

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: The Effect of Social Support on the Well-Being of Single-Mothers Enrolled in a Rural Community College

Abstract approved: Signature redacted for privacy.

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The primary purpose of this research was to examine the effects of informal social support on the psychological sense of well-being of single-parent mothers who are enrolled in a rural Oregon community college. A secondary purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of selected demographic indices upon the mothers' well-being.

A 32-item questionnaire was mailed to a randomly selected population of 1,000 female spring term enrollees at Linn-Benton Community College, resulting in an 82 percent rate of response and 781 usable surveys, including 76 (10 percent) from single-mother students. Characteristically 35 to 39 years of age, Caucasian, and maintaining her own household on a gross monthly income of \$1,000 or less, the single-mother student worked part-time, had been a single-parent for more than two years, raised one child, and was enrolled for six or fewer credits during the spring term.

Analyses of variance among demographic indices and well-being measures indicated that single-mother students employed part-time scored lowest on Total Well-Being, Problems and Isolation. There was a significant

effect on Problems from those enrolled in a degree program for seven or more credits and receiving financial aid. Simple linear and multiple stepwise regressions between components of Support and Well-Being, showed that: (1) Total Support had an effect upon Problems, Loneliness, Happiness, and Total Well-Being; (2) Personal Conversations influenced or affected all measures of Well-Being; (3) Relatives influenced Isolation, Loneliness, Happiness, and Total Well-Being; (4) Friendship affected Problems, Loneliness, Happiness, and Total Well-Being; and (5) Neighbors influenced Total Well-Being.

Stepwise multiple regressions indicated that (1) Total Well-Being was affected by Conversations and to a lesser extent by Relatives and Friends; (2) Problems and Loneliness were influenced by Friends; (3) Isolation was affected by Relatives, and (4) Happiness was influenced by Conversations and to a lesser degree by Relatives.

Recommendations for further research and implications for educational and family professionals working with single-mother students are discussed.

The Effect of Social Support on the Well-Being of
Single-Mothers Enrolled in a Rural Community College

by

Julie Ann Stenson

A THESIS

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Oregon State University

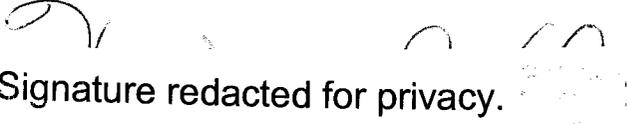
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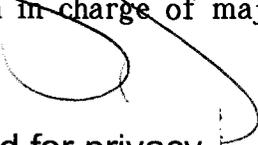
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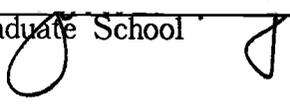
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THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL SUPPORT ON THE
WELL-BEING OF SINGLE-MOTHERS ENROLLED
IN A RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

I. INTRODUCTION

Harold Hodgkinson (1983) observed that "every society is constructed on a foundation of demographic assumptions. When these assumptions shift, the result is a major shock felt throughout the foundation and throughout the society in total" (p. 3). By the mid-20th century, society in the United States had been institutionally adapted to a social base built upon the demographic assumptions of a predominantly static nuclear family. However, for the last quarter of a century, the American family, as once so successfully stereotyped by the popular *Leave it to Beaver* television series, has undergone a remarkable alteration in structure. The typical nuclear family has evolved into a conglomeration of family lifestyles. At the same time institutions have been slow to recognize and respond to this evolution, much less acknowledge that American society has been subjected to a "major shock" (Austrom, 1984; Toffler, 1980).

At present, the single-parent family, as it has emerged from its transitional family underpinnings, comprises one in every five family groups, whereas in 1970, single-parent families constituted one in every ten (Hanson & Sporakowski, 1986; Norton & Glick, 1986; *Parents Without Partners*, 1983; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985). At the same time society's view of the

single-parent family has also undergone a dramatic change. Whereas the research of the 1970s focused generally upon the dysfunctional characteristics of single-parent families, recent research has begun to investigate the positive adaptations of this growing family type.

