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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE SINGLE-PARENT EXPERIENCE

by

BONNIE JEAN DEVINE

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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.....
Supervisor

.....

.....

Date ..... April 12 ..., 1983

Dedication

To my mother who was my first role model of a successful parent and to Chris and David who taught me about the responsibilities and rewards of single parenting and supported me through the learning process.

ABSTRACT

This study examined how single parents perceive their roles. Ten single fathers and ten single mothers were included in the study. Their level of satisfaction with their parental role and the amount of interaction with their children were explored. Their financial adjustment and satisfaction with their homemaker role were also examined. The relationship between the parental experience and self-esteem, use of support systems, relationship with ex-spouse and degree of meaning in life were analyzed. An attempt was made to formulate an accurate image of the single-parent experience.

Subjects completed the Personal Orientation Inventory, the Purpose in Life Test, and a questionnaire. An interview with each subject was done by the researcher. Interviews followed a fixed interview schedule and were tape-recorded. Extensive quotes from the interviews were used to illustrate the subjects' experiences.

The amount and quality of contact between the non-custodial parent and the children was found to affect the parenting experience of the custodial parent. The male subjects had a higher degree of purpose and meaning in life than the female subjects. The importance of support systems, particularly close friends, was evident. The

opportunity for personal growth and a change in the relationship with their children were two benefits of divorce recognized by the subjects. The need for a conciliator to assist couples experiencing a separation or divorce was clear. Implications for counsellors and lawyers and for further research were outlined.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Between 1796 and 1981, the number of single-parent families in Canada increased 27.7 percent. In Alberta the number of single-parent families increased by 38.2 percent (Statistics Canada, 1982). These increases mean that in 1981, single-parent families comprised 11.3 percent of all families in Canada (Statistics Canada, 1982). Separation and divorce account for the majority of these single-parent families. In Alberta, between 1968 and 1978, the divorce rate rose 147 percent (De Waal, 1982). The increasing divorce rate and the subsequent increase in single-parent families has given researchers reason to study these families.

How do these separated or divorced people feel about their roles as single parents? Are they satisfied with their lifestyles? What factors in their lives contribute to or detract from their level of satisfaction? This research study addresses these questions. It examines the reality of the single-parent experience.

Significance of the Study

The Chinese ideogram for crisis is a combination of the symbols for danger and opportunity. For parents experiencing a divorce, both danger and opportunity are present and many factors are involved which are capable of tipping the scales one way or another. Erikson (1968) defined crisis as "a turning point, a crucial period of increased vulnerability and heightened potential" (p. 96). He felt that in these moments of decision we would decide to progress or regress. At such points either achievements are won or failures occur, with the future inevitably restructured.

The increasing number of single parents and the possibility of progressing or regressing after a divorce indicate the importance of research on the factors relevant to successful parenting after divorce. This study will explore some of these factors in the sense that attention will be given to common themes among single parents who are experiencing satisfaction from their current life situation. The single parents, their behaviour and feelings, will be the main concerns. Attention will also focus on factors previously researched by others. These factors include: self-esteem, support systems, the relationship with the ex-spouse and a sense of purpose or meaning in life.

Much of the research on children of divorce has focused on the missing-parent aspect of the single-parent family. The quality of care provided by the remaining and

absent parent as well as the personal well being and emotional status of those individuals and their effect on the personal development of their children has received scant attention. Herzog and Sudia (1972), in an extensive review of over four hundred "father-absent" studies, noted the lack of attention to the "mother-present" aspect. They further noted that there has been very little attempt to ascertain the strengths and coping patterns necessary for successful single-parent functioning. Since their report, the lack of research in this area has continued. This study will focus on the custodial parent.

Although four out of five single parents currently responsible for child care are female (Statistics Canada, catalogue 91-522, p. 61), the number of single-parent males with child care responsibilities is increasing and there is a lack of research on their experiences. One exception to this lack of research is Defrain and Eirick's (1981) study. They found no significant differences between single-parent mothers and fathers on 62 out of 63 questions in areas of the history of the divorce process, feelings as a single parent, childrearing issues, the children's feelings and behaviours, relations with the ex-spouse and forming new social relationships. They found that the lifestyles of 33 divorced single-parent fathers and 38 divorced single-parent mothers in Nebraska to be very similar.

It is hoped that in addition to some theoretical findings on the factors affecting single parenting, some

practical implications will also be discovered. Professionals working with newly separated and divorced parents need some guidelines in order to provide the most effective treatment. If particular factors are shown to be significantly related to successful parenting, clinical intervention could be focused on these factors.

Underlying Assumptions

In this study, the researcher holds the following theoretical biases. Separation and divorce are viewed from a developmental perspective. They are seen as a developmental crisis which is essentially a "turning point" in life which is characterized by an "increased vulnerability" and "heightened potential" (Erikson, 1968, p. 96). The progressive resolution of each crisis defines the process of human development and the unsuccessful resolution of a crisis can arrest development. In this study, divorce is seen as a crisis in adulthood which has the potential for either progressive or unsuccessful resolution. The parenting role is viewed as one of the main aspects of the adult's life that is directly affected by the outcome of this crisis. Therefore, this study will focus on single parents who have experienced the crisis of separation and/or divorce. Adults who are parenting alone due to death or choice have not experienced separation or divorce as a developmental crisis and will not be included in this study.

The personal, subjective nature of the separation/divorce process has influenced the researcher to adopt primarily a qualitative approach in reporting the results of this study. While some quantitative results will be reported, it is the researcher's bias that qualitative results will more accurately represent the subjects' individual experiences. Behaviour is a function of perception and personal meaning (Combs et al., 1976). From this assumption, the researcher believes that behaviour can never be understood without knowing how different phenomena are perceived and interpreted by the individual. Therefore, this study will stress the subjects' perceptions and the meanings they hold for them.

The researcher's previous experiences with single-parent families has led to the expectation of several specific themes to be associated with parental satisfaction. High self-esteem is expected to be associated with parental satisfaction as the self-concept is a crucial aspect of anyone's functioning. The level of self-esteem in single parents is also of interest to the researcher. The degree of purpose and meaning in life is also expected to be positively related to parental satisfaction. The degree of purpose and meaning in life attained by single parents will be compared to that attained by the general population. Support systems are expected to be very important to the single parent. Who has helped them the most will be a focus of this study. Single-parent support groups and close

friends are expected to provide the most support for single parents. Lack of conflict with the ex-spouse is expected to reduce stress and perhaps increase support for the single parent. Contact between the non-custodial parent and the children is also expected to improve the situation not only for the children but for the custodial parent as well. The parents who have received training for parenting are expected to be more satisfied as are the parents who believe that a single-parent family is a viable way to raise children. Some differences between the fathers and mothers in this study are expected, but previous research and experiences have not pointed out what differences can be expected.

Definitions Used to Guide the Researcher

Adjustment is viewed as the ability to accept and benefit from a transition period in one's life such as a separation or divorce. It is the ability to integrate the experience and to establish a new satisfying lifestyle.

Meaning in Life is used in the same way as Frankl (1959, 1971) uses the term. It is a sense that life has a purpose and a goal.

Self-esteem is a positive self-concept. It is the degree of satisfaction one has with the view one holds of one's self. A person with high self-esteem would perceive and experience him/herself in a very positive way and be

satisfied with him/herself.

Separation is used in respect to the physical separation of the parents. Length of time of separation is the length of time since the two parents last lived in the same house.

Support System is an individual or group of individuals who provide either financial, emotional or practical assistance to single parents to enable them to deal with the stresses in their lives more effectively.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will present a short historical view of the patterns in single-parent research, some comments on adjustment in general and some recent research on adjustment after divorce. Literature will be presented from four major areas of concern to this study: support systems, self-esteem, relationship with ex-spouse, and meaning in life.

Patterns in Single-Parent Research

Studies in the 1950s and 1960s focused on demonstrating causal relationships between a child's living in a single-parent household and the child becoming a delinquent, failing in school, developing inappropriate sex role attitudes and behaviours, or exhibiting other types of pathology. Such studies have typically conceptualized the single-parent family as an unhealthy deviation from the traditional two-parent family. These families were not viewed as a family form to be studied on its own terms. Rather, they were seen as an abhorrent or deviant form of the normal family.

In the early 1970s, this pattern began to change to a less pathological approach. Two classical studies were done which have had a strong impact on single-parent

research. One of these was Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1979) and the other was Wallerstein and Kelly (1980). Both of these studies were concerned with the impact of divorce on normal, rather than clinical samples of children. Although different in approach, their findings tend to corroborate each other.

Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1979) conducted a two-year longitudinal study in which they documented the stress and disorganization experienced in the first year after a divorce. They found both mothers and fathers feeling incompetent, lonely, alienated and depressed, and coping far less well than non-divorced parents at the end of the first year. However, agreement about child rearing and low conflict between the divorced parents were important factors which were associated with less prolonged disorganization and stress for both parent and child. They found divorce to be a negative experience for at least one family member. "We did not encounter a victimless divorce" (Hetherington, 1981, p. 248). They summed up their study by saying:

> Divorce is one of the most serious crises in contemporary American life. It is a major social responsibility to develop support systems for the divorced family in coping with changes associated with divorce and in finding means of modifying or eliminating the deleterious sequela of divorce. (1981, p. 248)

Wallerstein and Kelly (1977) conducted a "Children of Divorce" project in Marin County, California. They began their five-year longitudinal study in 1972. They also found that the first year was a most stressful and critical

time, and that the relationship of the non-custodial parent both to the ex-spouse and to the children was a critical factor in the child's adjustment.

Keshet and Rosenthal (1978) have indicated that the single-parent family usually has its beginnings following severe emotional and physical stress.

As Weiss (1979) explained, the single-parent family:

> . . . is vulnerable to overloads of several types because of the absence of a second parent within the household who might provide support on a day-to-day basis and a reserve capability with which to meet new demands. (p. 281)

He described four main problem areas of raising children alone:

1. Feelings of anxiety, concern and guilt over childrearing practices;
2. No one to consult with about difficulties and issues;
3. No one to share the task of responding to the children's needs and wishes; and
4. No one to balance or minimize the parent's mistakes.

