addressed and stamped envelope within 10 days. Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey. Your response will be a contribution to a better understanding of women in our society.

Ms. Candace D. McCreary
P.O. Box 743
Williamsburg, Virginia 23185

7. How do you describe yourself?
 Hispanic Black White
 American Indian/Alaskan Native
 Other (what?) _____.
8. Before you were 15 years old, where did you live most of the time?
 City over 500,000 Village under 2,500
 100,000 to 500,000 Open country, non-farm
 10,000 to 100,000 On a farm
 2,500 to 10,000 A suburb (give population)
 Other (what?) _____.
9. What state of the nation are you now living in? _____.
- 10a. Your religious membership or affiliation. (Be specific)
 _____.
- b. Your father's religious membership or affiliation? _____.
- c. Your mother's religious membership or affiliation? _____.
11. How often do you attend church now? (check one)
 weekly 2-3 times a month monthly 3-4 times a year
 never
12. Growing up, how often did you attend church? (check one)
 weekly 2-3 times a month monthly 3-4 times a year
 never
13. I am: (check only one)
 an only child
 the eldest child
 a middle child
 the youngest child
- 14a. How do you describe your social class position?
 upper class middle class working class lower class
- b. How would you describe your parent's social class position?
 upper class middle class working class lower class
15. How old are your parents (if deceased, how old would they be if living?) Mot her _____ Father _____
16. How many children, not including yourself, are there in your family? (check one)
 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 or more

- 17a. Are any of your brothers or sisters born out of wedlock?
 Yes No If yes, how many? _____.
- b. Were you born out of wedlock? Yes No
18. Counting the present marriage, how many times have your parents been Married? (check one)
 1st marriage for each.
 1st marriage for mother, 2nd for father.
 1st marriage for father, 2nd for mother.
 2nd or more marriages for each.
 other (what?) _____.
19. How would you describe your parents' marriage? (check one)
 very happy happy average unhappy very unhappy
20. Do (did) your parents argue? (check one)
 rarely sometimes frequently most of the time
21. Who makes (made) most of the important decisions in your family? (check one)
 no one in particular father mother someone else (who?) _____.
22. How do (did) your parents argue? (check one)
 talk it out between them.
 both shout and become quite angry easily, but get over it quickly.
 father shouts, gets angry easily and gets over it quickly; mother keeps quiet and pouts.
 mother shouts, gets angry easily and gets over it quickly; father keeps quiet and pouts.
 both keep quiet, say little, but do not pout.
 both keep quiet, hold a grudge and pout.
 other (what?) _____.
23. How would you describe the interaction between your father and mother in the home while you were growing up?
 Father was definitely the dominant one.
 Father tended to be dominant.
 It was about 50-50.
 Mother tended to be dominant.
 Mother was definitely the dominant one.
 I was too young to know.

24. Which of the following describes the relationship between your father and mother?
- constant open conflict.
 moderate open conflict.
 little open conflict.
 no open conflict.
 no open conflict, but I sensed their unhappiness.
 too young to remember.
 other.
25. How many hours a week did your father average actually doing something with you in addition to eating with you or sleeping in the same house or just being in the same house? (check one)
- none 1-6 7-12 13-18 19 or more don't know
26. How many hours a week did your mother average actually doing something with you in addition to eating with you or sleeping in the same house or just being in the same house?
- none 1-6 7-12 13-18 19 or more don't know
27. Which of the following pairs best describes by whom you were disciplined? (check one)
- father 0%-mother 100% father 75%-mother 25%
 father 25%-mother 75% father 100%-mother 0%
 father 50%-mother 50% I wasn't disciplined.
 by someone else (whom?) _____.
28. What is (was) your relationship with your parents?
- a. With your father
 very close close somewhat close not close
 distant
- b. With your mother
 very close close somewhat close not close
 distant
29. Check the following ways each of your parents tended to use most often in disciplining you?
- | | Mother | Father |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Physical punishment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Threats of physical punishment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Verbal scoldings | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Denial of privileges | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Withholding affection and love | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Threatening to withhold affection and love | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ridicule | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No discipline | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (what?) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

30. In the following question:
 "very consistent" means--you knew what to expect; discipline was about the same from time to time and if they said they would punish you or withhold favors, that's what they did.
 "very changeable" means--you never knew what to expect; sometimes they would be harsh, sometimes tender, and when they said they would punish you or withhold favors, sometimes they did and sometimes they didn't.

Please, place a check at the point on each line which represents where your parents stood.

Father

| | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| very consistent | very changeable |
|-----------------|-----------------|

Mother

31. How old were you when you had your first date?
 ___under 10 ___10 ___11 ___12 ___13 ___14 ___15 ___16 ___17 ___18
 or over

32. How often did you date while in: (check one for each Column)

| | High School | Now |
|-------------------------|-------------|-----|
| Never | ___ | ___ |
| Once a month | ___ | ___ |
| 2-4 times a month | ___ | ___ |
| 5-8 times a month | ___ | ___ |
| 9 or more times a month | ___ | ___ |
| Went steady | ___ | ___ |

33. a. How much difficulty did you have in early adolescence in making friends with the opposite sex?
 ___very great ___great ___average ___little ___very little
 ___none
- b. How much difficulty did you have in early adolescence in making friends with the same sex?
 ___very great ___great ___average ___little ___very little
 ___none