Background

American society and its support systems are experiencing the after-shock of the upheaval in family demographics which has occurred over the last quarter of a century. During the 1950s, the typical family pattern consisted of a mother who remained in the home to care for the children and household while the father worked (Austrom, 1984). However, over the last 20 years, the divorce rate increased dramatically and the United States has slowly begun a shift from a nuclear family foundation to a more mixed-structure of family types.

At present, only seven percent of the total population of the United States still lives in the traditional nuclear family, while dual earner families (a mother in the labor force), step-parent families, communal and gay families, househusband, and single-parent families constitute the bulk of emerging family structures (Toffler, 1980). At the same time, the single lifestyle has grown in popularity as a result of an accelerating divorce rate and a growing number of people who are postponing marriage (Austrom, 1984; Furstenberg & Spanier, 1984).

Although available statistics on single-parent families tend to vary somewhat, the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1985) and *Parents without partners* (1983), the largest national organization for single-parents, are in agreement that roughly 26 percent of all family groups follow a single-

parent form. Between 1970 and 1983, the number of single-parent families increased by a factor of 118 percent; or, from a more recent perspective, the number of single-parent families has doubled since 1970, while the number of two-parent families has decreased by four percent (Hanson & Sporakowski, 1986; McLanahan, Wedemeyer, & Adelberg, 1981; Probst, Pardington, Ostrom, & Watkins, 1986).

Because the overwhelming majority of single-parents are females with minor children (90 percent), research has concentrated on this gender. They become single heads of household for a variety of reasons: divorce, separation, widowhood, adoption, and premarital birth. Of these subcategories, divorced (39%), never-married (24%), and separated mothers (19%) comprise the largest groups of single-parent families (Gladow & Ray, 1986; Hanson & Sporakowski, 1986; Norton & Glick, 1986; *Parents without partners*, 1983). The typical single-mother is 35 years old (as a group, this age has been declining). One-third of single-mothers are black, one-half live in poverty, one-half have not completed high school, and one-half are employed. However, this category of single-parents includes the very young, as well as single-mothers earning over \$20,000 per year, Hispanics and representatives of other ethnic groups as well as whites, and single-mothers with very young children (under three years of age) who stay home and live on Aid to Families with Dependent Children or sources of income other than wages. Moreover, there are indications of a growing enrollment of single-mothers in post-secondary education. They are enticed there to gain employment skills, to enrich their personal development and to begin where many of them left off prior to beginning a family (Danowski, 1983; Hooper & March, 1980; Norton & Glick, 1986; Weiner, 1986).

These changing family demographics have prompted an increase in research interest. Primarily from the disciplines of marital and family studies, investigations of the characteristics and endurance of the single-mother family are asking how these single-mother families are doing? The earliest reports concluded that single-mothers were under considerable stress from financial problems, from role and task overload, and from a general sense of isolation (Bachrach, 1975; Brandewein, 1977; Guttentag, Salasin, & Belle, 1980; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1977; Radloff & Rae, 1979).

As research efforts have moved toward a more positive focus, the aspect of social support has emerged as clearly efficacious in the enhancement of the endurance (the survivability) and the well-being of single-mother families (Berman & Turk, 1981; Bowen, 1982; Gladow & Ray, 1986; McLanahan et al., 1981). The body of research on social support and single-parenting are both recent developments, with support research emanating primarily from the health and medical disciplines and single-parent research coming from family studies. Theories of attachment behavior, along with the societal trends of divorce, urban solitary living, and socio-psychological correlates of disease, have demonstrated that social support reduces stress and disease and enhances overall well-being (Gottlieb, 1981; House, 1981; Kahn & Antonucci, 1980; Kobasa, 1981; Lieberman, 1982; Taylor, 1986; Wortman & Dunkel-Schetter, 1987).