The studies which focus on the single-parent family in the first year after separation tend to create a bias which focuses on the negative aspects of this family structure. Divorced parents are generally very concerned about the impact the divorce will have on their children and, if the children subsequently develop problems, it is more difficult for the parent to make a successful adjustment to the situation. This tends to be a circular process because, likewise, a parent who does not make a successful

adjustment after divorce often precipitates problems in the children. Much of the early research focused on this negative aspect of divorce. Nye (1967) reported that children with divorced parents do exhibit more problematic behaviour than children from happy, unbroken homes, but less than children from unhappy, unbroken homes. Generally, a parent who is single but happy is a better influence upon a child than two squabbling, miserable parents (Despert, 1962; Gardner, 1978; Hunt & Hunt, 1977; Krantzler, 1974; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1981).

Some of the authors who have examined the positive impact of divorce on children will be reviewed next. These authors tend to express opinion rather than report research evidence. The research to date tends to continue to focus on the negative impact of divorce.

Krantzler (1974) makes the following points:

1. Children are resilient and children can survive any family crisis without personal damage.
2. The impact of divorce on children is far less severe than the consequences of remaining in an unbroken, troubled home.
3. With or without divorce, the process of growing up is often stormy.
4. A two-parent home is not the only emotional structure within which a child can be happy and healthy.

Steinzor (1970) gives us the following advantages of divorce:

1. The emotional smog bothering the whole family is cleared away.
2. The broken home makes it possible for the child to form his own views of each parent.
3. Divorce is an admission that the adults can't get along.
4. The feeling that the child is guilty of causing his parents to fight is laid to rest.

Atlas (1981, p. 27) describes seven possible benefits of divorce:

1. A reduction in tension, hostility, and discord within the family and an increase in family solidarity and consistency;
2. Flexibility in planning time with children;
3. A democratic working together approach to problem solving and daily living;
4. An opportunity for growth and sharing;
5. The widening experience: two differing spheres of influence;
6. The extended single-parent community; and
7. The opportunity for young people to mature, gain independence, and feel needed and valued as contributing members of the household.

Weiss (1979) elaborated on this last point in a study in which he interviewed single parents and adolescents living with single parents. He found that after divorce a new parent-child relationship developed. The children were defined as having responsibilities and rights in the

household not very different from the parent's. They were more like junior partners in the management of the household. The children's self-description in this study showed an unusual sense of competence. Although these children may regret not having a more traditional family and a more carefree youth, they often respect themselves for having been able to respond to what they recognize as their family's genuine need for their contributions. This can be a useful experience which leads to self-esteem, independence, and a genuine sense of competence. Weiss also commented on the special relationship he noticed in this same study, between parent and child in a single-parent family. He found that there was often greater closeness as the children easily became confidants and friends with the parent.

Within the daily parent-child interactions, Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) found the stormy passions connected with the divorce had begun to subside or had disappeared at 18 months post-separation. As this occurred, some parents began to note real changes in the quality of the interactions with their youngsters.

> The flow of daily events took on a smoothness never before experienced and parents, men and women alike, discovered that being a parent could be quite pleasurable as well as a responsibility. (p. 159)

Historically, then, there is a pattern of studies reporting the negative effects of divorce. Those that outline the benefits are often more opinion than research. One final point on this is a thesis proposed by Gettleman and

Markowitz (1974).

> Divorce is in itself a "neutral" experience for children, which can be made into a "good" or "bad" experience. . . . a child cannot cope successfully with divorce, . . . when a parent feels that something catastrophic has happened.

In his Creative Single Parenting approach, Atlas (1981) states: "A single-parent family is not necessarily a bad or good family. Rather, it can be a healthy, secure, and effective growing environment for both the parent and the children. What makes the difference is the parent's attitude and approach" (pp. 29-30).

Divorce is a crisis for the family in that it requires the reorganization of the family and it is a time for decisions to be made and changes instigated. It appears from the literature that this crisis can be a negative experience and can lead to harmful results for all or some family members, or it can be a positive experience and lead to growth, development and re-integration of the newly formed family on a more satisfying level. The parent's personal and external resources at the time of the divorce have a great influence on the results of the divorce and the subsequent adjustment or lack of adjustment that is made.

Adjustment

Whether the divorce and re-organization of the family is catastrophic or not for the single parent depends on many factors. Divorce is often termed a crisis, but several authors (Levinson, 1978; Schlossberg, 1981; Sheehy,

1981) object to the negative connotations to the word. They prefer the term transition. Schlossberg (1981) defines a transition as occurring "if an event or non-event results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behaviour and relationships" (p. 5). Levinson (1978) defined a transition as a "bridge or boundary zone, between two states of greater stability" (p. 49). These transitions are not necessarily detrimental. They enhance development (Brammer & Abrego, 1981; Dabrowski, 1967) and may even be necessary for development. One theorist who holds this view is Klaus Riegel (1976). In his theory on dialectics, he says that crisis and stability should not be seen as either positive or negative but as mutually dependent. They are contradictory conditions that make development possible.

The ability to benefit from a transition is sometimes related to past experience with transitions. Brammer and Abrego (1981) stated that people in transitions grow in their own capacity for conceptualizing their transitions and gain personal strength from them. Through experience with transitions people develop various coping skills. Sheehy (1981) found that people with high well being turned most often to the same four coping devices: (a) work more; (b) depend on friends; (c) see the humour in the situation; and (d) pray. The four most common responses from people of low well being were: (a) drink more, eat more, take more drugs--indulge; (b) pretend the problem does not exist; (c) develop physical symptoms; and (d) escape into fantasy.

She felt that the best way to cope with transitions was to build up a strong "armor." Resiliency in failure situations and the ability to take criticism are not qualities with which one is born; they are acquired from failures which we have survived (Sheehy, 1981).

It appears, then, that in the 1980s there has been a trend to the position that positive development can emerge from crisis, upheaval, uncertainty and change. Crisis is viewed as a point from which growth emanates--a creative opportunity as well as a state of turmoil. Crises can be perceived as a challenge. "If crises do occur, they should be seen as meaningful phases in one's life. This is true for incapacitations (divorce) and even for death" (Riegel, 1976, p. 693).

Whether or not parents and children cope positively with the crisis or transition period of divorce and use it as an opportunity for growth has been examined in studies focused on adjustment after divorce. This adjustment or lack of it is viewed as a process, occurring over several years. Fisher (1973) originally divided this process into three stages: the emotional divorce, the physical divorce, and the legal divorce. These stages can overlap or occur one at a time. The factors examined in the majority of studies are involved primarily in the emotional divorce stage.

The passing of time has been found to have a significant impact on adjustment. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) found 15 percent of the fathers and 20 percent of the

mothers experiencing increased gratification in being a parent 18 months post-separation. "These adults not only felt considerably more gratification in their role as parents, but in reality functioned better as parents and were much happier with their lives" (p. 159).

Conclusions arrived at by Atlas (1981) were far more optimistic. He reported, "75 percent of single-parent families are doing well and the kids know it" (p. 203). His subjects were 768 single parents and 483 children of single parents who voluntarily mailed in a questionnaire. There was no information gathered as to how long the parents had been separated. He made three other points in his conclusion: (a) when the non-custodial parent remains involved, the single-parent families do well; (b) unhappy parents (25 percent of his study) have troubled children; and (c) to be well adjusted single parents need to be employed. It is important to consider that all his respondents were volunteers who chose to mail in the questionnaire. This may have biased his sample in favour of single parents who were doing well.

Support Systems

One of the factors influencing adjustment is the availability and use of support systems. These support systems can consist of individuals or groups who assist the single parent financially, emotionally or in other practical terms. Throughout the literature, support systems are

stressed as being important in relieving the social, personal, economic and parental burdens encountered by single parents. Weiss (1976) has written that people experiencing a crisis, such as divorce, are best helped by support. Support from others who are going through a similar experience can provide the person with a framework which orders and explains the individual's experiences and responses. This helps to explain the effectiveness of single-parent groups in providing support.

Colletta (1979) described support systems as "forces at the person-to-person and social levels which enable people to master the challenges and strains of their lives" (p. 837). This author further explained that support systems allow the individual to mobilize psychological resources and complete tasks to avoid the harmful effects of stressful situations. It was pointed out by Colletta that without adequate support, the build-up of stresses may have deleterious effects on the parents' ability to care for children.

Bronfenbrenner (1976) stated that the parent will perform his/her nurturing roles better and improve the quality of interaction with the children if support systems exist. Wahler (1980) also suggests that "a mother's extra-family social contacts may influence (beneficially) her child's interaction patterns at home" (p. 207). He proposed that if someone helped mothers to "alter their community interactions in the direction of friendship relationships,

that change might support more positive interchanges between mothers and their children" (p. 218).

Santrock and Warshak (1979) found fathers using support systems more than mothers. They were not sure whether fathers sought these support systems more frequently, or whether relatives, friends and so forth felt the father needed more help than the mother in rearing children. They reported that the use of support systems was one of the most important mediating factors in the social development of the child.

Schlossberg (1981) proposed a model specifying three different types of interpersonal support systems: (a) intimate relationships; (b) the family unit; and (c) the network of friends. Fiske and Weiss (1977) maintain that intimate relationships--involving trust, support, understanding and the sharing of confidences--are an important resource during stressful transitions. In 1979, Weiss' study in single parents reported that family, friends, single-parent organizations, counsellors and religion were the support systems used by his subjects.

In a study of divorced people in Scotland, Mitchell (1981) found that family members were used for support by between 19 percent and 63 percent of the sample, depending on the family member's relationship to the subject. Friends were used for support by 41 percent of the sample, marriage counsellors by five percent and clergy by seven percent. An interesting finding in this study is that most of the 120

divorced people interviewed were unaware of the "concept of counselling or of examining personal relationships or feelings" (p. 59) that was available through marriage counsellors. It is recognized that this service is not as available and therefore probably less known in Scotland than in North America.

The extended family is not always seen as a support system. Beal (1979) reports that maintaining contact with the extended family can enhance or detract from a parent's ability to respond appropriately to his or her children regarding the divorce. Highly anxious grandparents can enhance parental anxiety and impair parental functioning by taking a negative, non-supportive posture toward the divorce. On the other hand, a parent can become so emotionally isolated from the extended family and the other parent that "emotional disequilibrium" occurs and the development of symptoms result. He felt that a family's emotional equilibrium significantly contributed to the functioning of children and parents during and following the divorce process.