34. What is your evaluation of your personality?
 ___superior ___above average ___average ___below average
 ___poor

35. What is your evaluation of your physical appearance?
 unusually good looking (beautiful, pretty)
 above average in looks
 average
 below average
36. How confident are you now in associating with the opposite sex as opposed to your adolescence?
 very confident confident little confidence no confidence
37. Do you prefer to date steady or to "date the field"?
 steady date the field
38. Do you ever want to get married? Yes No
39. In the history of American families, the opportunities for marriage varies from year to year; have you ever had the opportunity to get married? Yes No
40. Do you ever have doubts about your chances of having a successful marriage?
 frequently occasionally rarely never
41. Did you purposely get pregnant? Yes No
42. When did you decide to become a single mother prior to or following conception?
43. How many children do you now have? How many do you want or plan on having out of marriage?
44. Does the father(s) of your child(ren) know about the child(ren)? Yes No
45. What is your present living arrangement? Are you living with anyone (i.e., your parents, the father, another single mother)?
46. What were your family's reactions and attitudes before and after the child's birth? (check one)
 Before: supportive non-supportive
 After : supportive non-supportive
47. How did you go about selecting the biological father for your child?

48. Briefly describe your reasons for choosing to have a child.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the questionnaire.
Return in enclosed addressed stamped envelope to:

Ms. Candace D. McCreary
P.O. Box 743
Williamsburg, Virginia 23185

APPENDIX B

OTHER DATA

The following are data collected but not used in the body of the thesis. In designing the questionnaire, some questions were thought possibly to be informative and significant; they did not appear to be when interpreting the data. Rather than leave out these data which someone might find interesting and informative, it is included.

TABLE A

DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS' PARENTS LIVING

| | Percent |
|---|-------------|
| Parents alive (together) | 61.7 |
| Father dead Mother living (not married) | 10.6 |
| Father dead Mother living (remarried) | 4.3 |
| Mother dead Father living (not remarried) | 0.0 |
| Mother dead Father living (remarried) | 4.3 |
| Parents divorced | 6.4 |
| Parents dead | 2.1 |
| Other | <u>10.6</u> |
| | 100.0 |

N=47, number of respondents in survey.

TABLE B
DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS BY
GRADE AVERAGE IN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

| High School | College | Percent |
|-------------|------------|------------|
| A | No College | 4.3 |
| A | A | 8.5 |
| A | B | 19.1 |
| B | No College | 10.7 |
| B | A | 6.4 |
| B | B | 23.4 |
| B | C | 2.1 |
| C | No College | 6.4 |
| C | A | 4.3 |
| C | B | 10.6 |
| C | C | 2.1 |
| C | D | <u>2.1</u> |
| | | 100.0 |

N=47, number of respondents in survey.

TABLE C
DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS
AND THEIR PARENTS BY COUNTRY BORN

| | Single Mothers | Percent | |
|-----------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| | | Fathers | Mothers |
| United States | 93.6 | 89.4 | 89.4 |
| Foreign Country | <u>6.4</u> | <u>10.6</u> | <u>10.6</u> |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

N=47, number of respondents in survey.

TABLE D
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE
MOTHERS BY HOW THEIR PARENTS ARGUED

| | |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| Talk it out | 19.6 |
| Both shout but get over it quickly | 21.3 |
| Father shouts, Mother quiet | 12.8 |
| Mother shouts, Father quiet | 12.8 |
| Both quiet, no pouting | 6.4 |
| Both quiet, grudges | 10.6 |
| Other | 14.9 |
| Missing data | <u>2.1</u> |
| | 100.0 |

N=47, number of respondents in survey.

TABLE E
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS
BY WAYS THEIR PARENTS DISCIPLINED THEM

| | Mother | Father |
|------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Predominantly verbal | 23.4 | 14.8 |
| Mixed | 74.5 | 61.8 |
| Predominantly physical | 0.0 | 8.5 |
| No discipline | <u>2.1</u> | <u>14.9</u> |
| | 100.0 | 100.0 |

N=47, number of respondents in survey.

TABLE F
DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS BY
NUMBER OF CHILDREN THEY HAVE AND WANT

| Number of Children | Have | Want |
|--------------------|----------|----------|
| 1 | 34 | 32 |
| 2 | 6 | 9 |
| 3 | 1 | 1 |
| 4 | 1 | 2 |
| 5 | 0 | 1 |
| Missing data | <u>5</u> | <u>2</u> |
| | 47 | 47 |

TABLE G
DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS BY
FATHERS' KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD

| | Frequencies | Percent |
|--------------|-------------|------------|
| Yes | 38 | 80.9 |
| No | 8 | 17.0 |
| Missing data | <u>1</u> | <u>2.1</u> |
| | 47 | 100.0 |

TABLE H
 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS
 BY THEIR LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Living with: | |
| Parents | 10.7 |
| Father of child | 2.1 |
| Another single mother | 2.1 |
| Self | 68.1 |
| Other | <u>17.0</u> |
| | 100.0 |

N=47, number of respondents in survey.

TABLE I
 DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE MOTHERS BY THEIR PARENT'S AGES

| Age Range | Mother | Father |
|-------------|----------|----------|
| 40-44 | 3 | 2 |
| 45-49 | 9 | 5 |
| 50-54 | 8 | 10 |
| 55-59 | 15 | 8 |
| 60-64 | 7 | 11 |
| 65-69 | 4 | 5 |
| 70 and over | <u>1</u> | <u>6</u> |
| | 47 | 47 |

TABLE J

CROSSTABULATION OF SINGLE MOTHERS' SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS
 COMPARED TO PARENTS' SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

| Single Mothers' SES | Parents' SES | | | |
|------------------------|--------------|--------|---------|-------|
| | Upper | Middle | Working | Lower |
| Upper | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Middle | 1 | 20 | 3 | 0 |
| Working | 0 | 5 | 9 | 1 |
| Lower | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 |

Missing Data=2
 N=47

Gamma=0.764

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VITA

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