Dell and Applebaum (1977) warned against the dangers of a single parent relying too heavily on the extended family, particularly their parents. They stated:

> Pathology does not lie in the fact of continuing to have active relationships with one's family of origin. Instead, pathology lies in the nature of those relationships when they are characterized by violations of autonomy, blurring of roles, and undermining of parental skills. (p. 59)

In general, there is consensus in the literature on the benefit of support systems for both single fathers and mothers. Friends, extended family, organizations and professionals can provide this support. The opinion that it is important that this support be used to encourage single parents to cope with their responsibilities and not be used as a crutch has also been found in the literature.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is the degree of satisfaction with the view one holds of one's self. One's self, both perceived and experienced, is the most important element in one's world (Rogers, 1951).

The self-concept is a dynamic circular force in human lives. Since human beings are vitally influenced by those around them, the people who are important to them influence what they think of themselves. The self-concept is influenced by what happens and it also determines how an individual will behave in a wide range of situations. It functions like a filter that affects all perceptions. According to Cooley's theory of "the looking-glass self," (1922) we develop our sense of self from the self we see reflected in others and their reactions to us. Mead's theory of symbolic interactionism (1934) also recognizes the necessity of interaction with others in the formulation of the self-concept. Rogers (1951) stressed the desirability of congruity between the self-concept and others'

perceptions of the person.

Rosenberg (1965) examined family structure and self-esteem of the children but did not determine the self-esteem of the adults in his study. It is because of the strong influence of the self-concept on behaviours and attitudes that self-esteem is a crucial factor to examine when studying single parents. However, with one exception, the research to date on level of self-esteem in relation to single parenting has been virtually ignored.

Brassington (1981) studied 118 female single-parent families in the Ottawa area. He measured self-esteem with the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory. He found that self-esteem levels remained very constant over a one-year time period. His subjects had been single parents for an average of two years. His study showed a relationship between the parents' self-esteem and the healthy development of inter-familial relations. Self-esteem levels were related to the age and educational level of the remaining parent, the length of separation, and income. Brassington (1981) reported that high self-esteem played "a significant role in the person's successful adaptation to changing and new familial groupings" (p. 15). He stated that in order to maintain high levels of self-esteem during the stressful process of divorce, one must maintain a level of recognition and acceptance, by one's peers. His study supported the notion that how the female single parent viewed herself was to a large extent dependent on her parenting ability and

self-initiative. He recommended further research to examine changes in self-esteem over extended periods of time and an investigation of specific child-rearing techniques that enhance self-esteem. He did not include any single-parent fathers in his study.

Clearly, self-esteem is an important factor in the ability to be a successful single parent, but it is one factor that has been virtually ignored especially with the single-parent father.

Relationship with the Ex-Spouse

Children of divorced parents who continue to have conflicts beyond the divorce have more problems than do children from relatively conflict-free divorces, as shown both by clinical impressions (Anthony, 1974; Kelly & Wallerstein, 1977), and by research results (Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1979). After a divorce, the newly-established relationship between ex-spouses is a potent influence on child behaviour.

Recently, a review of studies on interparental conflict and its affect on children was conducted by Emery (1982). He felt that interparental conflict was an important variable in child behaviour after divorce which was often overlooked.

Goetting (1981), in studying the effects of divorce on adults, said that discord rather than divorce <u>per se</u> is the critical variable involved in the adversity associated

with divorce. She pointed out that research suggests that it is the emotional climate of the home that is critical to the well-being of the family members rather than actual family structure.

The relationship between the ex-spouses at the time of separation sets the stage for much of the interaction at the time of the divorce and during the years that follow, according to Wallerstein and Kelly (1980).

Hetherington, Cox and Cox (1979) investigated factors influencing the capacity of single-parent mothers to function effectively in dealing with their children. The most critical factor was the behaviour of the father. If he continued to be supportive of the mother's role as a parent, the mother's relationship with the child was more harmonious and the child's development was relatively unimpaired. Conversely, continued conflict between the divorced parents was associated with disruption in the functioning of the mother-child dyad and in the behaviour of the child.

Hess and Camara (1979) also found that the negative effects of divorce were greatly mitigated when positive relationships with both parents were maintained. The child's relationship with an absent father was as important as the continuing relationship with the mother. They pointed out that:

> Divorce changes the relationship between the parents, it does not end it. Psychological ties continue to connect all family members after the divorce papers have been signed. Even the absence of contact with a divorced parent may be seen as a form of relationship,

> invoking resentment or anger and feelings of deprivation. (p. 80)

Porter and Chatelain (1981) found that if parents are not expressing bitterness and hostility toward each other, children can usually have a more frequent and healthy interchange with both parents. A divorced spouse can still be a good parent. Cooperation and collaboration between the two adults, and their support of one another in their roles as parents, helps preserve the bond between parent and child. Anger between parents and conflict around child-rearing responsibilities perpetuate a state of emotional disequilibrium.

Emery (1982) writes that in light of what we know about the effects of interparental conflict, both parents have a continuing responsibility to improve relations with the former spouse for the children's sake. Hess and Camara (1979) further point out that a realization that the relationship with both parents is crucial may help parents to avoid the temptation to use the children as weapons against one another.

Emery (1982) makes four suggestions to maintain a healthy relationship with ex-spouses and minimize the damaging effect of interparental conflict.

1. Parents should work toward the difficult goal of keeping children out of their angry disagreements.
2. Parents should attempt always to agree in front of the children about at least one important topic: discipline.
3. Parents should make a special effort to maintain their

individual relationship with each child.

4. Parents need to be aware that conflict between them can have negative effects on their children (p. 324)

From the literature it appears that various aspects of the relationship with the ex-spouse need to be examined, in particular the amount of conflict between the ex-spouses, and the amount and quality of the contact between the absent parent and the children.

Meaning in Life

Periods of transition such as divorce have the potential to produce feelings of stress, anxiety, meaninglessness and alienation. These feelings often result from having no purpose in life. This failure to find meaning and purpose in life has been termed an existential vacuum by Frankl (1959, 1971). He saw search for meaning as the primary motivating force and a prerequisite to becoming a fully functioning individual.

If a person does not find purpose or meaning in his/her life, that person will give up and have no will to live. With no aim, no purpose, no sense or meaning in life, there is no point in carrying on. The person who is actively engaged in the search for meaning will be happy, according to Frankl, for happiness is a by-product of the search.

Meaning and purpose can be found in what a person gives to the world (creative), in what one takes from the world in terms of encounters and experiences (experiential)

and in the stand one takes to one's predicament when one cannot change one's fate (attitudinal). Experiential meaning can be found through work and enjoying nature and culture and through love. Frankl believed that the only way one can become fully aware of the very essence of another human being is through love. Meaning in life is unique for each person and can vary from moment to moment.

In the literature, meaning in life has been associated with self-esteem. Crooks (1980) found a significant relationship between scores on the Purpose in Life Test, developed by Crumbaugh and Maholick (1969), and the Tennessee Self-Concept scores. The higher the subject's level of self-esteem, the greater the degree to which a purpose and meaning in life was found. The concept of purpose in life has been used to investigate several aspects of human behaviour but has not to date been used in studies of single parents. It is an important concept and worthy of investigating in relation to parenting after separation and divorce.

Summary

The onset and actual process of divorce indeed creates stress for both the adults and the children. Learning a new social role, readjusting parent-child relationships, and coping with society's negative assumptions about the single-parent family can place undue burdens on the single parent. Often portrayed as a deviant family, the single-parent family needs many resources in order to succeed

as a functioning and viable environment for personal development. Some of these resources that have been defined in the literature are: support systems, self-esteem, relationship with ex-spouse, and meaning in life.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

General Questions

What are the significant variables that affect a person's perceptions of their parenting role after a separation and/or divorce? This question was the main focus of the study. To address this question, common themes among single parents who reported few difficulties and high satisfaction with their parenting role were examined. Relationships between satisfaction with parenting and: (a) parental self-esteem; (b) the availability and use of support systems; (c) the amount of contact and/or conflict with the ex-spouse; and (d) parental sense of purpose or meaning in life were also investigated. A comparison of single-parent fathers and single-parent mothers was also done in terms of the above mentioned factors.

Descriptions of Subjects

The subjects for this study consisted of 10 single parent fathers and 10 single-parent mothers. All subjects were either separated or divorced and were currently living with their children. Three of the mothers were separated and seven were divorced, while four of the fathers were

separated and six were divorced. They had lived with their ex-spouse for an average of 10.1 years prior to separating. The subjects ranged in age from 29 years to 42 years, with the average age for the fathers being 38.8 years and the average age for the mothers being 36.6 years. All subjects lived in or close to the city of Edmonton. The mothers had been single parents for an average of 4.9 years--the fathers 2.1 years. All had been single parents for at least six months. Eight subjects had one child, nine had two children and three subjects had three children living with them. Further information about the subjects is contained in Tables 1 and 2. PIL scores have also been included for comparison.

A variety of sources were used to identify participants. Six subjects were contacted through a community-based single-parent support group, six were acquaintances of people already in the study, three were contacted through a church-based group for singles, two were members of a city-wide single-parent group, two were former clients of the researcher, and one was a student of the researcher.

All subjects volunteered to take part in the study after learning how much time would be involved. They were informed that they would not be identified by name in any written reports of the study. Everyone who was approached directly agreed to participate in the study.

Table 1

Description of Subjects - Females

Subject	Age	Number of Children	Ages of Children	Current Marital Status	Length of Marriage	Length of Time as Single Parent	PIL Score
#1	38	2	10,8	Separated	14 yrs.	2 years	99
#2	30	3	11,8,5	Divorced	8.5 yrs.	2 years	94
#3	41	2	13,8	Divorced	8 yrs.	6 years	85
#4	37	1	14	Divorced	14 yrs.	3 years	76
#5	34	1	12	Divorced	6.5 yrs.	10 years	105
#6	36	1	8	Separated	11 yrs.	4 years	109
#7	36	1	11	Divorced	13 yrs.	3 years	96
#8	35	2	10,6	Separated	11 yrs.	3 years	132
#9	40	2	14,13	Divorced	5 yrs.	12 years	104
#10	39	1	14	Divorced	16 yrs.	4 years	108

Table 2

Description of Subjects - Males

Subject	Age	Number of Children	Ages of Children	Current Marital Status	Length of Marriage	Length of Time as Single Parent	PIL Score
#11	34	3	10,5,3	Separated	10 yrs.	8 months	119
#12	29	2	9,7	Divorced	5 yrs.	5.5 years	101
#13	31	3	8,7,5	Separated	8.5 yrs.	9 months	105
#14	36	1	4.5	Separated	9 yrs.	1 year	115
#15	39	2	11,11	Divorced	14 yrs.	1 year	128
#16	40	2	17,13	Divorced	14 yrs.	5 years	120
#17	42	1	13	Divorced	11 yrs.	5 years	97
#18	31	2	9,6	Divorced	8 yrs.	13 months	101
#19	30	1	2	Separated	5 yrs.	6 months	118
#20	37	2	16,13	Divorced	10 yrs.	8 months	110

Design

After agreeing to be involved in the study, each subject completed two personality inventories (Purpose in Life Test, Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1969; Personal Orientation Inventory, Shostrom, 1966), and a general questionnaire composed by the researcher (see Appendix A). When this written component was completed, an interview was arranged at the subject's convenience. Twelve of the interviews took place in the subjects' home, four at the researcher's home, two at the subjects' place of employment, and two in a counselling room at the University of Alberta. The interviews followed a fixed interview schedule (see Appendix B) and were tape-recorded. Interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes and were conducted by the researcher during a four-week period.

Questions asked on the questionnaire and during the interview were constructed to elicit information related to the research questions and also to explore the individual's subjective experience of single parenting.

The variables that were measured and compared with the amount of satisfaction with parenting were: (a) age; (b) sex; (c) amount of self-regard; (d) amount of self-acceptance; (e) degree of meaning or pupose in life; (f) amount of support from others; (g) amount of conflict with ex-spouse at the present time; (h) amount of contact between children and ex-spouse at the present time; and (i) amount of training for parenting (see Appendix D for

rating scales for these variables).

Instruments

The instruments used in this study were as follows: the Personal Orientation Inventory (POI), the Purpose in Life test (PIL), a questionnaire (see Appendix A), and a tape-recorded interview (see Appendix B).

Personal Orientation Inventory

Self-esteem was measured by the self-regard and self-acceptance sub-scales of the POI. These sub-scales combine to form the self-perception scale. The POI was developed by Everett Shostrom in 1966 and revised in 1976. It consists of two basic scales of personal orientation and ten sub-scales each of which measures an element of self-actualization. Two of these sub-scales were used in this study.

The self-regard sub-scale measures affirmation of self because of worth or strength. A high score measures the ability to like oneself because of one's strength as a person. A low score suggests feelings of low self-worth. The self-acceptance sub-scale measures the affirmation or acceptance of oneself in spite of one's weaknesses or deficiencies. A high score suggests acceptance of self and weaknesses and a low score suggests inability to accept one's weaknesses. Self-perception (the combination of self-regard and self-acceptance) measures the general area of

how one views one's self.

The POI consists of 150 two-choice comparative value and behaviour judgements. It is self-administered and applicable to a wide range of subjects.

Test-retest reliability coefficients for the scales used were .71 and .77, respectively (Klavetter & Mogar, 1967). Shostrom (1964) reported a study in which these scales discriminated between clinically judged self-actualizing and non-self-actualizing groups at the .01 confidence level. Critical studies since then have also supported the validity of the POI as a measure of self-actualizing. Construct validity was also established with the MMPI (Shostrom, 1966).

Purpose in Life Test

The Purpose in Life Test (PIL) is a measure of meaning or purpose in life. It was developed by Crumbaugh and Maholick in 1969 to measure Viktor Frankl's (1959) concept of "existential vacuum," or a failure to find a meaning and purpose in life. Part A of this test was used. It consists of 20 items which are rated on a seven-point Likert scale with position 4 on this scale as neutral.

Reliability on the basis of odd-even (split-half) methods was reported by Buros (1977) as being .90 and .92 in two separate studies. The construct validity was reported to be .38 between PIL scores and the rating of therapists, while a correlation of .47 was found between the PIL and the ratings of parishioners by ministers. Construct validity

was established with the MMPI and the 16PF (Buros, 1977).

Questionnaire

The questionnaire (see Appendix A), designed by the researcher, was constructed to yield background and demographic information. It was based on similar questionnaires used by Kendall (1977) and Tobias (1982) and adjusted to suit this particular study. It served as an instrument to focus the subject's attention on issues relevant to the study and as an introduction to the interview. Comments made on the questionnaire were compared with comments made during the interview to check for congruence.

Interview

The interview followed the schedule set out in Appendix B. Some flexibility was allowed in the order of the questions, but generally the interview followed the schedule very closely. Additional comments by the subjects were encouraged throughout the interview. An attempt was made by the researcher to develop a rapport with each subject to facilitate self-disclosure. The atmosphere of the interviews was relaxed and all subjects were very cooperative.

Procedure

A pilot study was completed with three female subjects and one male subject. Following this, adjustments were made to the questionnaire and interview schedule in order to increase clarity and amount of information received.

After initial contact for the formal study, the 20 subjects completed the written part of the research (POI, PIL, and questionnaire). A consent form (see Appendix D) was signed and then the interview was completed. An informal discussion between the researcher and the subject took place to answer any questions the subject had about the study and also to share knowledge about the resources available to single parents in their community.

The PIL and POI were scored according to the test manuals. These scores, along with the questionnaire answers and the interview recordings, were used to complete a summary sheet for each subject (see Appendix E). All ratings were initially done by the researcher.

To test inter-rater reliability, two of the subjects who had been the most difficult for the researcher to rate were also scored independently by two colleagues of the researcher. Inter-rater reliability between the three raters was 77.8 percent for one subject and 83.3 percent for the second subject.

The data on the summary sheets were transferred to computer cards and a correlational analysis was done. A Pearson correlation coefficient was done for ratings on

parenting scales and each of the previously mentioned variables to determine if any of the variables were significantly related to parenting as experienced by the parent. The correlation coefficients between variables were also examined for additional information.

Experiences and feelings expressed by the subjects that appeared to have strong meaning for them were transcribed onto their summary sheet. These direct quotes were later surveyed by the researcher for common themes and experiences.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter will present the results obtained through the descriptions of personal experiences provided by the subjects and through data analysis. The themes that were expected to be found by the researcher will be discussed first and then a comparison of single fathers and single mothers will be presented. Lastly, other significant findings will be presented in the form of common themes found in the results. Whenever possible, direct quotes from the questionnaire or interview will be used to convey the personal experiences of the subjects.

Expected Results

Self-Esteem

A high level of self-esteem was expected to enhance parental satisfaction. Therefore, a high score by the parent on the self-perception scale of the POI was expected to be associated with a high score on the parenting scales. The correlation coefficient is not as high as was expected and is not statistically significant ($r = +0.20$; $p = 0.20$).

This sample had a higher mean score on both self-regard and self-acceptance sub-scales than the norming group

of college students. The norms given in the POI manual (Shostrom, 1966) are self-regard 11.5 and self-acceptance 13.7. The means in this study are self-regard 12.45 and self-acceptance 14.90. According to the norms given by Shostrom, this sample would place at the 73rd percentile for self-regard and at the 67th percentile for self-acceptance.

More than half of the subjects specifically reported an increase in self-confidence after their separation. In answering the questions, "Have your feelings about yourself changed since you have been a single parent?" "In what way?" the following responses are typical. (Note to guide the reader: all female subjects are numbered one through 10 inclusive and male subjects are numbered 11 through 20.)

Subject #3
Not having someone constantly putting me down has allowed me to have more confidence in myself.

Subject #4
A very positive change. I feel better about myself.

Subject #5
This last period in my life has been the strongest time in my life because of the many roles I've fulfilled. . . . I'm so much more than I ever thought I could be.

Subject #7
Being a single parent has forced me to grow and learn to be more self-sufficient.

Subject #8
I have confirmed my belief that I can do things. I can change my destiny. I want to thank my husband for being the way he is; otherwise I wouldn't have taken the risks and discovered these things about myself.

Subject #14
I've experienced a total growth time since my separation. I wish it hadn't happened, but it was an excellent growth experience.

Subject #19
I feel a lot more confident, and more freedom. The biggest surprise to me was finding out I could do it. Seeing the end of our marriage coming I dreaded being a single parent because I didn't think I was capable of doing it. I found the thing I feared the most was what I most needed to do.

Subject #20
You feel more satisfaction as a single parent 'cause you're doing it on your own . . . . The first week that nothing shrinks, or colours don't run, and all the socks match--wow--that's success!

PIL Scores

An association was expected to be found between high PIL scores and high ratings on parenting scales. While all correlations were positive, there were none that were significant at the 0.05 level.

The mean PIL score was 106.1 with a standard deviation of 13.67. Crumbaugh and Maholick (1969) in their manual suggest using 102 as a norm mean and a standard deviation of 19. A mean of 106.1 would place at the 59th percentile.

As expected, the PIL scores were significantly related to the self-perception scores ($r = +0.55$; $p = 0.01$).

Support Systems

The use of support systems, particularly a network of close friends, was expected to be associated with high

parenting scores. The data analysis revealed no significant correlation.

However, a network of close friends seemed to be important to most subjects. Only one female and one male reported not having friends they felt close to. Most often these friends were also separated or divorced. Seventeen of the subjects had more female friends than male friends. Most of the close friends who provided a lot of support were people who had been friends for a long time. Eleven subjects reported a close friend as the person who had helped them the most. Nine of these close friends were female. Four subjects reported they had helped themselves the most; three felt a family member had helped the most and two received the most help from a counsellor.

Two of the male subjects reported having more male friends than female friends but generally the single fathers tended to receive personal help from female friends and usually females who were also single parents.

Subject #17
Men back down from helping other men. Men can't be close with another single man. I don't have a single male friend I can ask how to do something but I've developed some female friends I can ask for help.

One father reported being more comfortable talking with his female friends since his separation.

Several of the subjects felt that their close friendships had improved their relationship with their children. Sometimes this was because of increased activities they did with their friends and children and sometimes

ause of the support they received from their friends.

Subject #4
Having friends has made it easier to parent. They back me up.

Subject #10
My friends have helped my relationship with my daughter. She joins us in discussions and is more able to see my point of view and express her ideas when a neutral third party is present.

Subject #12
Friends have helped me to be more sensitive to my children's needs.

One male subject reported a high level of support from several sources. He said he didn't have to ask for support. It was offered to him spontaneously. Another father commented, "Help has always just shown up when I needed it." However, another subject had a different experience. She explained the necessity of having to ask for

rt.

Subject #1
Part of being able to draw on support from friends and family is being able to let them know what you need. Single parents should try not to feel they have to do it all by themselves.

Five of the mothers and six of the fathers in this study had had contact with a single-parent support group or a newly singled group. This was a beneficial experience for all eleven subjects.

Subject #10
The single-parent group where we just rap has been most useful because I hear about the difficulties other people are having and I go home and think "gawd I'm not totally out to lunch."

Lack of Conflict

It was expected that a lack of conflict in the present relationship between ex-spouses would be associated with high parenting scores. From the reports of the subjects this factor did appear to effect their parental satisfaction. In the data analysis, lack of conflict was significantly related to two of the parenting sub-scales (satisfaction with parental role $r = +0.37$; $p = 0.05$; and interaction with the children $r = +0.46$; $p = 0.02$).

Contact with Children

Regular contact between the children and their non-custodial parent was expected to be associated with high parenting scores for the custodial parent. This contact was reported to be very important to most subjects, and the data analysis supports this. The correlation was significant at the 0.01 level ($r = +0.58$; $p = 0.01$). Subjects who scored high on the parenting scales were satisfied with the relationship between their children and their ex-spouse. In most cases, there was regular contact and the children had a close relationship with the non-custodial parent. This factor affected parental satisfaction more than any other factor.

Not surprisingly, these two variables (lack of conflict and contact with children) are closely related ($r = +0.54$; $p = 0.01$). It appears that the non-custodial parent in this study can have an important effect on the

parenting role of their ex-spouse. Several of the subjects spoke of the importance to them of maintaining a relationship with their ex-spouse.

> Subject #16
> I've encouraged my boys to see their mother because they need a female influence in their lives.

One of the problems often encountered by the subjects in this study was how to handle the discipline aspect of parenting. When conflict between the ex-spouses was high the non-custodial parent was most likely to undermine the discipline approach of the parent with custody. Both fathers and mothers in this study recognized the benefit of having their ex-spouses back them up, particularly when discipline was a concern.

Training for Parenting

Training for parenting was expected to be related to high parenting scores. Most subjects reported very little training for parenting. The data analysis did not reveal any significant relationship between these variables.

Belief in Viability

It was believed that if a single parent felt that a single-parent family was a viable way to raise children they would have higher parenting scores. In this study, only two male subjects felt that a single-parent family was not viable and they placed in the average range on the parenting scales. For this reason, an analysis was not done on this

variable. Five of the subjects qualified their affirmative answer with the opinion that single-parent families were not the best way to raise children but they were viable and they were better than a two-parent family that "wasn't working."

Subject #18
I'm not advocating it, but it is viable. Sometimes it's the best way to go.

Subject #11
It isn't the ideal, but it's definitely viable.

Subject #15
It is viable if the parent is actively involved with the family and can do it. It doesn't work with everyone.

Subject #10
It doesn't matter. It's happening so we have to find ways to make it work.

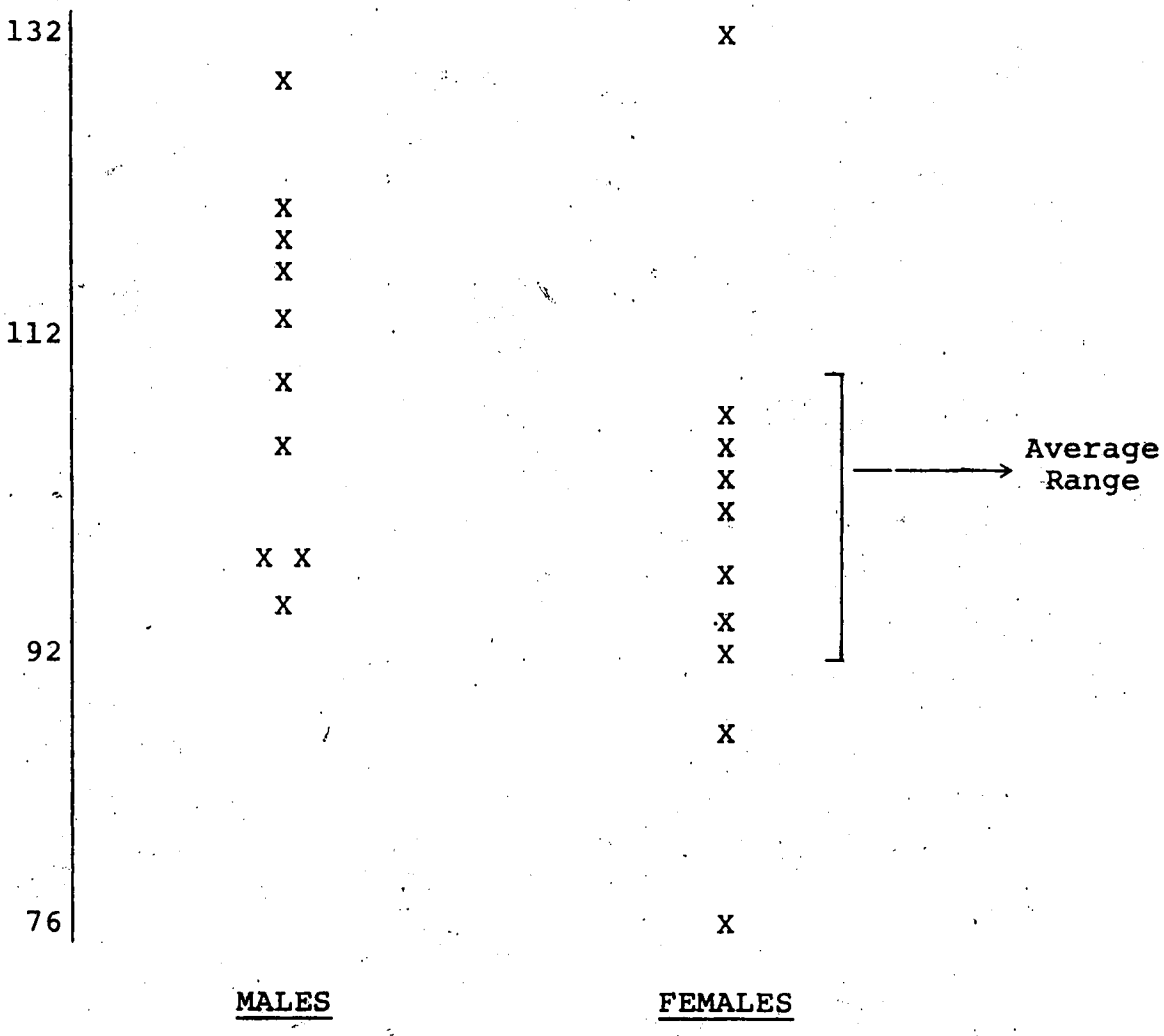
Comparison of Single Fathers and Single Mothers

One of the main differences between the males and females in this study were their PIL scores. The males' PIL scores were significantly higher than the female scores ($r = +0.40$; $p = 0.04$).

The mean for the fathers in this sample was 111.4 which is the 70th percentile and the mean for the mothers was 100.8 which is the 47th percentile, according to the norms set by Crumbaugh and Maholick (1969). They suggest an "average range" of 92 to 112 inclusive. Using these criteria, two mothers scored in the low range and one mother scored in the high range. There were no fathers in the low range and five fathers in the high range. Table 3

Table 3

Distribution of PIL Scores



illustrates the distribution of these scores.

As expected, the males had less training for parenting than females. Many subjects expressed a desire for parenting training to be part of the regular school programs and several fathers mentioned the difficulties of learning how to run the household.

> Subject #16
> Initially we ate out for three meals a day, I sent all the laundry out and we had a housekeeper come in. My sons decided they wanted to change this . . . . One of my sons took a cooking course at school . . . . He will be a much better husband than I was. He knows how to cook and clean.

> Subject #17
> There should be a program to assist male single parents to cope with household problems. Not one of my cookbooks gives a step-by-step method to cook a single meal, so I end up spending hours cooking really fancy dishes. But four and a half years later I still don't know how to cook gravy. A single father has to learn how to run the house right away. He needs a general how-to-do-it manual.

This subject also pointed out that it is possible to find how-to-do-it manuals for fixing cars, doing repairs and building things.

Nine of the 10 fathers reported spending more time with the children now than when they were married and eight of them reported a much closer relationship with their children.

> Subject #11
> I definitely spend more time with my kids now. I used to be able to "tune-out" after a bad day, and hide behind a newspaper and let my wife take over but now I have to stay involved with the children. . . . I've become more sensitive, particularly to the children's feelings.

Subject #13
When I was married, I didn't realize how much time I didn't spend with my kids. I thought I had a good relationship with them, but now I know I could have spent a lot more time with them. When I was married my wife would tell me to talk to the kids. I always had to be the disciplinarian.

Subject #18
I'm not as hard on my kids now. I probably got mad easier with them before. I'm more tolerant now. I would have had a much harder time getting through the separation without my kids.

Subject #19
I had no relationship with my son before-- I had no patience. Now we have a relationship and I respect the part of him that wants to do his own thing.

Subject #20
I see more of their problems now. I worry about them more. We're closer.

Fathers in this study made more use of community resources, particularly day-care facilities, than mothers. Four of the fathers felt that community resources needed to be advertised more.

Subject #17
Men need to know what services are available. They don't have a network to hear about them.

Five of the mothers in this study also thought that services in the community should be advertised more. One mother had several experiences which made her realize that many people in service agencies and organizations were unaware of the services available outside of their own office. She commented that doctors particularly were not informed about resources for single parents.

When discussing parenting concerns, the fathers mentioned many of the same concerns as the mothers. However, there was one area where the men had a higher level of concern. They were more concerned about maintaining custody of their children and a few of them were experiencing the aftereffects of difficult court battles.

> Subject #19
> My ex-spouse would be a good friend if the legal system had not forced us to play adversary roles . . . . I assume an adversary position only with grave reluctance.

Another father who had had custody of his two daughters (presently aged seven and nine) for five and a half years was suddenly faced with a custody dispute. He wrote on his questionnaire:

> The custody thing was very hard to deal with as I felt my competen[redacted] was being questioned . . . . High anxiety reigned over my house for a number of months due to this and I was pretty grouchy at times.

Four of the fathers had experienced questions from friends and co-workers inquiring why they wanted custody of their children.

> Subject #13
> My co-workers asked my why I have the kids. They said I'd have more time for myself if I let my wife have them.

This same subject later commented, "It may not be easy, but I'd never think of giving my children up. They're mine and I love them." He had experienced several problems in the first six months of single parenting but he was very optimistic. "We're getting to be a family now. If I can improve as much in the next six months as I have in the last

six months, I'll have no problems at all."

Several fathers felt they lacked information and were reading parenting books as well as cook books. One father expressed concern about his children's need for affection as he had not been overly affectionate in the past. In general, the males in this study were more likely to reveal areas where they felt insecure as a parent and ask for suggestions on how to improve. One father said that for him the most important thing was that you learn from your mistakes. Another father expressed it this way: "To be a good parent, you have to accept input from others, both pro and con. You can't be narrow-minded."

Other Findings

It was not a surprise to discover that the highest correlation obtained between any of the variables was between satisfaction with parental role and interaction with the children ($r = +0.90$; $p = 0.00$). It appears that in this study, the parents who had a high amount of interaction with their children also experienced a high level of satisfaction as a parent.

The parents in this study expressed several needs and concerns. The one most often reported was care for the children when the parent was at work. The lack of suitable day care was mentioned many times. One mother who had done very well in her career and was now earning a "reasonable" income found that she was no longer eligible for subsidized

day care.

School holidays were also a problem for parents.

> Subject #7
> Single parents need more after school care. I find I have to rely on my neighbours--my daughter's friends' mothers to take her after school and on school holidays. You're just stuck if they're going away and what are you supposed to do--stay home from work?

Care for the children was a large concern for the parents who had to travel out of town for business reasons. Two of the subjects had changed jobs to eliminate any travelling. The biggest problem with day care arose when the child was sick. Some of the parents reported missing work when the children were sick and several others were concerned about this possibility. One subject felt that in a two-parent family you might have more flexibility in deciding which parent would miss work.

Another point, related to day care, was alluded to earlier. The day care facilities already in operation are not well enough advertised.

The community service used the most often by single parents in this study was day care. Single-parent groups in one form or another was the next most popular service, followed by schools, doctors and churches.

Churches as a community resource were viewed in very individual ways. There was a wide variety of religious views in the sample. Three subjects said their religion was very important to them, eight said it was important and nine said it was not very important. One of the subjects who reported

that her religion was important to her made the following comment:

> Subject #10
> I found no support at my church. It's a very family-oriented church. I've quit going . . . I felt so uncomfortable. I'd spend most of the service trying not to cry because I'm looking around at all the families.

After day care, the need most often mentioned by the subjects was the need for time to be alone. This was most often mentioned by the parent whose children did not have regular contact with their other parent. Twelve of the subjects checked off "time" as a significant problem.

> Subject #7
> Rarely is there enough time to do things just for me, such as reading or my oil painting.

> Subject #10
> I had one period when my daughter was not able to visit her father and found a great need for some time on my own.

> Subject #16
> Children each require individual time, as does the parent. Sometimes it is difficult to accommodate everyone at the same time.

> Subject #17
> The time to be myself has been a problem . . . I find that I have a problem allowing myself not to give any free time to my children.

Support systems of one kind or another were very important to this group of subjects. One of the most important support systems for some of the parents in this study were children. Ten of the parents received a lot of support from their children and six received some support. Three of the parents specifically stated, "If I hadn't had my kids I wouldn't have survived the separation." One father who

received a lot of support from his children commented, "You can never get too many hugs from your kids."

A support system that was not taken into account when designing the research problem was the relatives of the ex-spouse. Eight of the subjects reported being in close contact with their ex-in-laws, particularly the children's grandparents.

In response to the questions "Since becoming a single parent, do you feel that your relationship with your children has changed? In what way?" two main themes emerged. One has been mentioned previously in relation to fathers: that is, an increased closeness with their children resulted. Three of the mothers also specifically commented on an improvement in their relationship with their children. The time spent with the children increased after the separation for 16 of the subjects. Many of them commented that the time they used to spend with their spouse was now spent with their children.

> Subject #3
> I got closer to my children and was able to do more things with them.

> Subject #2
> We've become a tighter group. The boys support me a lot. We're closer now, we support each other. We're a real team.

The second theme that emerged from these questions was the increase in the children's level of responsibility and their participation in family decision making.

> Subject #16
> The key has been to always be honest with the kids and let them in on the decision making. They've become much more independent.

The perceptions that other people had of single parents was a recurring theme in the interviews. A very common comment made by others to the subjects was, "Being a single parent must be extremely difficult. I don't know how you do it." Several subjects objected to the view of single parenting as being difficult and different. At least two of the subjects had a strong reaction to this perception.

> Subject #3
> We're really not that different. I've reached a point where I don't want to be different. I have the same problems and concerns as other parents. In a lot of two-parent families there is really only one parent raising the children if the other parent travels or is away a lot. People play up the negatives of single parents too much.

> Subject #9
> I've never been able to figure out what all the hulla-balloo is about. What's the big problem? People see a problem when there isn't one. They think you should be having a hard time.

Five of the subjects (both male and female) reported being a single parent was easier because they had "one less child to look after."

One of the questions asked during the interviews was, "What do you think is the most beneficial thing a counsellor can do for a person who is in the process of separation or divorce?" As expected, most subjects answered this question in relation to what would have helped them the most. Since one of the focuses of this research is to formulate guidelines for counsellors, a summary of the responses to this question will be reported.

The majority of responses recognized a need for understanding and acceptance, and for someone to listen.

Subject #1
Understand them. Give them strength to carry on and look at their positive side.

Subject #2
They just have to listen. If I could talk to someone about it then the load was off and I could go home and decide what to do.

Subject #4
Being there and letting you say the things you can't say to people who are close to you. It's not so bad once you say it out loud.

Subject #14
Just let them talk. I needed a good listener.

Subject #17
To let people know they are important--that they are worth something.

Subject #18
Just provide support--especially if you don't have family or friends. They can give you a few ideas but mainly just listen.

Two of the subjects felt this understanding would be more effective if the counsellor had been a single parent.

Subject #11
To just listen and ask pertinent questions because you're confused. It's especially helpful if the counsellor has been there.

Subject #20
They have to be a single parent themselves before they can help you.

Four of the subjects felt that reassurance was important.

Subject #6
Help them accept the fact that it's the best solution for their problem and to accept it without guilt.

Subject #7
Best help would be if they could stop the separation. Counsellors in schools should have more time to work with children whose parents are separating, to help the children understand it's not their fault.

Subject #8
Provide academic knowledge to reassure me I was normal.

Subject #12
Tell them it's O.K. and help dispel their guilt. Tell them it's O.K. to feel the way they feel.

Four of the subjects had more specific suggestions for counsellors.

Subject #5
Help you to keep emotional energy "up" because you're dealing with a lot.

Subject #10
Help them to clarify their options. I felt in a box and I had to sort it out. I needed feedback that I was a worthwhile capable person.

Subject #13
They could be a mediator to help parents arrange visiting times

Subject #19
Help you accept the emotional pain and speed up the healing process.

At the end of the interview, the subjects were asked to give their greatest concern and greatest satisfaction in being a single parent.

Eight of the subjects' greatest concern was connected to their children. They worried about the effect of the separation on the children, particularly the lack of a role model of the opposite sex. They worried about what would happen to the children when they went out into the

world and what the world would be like in the future. Day care was mentioned and also the concern of who would care for the children if something happened to them.

Four subjects related the lack of support as their greatest concern. In particular, the lack of someone to share the responsibilities and someone to keep you going when you get discouraged.

Four subjects gave loneliness as their greatest concern. Lack of adult affection and sexual intimacy were included in this concern.

Two subjects were mostly concerned with getting time for themselves and one was concerned with obtaining a good education and a job to provide for her children.

Two of the subjects could not give their greatest satisfaction. They weren't aware of any.

Nine subjects included their children in this answer. Either their greatest satisfaction was the improved relationship with their children or their pleasure in seeing their children grow up. One father stated simply, "The love between my son and myself." Seeing the children happy was a great satisfaction and one parent was most satisfied when the children chose to stay home with him instead of spending the evening with their friends.

Five of the subjects' greatest satisfactions were connected in some way with the theme of freedom. Freedom to raise the children the way they wanted to was mentioned. As one subject said, "Freedom to do what I want, when I want

without negative feedback." Related to this was the subject who enjoyed the disappearance of the turmoil and tension that had been present in her marriage. Another subject stated, "The pressure of compromising is off."

And still another subject said, "The trouble with marriage is that you have to agree on discipline, but now I have supreme authority."

For the four remaining subjects, their greatest satisfaction was with themselves. They were proud of the fact that they had survived and proud of what they had accomplished. One subject stated, "I've been forced to learn and grow quickly in many directions at once." Another one concluded, "My greatest satisfaction is how well I've handled things. I know I can raise my kids by myself." Another one stated that he had learned a lot. "Looking back I see things I would do differently now if I was in a new relationship.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

"Which variables affect a person's perceptions of his/her parenting role after a separation and/or a divorce?" was the question explored in this study. The amount and quality of the relationship between the children and their non-custodial parent appears to be the most important variable. This result will be discussed in this chapter, as well as a summary and discussion of the other results obtained. The implications of these results and suggestions for further research will also be described.

Summary of Results

It was the researcher's expectation that the use of many quotes from questionnaires and interviews in this study would present a clear picture of the subjects' personal experiences. In addition to this, a data analysis was done. The results of the data analysis are to be viewed with caution because the small sample size (N = 20) limits the validity of the results.

This case study approach was used in order to present the experience of being a single parent as clearly as possible. The subjects' cooperation

in achieving this goal was essential. Several subjects appreciated the opportunity to participate in the study and three of them commented on the cathartic effect of writing their answers to the questions on the questionnaire. The last question on the questionnaire--"Is there anything else you would like to share about your past or present experiences as a single parent?"--was answered in great detail by more than half of the subjects.

The sample may not be representative of the single parent population because of the fact that the subjects all volunteered to participate in the study. However, everyone who was approached by the researcher agreed to participate and only one subject was unable to be included because of difficulty in scheduling an interview time.

> Divorce in mid-life occurs in response to changes and stresses and is painful, followed most often by feelings of self-doubt, negative self-perceptions and lowered levels of self-esteem. (Crooks, 1980, p. 116)

Given that the self-perception scores for this sample were higher than the norms set by Crumbaugh, it appears that the subjects in this study are recovering from the time period immediately following divorce that is accompanied by low self-perceptions. This is confirmed by their self-reports of personal growth and increased confidence.

The correlation of PIL scores and self-perception scores ($r = +0.55$; $p = 0.01$) was similar to Crooks' findings relating PIL scores and Tennessee Self-Concept scores

($r = +0.285$; $p = 0.002$). Both these findings confirm the view that the higher the level of self-esteem, the greater the degree to which people find a purpose and meaning in life. From the self-reports in this study, purpose and meaning in life were often found through children.

The importance of a network of friends confirms Weiss' findings (1976), and lead to a recognition of the importance of single-parent groups. Single parents need an opportunity to meet other parents with similar needs and problems in order to establish this important support system.

Satisfaction with parental role and interaction with children were significantly correlated with lack of conflict between ex-spouses ($p = 0.05$ and $p = 0.02$, respectively). The importance of this lack of conflict has been noted by several authors (Anthony, 1974; Emery, 1982; Hess & Camara, 1979; Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1979; Kelly & Wallerstein, 1977; Porter & Chatelain, 1981). These results point out the need to examine the adversary positions our current legal system encourages during the process of a divorce.

Most training for parenting occurred after the subjects had responsibility for child care. While the desire for parenting training was evident in the sample, it appeared that if there was a lack of training prior to having children it was compensated for by "on-the-job" training and individual motivation to learn parenting skills as the children were growing.

A significant relationship between the amount and quality of contact between the non-custodial parent and children and the parenting given by the custodial parent was found. This fact, along with the importance of lack of conflict between ex-spouses, makes the role of the ex-spouse in the single parent's life appear to be very important. This aspect of single parenting has not received as much attention as it warrants in recent research. The research that has been done needs to be published to make non-custodial parents aware of the beneficial effect they can have on their children.

In comparing the fathers and mothers in this study, several differences were noted. The most surprising was the significantly higher PIL scores by the fathers ($p = 0.04$). Several researchers have reported no significant sex differences in PIL scores (Crooks, 1980; Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1969; Meier & Edwards, 1973; Murphy, 1967). Crooks (1980) found sex differences approaching significance ($p = 0.08$) with the females in her sample scoring higher than the males. Her sample was comprised of adults aged 15 to 54. The present study had a narrower age range (29 to 42) which could have affected the PIL scores. Meier and Edwards (1973) also found female PIL scores to be slightly but not significantly higher than the PIL scores of the males in their sample. However in the 25 to 35 year age group and again in the 45 to 55 year age group the males had slightly higher PIL scores than the females. He did not include any subjects

between 36 and 44 years of age. The age of subjects in this study would affect PIL scores (Crooks, 1980) but their age does not account for the males being sufficiently higher than the norms set by Crumbaugh and Maholick (1969). It is expected that these male subjects have found a purpose and a sense of meaning in their careers and now in addition to that sense of meaning they have also found meaning in their parenting roles. A second possibility is that these men may have had higher PIL scores prior to their separation and that may have influenced their decision to maintain custody of their children. There are no clear answers for the presence of this phenomenon in this study. It is an area which requires further research.

The fathers had less training for parenting than the mothers in this study. They expressed a need for more training in parenting and especially training for their role as homemaker. This finding has implications for our educational institutions. Indications from this study are that the men are very eager to learn new skills in the areas of homemaking and parenting. Opportunities for this learning to occur need to be provided by our educational institutions or our community agencies. Perhaps the most beneficial support others can give single fathers is to teach them how to manage their new responsibilities.

The fathers in this study had many concerns in common with the mothers. They were also concerned with the state of our present legal system and their situation in

relation to their custody rights.

The need for day care services was expressed by both mothers and fathers in this study. Given the number of parents in the general population who have entered the work force, it is expected that this need is not confined to single parents. Quality day care, not only for pre-schoolers but for school-aged children when school is not in session, is essential for all working parents. Care for children who are sick and care for children over-night when parents are away on business trips should also be a priority.

Single parents need support--emotional, financial, physical and cognitive support. This is not a surprise. All parents need support. Indeed, all humans need support at certain times of their lives.

The most important type of support for the subjects in this research was acceptance by others. This concurs with Brassington's (1981) findings. These subjects do not want to be seen as "different." They do not want to be stereotyped because they are single and, most importantly, they do not want their children to be judged only on the basis of coming from a divorced family. There needs to be more education done to inform teachers, counsellors, and other professionals, such as doctors, about the single parent experience. Acceptance by institutions is also desired by these subjects, in particular by churches.

The parents interviewed in this study were concerned about the way in which society viewed them. They expressed a desire for society and the professionals working in it

to have a realistic view of the single-parent experience.

In this study the parents' separation and divorce had affected the children in many different ways. Two main themes were evident. The parents felt they had a closer relationship with their children now and, in most cases, they spent more time with them. Secondly, the parents reported that the children had become more responsible and more involved in family decision making. This finding concurs with Weiss' research (1979). The closer relationship with their children was an important source of support for these parents.

In presenting their actual experiences, the subjects in this study discussed both the benefits and the problems of their current situations. Some of the ideas presented applied to all parents and a few were specifically related to being a single parent.

The concerns of day care and obtaining education and employment are not limited to single parents. The difficulty in finding time for oneself applies to all parents but may be more of a problem for single parents. The concern about the effect of the separation or divorce on the children is a special concern for single parents. The parents expressed a desire for more knowledge in this area and for help to understand their children's feelings. Loneliness, and lack of support in the home on a day-to-day basis from another adult were also concerns. Usually, these concerns would apply more to single parents.

The benefits mentioned in this study all seem to apply mostly to the single-parent situation. They experienced more freedom, independence and opportunity for personal growth. They felt closer to their children and felt that their children had matured greatly.

Most of the parents in this study had matured greatly from their experiences as well. They had been able to progress through their separation and grow from the experience. One subject expressed it this way:

> I feel emotionally stronger now. I get more satisfaction from what I do. My whole outlook on life is different. I take things easier and enjoy life more. I experience more personal satisfaction.

Divorce can be viewed as a transition time that provides the opportunity for growth.

The subjects in this study were putting time and energy into their parenting roles. Most were anxious to learn how to improve their situations. All were successful in one way--they were functioning in a family unit, usually with ensuing benefits for all family members.

Practical Implications

This research pointed out several implications for counsellors and lawyers.

The subjects reported a need for understanding, acceptance and reassurance. They also wanted help to clarify their options. In most cases, counsellors are already providing for these needs. A lot of single parents

have never gone to a counsellor and are not aware of their services. Counsellors should inform the public, particularly other professionals in the community, of their services. This would probably increase the number of people using their services and result in a need for more counsellors.

One place where there is already a need for more counsellors is the school system where counsellors need more time to work with the children of separating parents. The experience of several of the subjects in this study has been that the school counsellor is only there part-time and has no time to be effective with the children. One parent suggested that the school counsellor could work with groups of children who were in similar situations, so that the children would realize they weren't the only ones whose family structure was changing. School counsellors need an understanding of the process from the child's perspective. In-service training sessions should be presented to increase counsellors' and also teachers' awareness of the feelings and concerns the children may be experiencing.

The effectiveness of groups has been pointed out by the amount of support reported by single parents from group experiences they have had. Single-parent groups are a valuable service and should continue to be encouraged by counsellors and other professionals. This type of support should be available to the single parent as soon as possible. Support groups for adjustment to divorce at the time of the

initial separation are highly recommended.

Counsellors should recognize the importance of helping the client to see a divorce as an opportunity for growth. A more positive view of divorce as a transition rather than a crisis, in the negative sense of the word, would be helpful.

And lastly, the important role of a divorce mediator could be filled by a counsellor or a person trained specially for this role. Only one of the subjects in this study had used the court conciliator service available in this city. Most of the subjects were unaware of its existence. Due to the importance of maintaining close relationships between the non-custodial parent and the children and also the importance of support in matters of discipline and child-rearing from the ex-spouse, it seems reasonable to make all possible attempts at accomplishing the separation of the marriage partners with as little hostility as possible. Our present legal system does not do this. The continued relationship between the ex-spouses is not a concern for our lawyers. Presently this is a role that divorce mediators or counsellors are trying to fill. For lawyers, the implications of this last point are very serious. Lawyers should be very aware of the consequences of their adversary positions both for their clients and the clients' children. Lawyers should refer clients to the court conciliator or a mediation counsellor whenever they encounter hostility between the separating parents.

Lawyers as well as counsellors have an obligation to inform their clients of the important role of the non-custodial parent in the continued parenting of the children and of the negative effects of continued hostility. Counsellors can also help their clients work through the hurt and anger experienced because of their separation in order to reduce the level of hostility between the ex spouses.

Further Research

An instrument needs to be developed to measure actual parenting success. This study focused only on the parents' subjective experience of parenting. Further research would use a more accurate measure of parenting ability and would include interviews with the children and their teachers.

An area that has surprised and intrigued this researcher is the high PIL scores of the single fathers. This needs to be researched to discover if men this age (29 to 42 years) have higher PIL scores than the rest of the population or if men with high PIL scores are likely to want custody of their children, or if having custody of their children increases PIL scores.

Due to the increase in single parent families and to our changing lifestyles, more research is needed to discover what is "normal" for a single-parent family. The single parent experience needs to be explored in more detail with larger sample sizes in order to establish what the

ordinary experience of single parenting is really like. This study has been a beginning toward this goal.

Conclusion

To paraphrase the words of one of the subjects: there are going to be single parents so we need to know what their experiences are and how we can best help them in their parenting role.

This study has pointed out similarities and differences in the experiences of 20 single parents. They have many experiences in common with parents in a more traditional family structure and they have some unique experiences. Generally, the single-parent families appear to exhibit just as much variety as two-parent families do. In some ways their parenting roles are more difficult because they are doing it by themselves, but there are also aspects of single parenting that make it easier.

Parenting can be done alone by a wide variety of adults and we, as a community, need to accept single parents, understand them, and reassure them that their family structure is viable. We need to change our definition of family as a traditional nuclear family with two parents. There are likely to be many more parents raising their children alone in the future. Our acceptance and increased understanding of single parent families will benefit everyone. The first step toward this is the realization that already there are a great many successful families with one parent.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

APPENDIX A

Number

Questionnaire

Directions: Answer as completely as possible. If you have any questions they can be answered at the time of your interview. You will be contacted by phone to arrange for this interview. Please return this questionnaire and the other two tests at the time of your interview.

1.Age _____

2.Sex _____

3. Present marital status ☐ separated ☐ divorced ☐ other (explain) _____

4. Number of times married ☐ once ☐ more than once ☐ never married

5. In your most recent marriage how many years did you live with your spouse? _____

6. How long have you been a single parent? _____

7. Level of formal education completed _____

8. Are you currently employed? ☐ full-time ☐ part-time ☐ unemployed ☐ other (explain) _____

9. If employed, what is your occupation? _____

10. What is your religion? _____

How important is your religion to you? ☐ very important ☐ important ☐ not very important

11. Children living with you

	1st child	2nd child	3rd child	4th child
Age	_____	_____	_____	_____
Sex	_____	_____	_____	_____
School grade	_____	_____	_____	_____

12. If you share your accommodation with anyone besides your children, please indicate their relationship to you.

_____

_____

13. Do you have other children not living with you? _____

If yes, who do they live with? _____ where? _____

14. Do the children living with you have regular contact with their other parent? _____ How often?

- ☐ at least once a week
- ☐ once every two weeks
- ☐ once a month
- ☐ less than once a month

15. How would you describe your present relationship with your children?

_____

16. How would you describe your present relationship with your ex-spouse?

_____

17. While being a single parent, which of the following have you found to be significant problems?

a. insufficient income _____
b. child discipline _____
c. obtaining employment _____
d. care for children when I want to go out _____
e. medical problems (health) yours _____ childrens _____
f. dental problems yours _____ childrens _____
g. housing _____
h. legal problems _____
i. sexual problems _____
j. time _____
k. energy _____
l. other (list) _____
_____

Please rate these problems in order of importance.

1st _____
2nd _____
3rd _____

18. Please explain how these are problems for you. (Use the other side of the page if needed.)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

19. How would you describe the "climate" of your separation or divorce?

☐ friendly ☐ neutral
☐ hostile ☐ other (explain) _____

20. Have you ever attended a parenting training course or workshop? _____

If yes, where and when? _____

Did it affect your parenting? _____ How? _____

_____

21. What are your immediate and long-term goals and aspirations? (Further education, training, employment, etc.) _____

_____

_____

22. What do you consider the best things about being a single parent?

_____

_____

_____

_____

23. What do you consider the worst things about being a single parent? _____

_____

_____

24. How well do your children think you are doing as a single parent?

_____

_____

_____

25. In what way would you change your present situation if you could?

_____

_____

_____

_____

26. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your present or past experience as a single parent?

Thank you for your participation.

Bonnie Jean Devine

Bonnie Jean Devine

APPENDIX B

Interview Schedule

APPENDIX B

Interview Schedule

This interview, as explained to you on the telephone, will focus on your role as a single parent. The interview will be taped for my use only. Everything we discuss will be kept completely confidential. I will quote some of your comments in my thesis but at no time will your name be used. If there are any questions that you do not wish to answer, please feel free to say so. Do you have any questions before we start? Please take as much time as you need for each question.

Would you care to elaborate on any of your answers to the written questionnaire?

Work

1. Tell me about the work you do.
2. What do you like about your job?
3. What do you dislike about your job?
4. How have you been getting along with your co-workers in the past two months?
5. Is there anyone at work that you share your experiences with? Could you tell them about a personal problem?
6. Do you experience feelings of satisfaction from your work?
7. Would you like to change your work situation in any way? How?
8. Have your co-workers ever commented on your parenting abilities? If yes, would your elaborate on their comments?

Friends

1. How many close friends do you have? By close friends I mean people you have regularly seen or telephoned during the last two months. How many of these friends are male? Female?

2. Could you tell these friends about a personal problem?

3. How many times have you done something socially with friends in the last two months?

4. Have your friends ever commented on your parenting abilities? If yes, would you elaborate on their comments?

5. Have your friends affected your relationship with your children? In what way? What other activities do you do outside the home?

6. What other activities do you do outside the home?

7. Do you enjoy these activities?

8. What is your most satisfying leisure time activity?

Extended Family

1. Do your parents, brothers or sisters live in Edmonton?

2. Have you seen or heard from them in the last two months?

3. Do you have any other relatives that you feel close to?

4. During the last two months, have you been able to talk about personal problems with any of your relatives?

5. Have your relatives ever commented on your parenting abilities? If yes, please elaborate.

Former Spouse

1. How often do you have contact with your former spouse? Do you discuss personal problems with him/her?

2. What is the nature of the relationship between the children and the absent parent? Are you satisfied with this?

3. Has your former spouse ever commented on your parenting abilities? Please elaborate.

Community Resources

1. As a single parent, which community resources have you had contact with? (church, doctor, school, groups, etc.) What was your experience? Was the service helpful? How

important has this contact been to you? Did you discuss personal problems with them?

2. What changes are needed to make these resources better?

3. Did anyone connected with these resources comment on your parenting abilities? Please elaborate.

4. As a single parent, have you received help or support from anyone you haven't already mentioned.

5. Have you seen a professional counsellor since your separation? What was that experience like for you?

6. What do you think is the most beneficial thing a counsellor can do for a person who is in the process of separation or divorce?

7. We've talked about several people who you could approach for help. Who has helped you the most since you have been a single parent?

Parenting Role

1. How did your children respond to the separation?

2. In what way have the children's lives changed?

3. What kinds of things have you been doing with the children during the last two months? How do you feel about these activities?

4. Has being a single parent changed the amount of time you spend with your children? Please explain.

5. Have you been able to discuss feelings and problems with your children during the last two months? Can you give any examples? How would you describe your parenting abilities?

6. How much friction (if any) has there been between you and the children?

7. How is discipline handled in your family?

8. What have your feelings generally been toward your children since being a single parent? during the past two months?

9. Since becoming a single parent, do you feel that your relationship with your children has changed? In what way?

10. Did your style of parenting change when you became a single parent? Explain.

11. What help have you had in learning to parent? (courses, experiences babysitting, younger siblings, etc.)

12. Do you experience feelings of satisfaction from your parenting role? Would you elaborate?

Homemaker Role

1. How are household chores handled in your home? Is this a source of friction between you and the children? Please explain.

2. Do you experience feelings of satisfaction from your homemaker role?

3. What do you enjoy/not enjoy about your homemaker role?

Conclusion

1. Have your feelings about yourself changed since you have been a single parent. In what way?

2. Could you identify your single greatest concern in being a single parent?

3. Could you identify a single greatest satisfaction?

4. Do you believe that a single-parent family is a viable way to raise children?

5. Is there anything that you would like to add, any insights that you have acquired through your experiences?

6. Do you have any questions or concerns about this study?

APPENDIX C

Parenting Scales

APPENDIX C

Parenting Scales
(from interview and questionnaire)

1. Financial Adjustment

   3. Little difficulty. Financial situation comfortable; has very satisfying employment and desired housing.

   2. Average difficulty. Meeting financial and housing needs. Has satisfying employment but would like to make some changes.

   1. Great difficulty. Difficult to meet financial needs; difficulty finding employment and/or housing.

2. Satisfaction with Parental Role

   3. Extremely satisfied. Able to meet own needs while fulfilling parental role. Sense of accomplishment and worthwhileness of parenting.

   2. Satisfied. Meets most needs. Aware of responsibilities and rewards of parenting.

   1. Not very satisfied. Negative feelings toward parenting. Feels it is a great responsibility with no rewards. Has many discipline problems with children.

3. Interaction with Children

   3. Excellent. Able to meet children's emotional needs. Children developing self-discipline. Time spent with children is sufficient and provides enjoyment for parent and child.

   2. Average amount of time spent with children. A few discipline problems. Would like to spend more time with children.

   1. Poor. Many discipline problems with children. Unable to discuss feelings or problems with children. Very little enjoyment in time spent together.

4. Satisfaction with Homemaker Role

3. Extremely satisfied. Sufficient time and energy to attend to household tasks. Enjoys household tasks.

2. Satisfied. Most household tasks accomplished.

1. Not very satisfied. Often tired. Unable to perform necessary household tasks.

5. Amount of Training for Parenting

5. Very high. Attended parenting courses. Helped raise younger siblings. Felt very competent in ability to parent.

3. Average. Some experience in caring for children or some training.

1. Poor. No experience or training at all.

6. Relationship with Former Spouse

- Amount of Conflict Between Ex-spouses:

5. Very little. Able to discuss all issues, including personal problems.

3. Average. Some disagreements but able to agree on important issues, including issues involving the children.

1. Very high. Unable to discuss even minor issues.

- Amount of Contact Between Former Spouse and Children:

5. High. Contact more than once a week. Warm, caring relationship.

3. Average. Contact twice a month.

1. Low. No contact.

APPENDIX D

Consent Form

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

I, the undersigned, voluntarily consent to participate in the study being conducted by Bonnie Jean Devine, a graduate student in the Educational Psychology Department at the University of Alberta. My participation will include two written tests, a questionnaire and an interview which will be tape-recorded. I understand that my responses will be used for a Master's thesis by Bonnie Jean Devine and will be treated as confidential.

_____ _____

NAME DATE

_____ _____

ADDRESS PHONE NUMBER

APPENDIX E

Summary Sheet

APPENDIX E

Subject # _____

SUMMARY SHEET

P.I.L. _____

P.O.I. _____

SCALES

Parenting---- Financial _____

Parental _____ Homemaker _____

Interaction _____

Total _____

Support Systems----- Co-workers _____

Friends _____

Extended Family _____

Children _____

Community Resources _____

Total Support _____

Former Spouse ---- Amount of Conflict _____

Contact with Children _____

Training for Parenting _____

Is single parent family viable? _____

Most help from counsellor would be..... _____

Person who helped you the most _____

Greatest concern _____

Greatest satisfaction _____ _____

Additional impressions of interviewer

Significant comments made by subject