In the 1980s, only a handful of studies addressed the issue of social support for single-parent family populations (Albrecht, 1980; Bowen, 1982; Colletta, 1979; Gladow & Ray, 1986; McLanahan et al., 1981). The results indicated that the social support of friends, relatives, romantic involvements, and of institutions were major determinants in the well-being of single-

mothers and their children (Albrecht, 1980; Bowen, 1982; Gladow & Ray, 1986).

Statement of the Problem

A large number of single-mothers are unemployed and live below the poverty level (Hanson & Sporakowski, 1986; Hewlett, 1986; Norton & Glick, 1986). One way for a single-mother to improve her financial condition is to become involved in community college education in order to obtain the skills, knowledge, and often the internship experience necessary to qualify for employment (Weiner, 1986). Apart from the pursuit of degree or skill qualifications, community college enrollment can be a means for the single-mother student to engage in self-development or broaden her social bonds within the larger community within which she resides.

However, the socio-economic barriers faced by single-mothers who choose to enter college education make success particularly difficult and broadened social support may enhance the well-being of the single-mother student. Moreover, older-than-average students (including single-mothers) constitute increasingly large segments within college and university enrollments, a statistical fact which makes it worthwhile for schools with declining enrollments to pay closer attention to this category of student. This also works to the advantage of single-mothers, or at least those with marketable skills, in view of the strong competition educational institutions face from business and industry (Danowski, 1983; Grant & Snyder, 1986; Hooper & March, 1980; Hooper & Rice, 1978; McClain, 1979; Sewall, 1986; Weiner, 1986).

Overall, there remains a paucity of research on the single-parent and specifically the relationship between social support and the single-mother's state of well-being.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of social support on the well-being of single-mothers who are attending community college. Specifically, this study will investigate the relationship between informal sources of social support, e.g., relatives, friends, and neighbors, and the well-being of single-mothers enrolled in community college education. The investigation does not include the effects of institutional (formal) social support upon single-mothers, other than making use of institutional demographics in the formation of a composite view of the single-mothers.

As previously stated, poverty and the lack of education among single-mothers is a growing problem in the United States. In this study, the well-being of single-mothers enrolled in education will be the focus of research for the following reasons:

- 1) there has been little experimental research on the effects of social support upon single-mothers in educational settings and, on the whole, there has been relatively little research upon the study of similar effects upon single-mothers; therefore, this study would add to the few demographic analyses of single-mothers in education--this information may be useful to educational institutions in their efforts to market, recruit, and subsequently retain this population as students; and

- 2) information on the effectiveness of various types of social support on the well-being of single-mothers has a wide range of implications for the helping professionals who deal with single-parents--it may assist them in developing professional services for this group.

Limitations of the Study

This research is limited in the ethnic diversity of the sample to Causasian (92 percent) single-mother students at one rural community college in Oregon. It may not be feasible to generalize the findings of this study for other ethnic populations in different educational settings, i.e., single-mother students in larger urban centers of population.

Social support, as defined in this study, is an informal type of support and does not include institutional support nor other forms of support.

The examination of well-being is limited to the definitions set forth below and does not include physical well-being.

This study does not include the potential mediating effects of personality variables, such as locus of control or introversion-extroversion, on social support and well-being.

Although the self-report interview instrument (upon which the survey in this study was based) carried a reliability coefficient of .74 and .88 (Cronbach's alpha), the community college mail survey has not been tested for reliability or validity.

Definitions

SINGLE-PARENT FAMILY: A mother or father parenting one or more children age 18 or under single-handedly.

FATHER-CHILD FAMILY: A father parenting one or more children age 18 or under single-handedly.

MOTHER-CHILD FAMILY: A mother parenting one or more children age 18 or under single-handedly.

SINGLE-MOTHER: A female with no husband present supporting one or more children age 18 or under.

SINGLE-MOTHER STUDENT: A single-mother attending any kind of community college, whether or not in pursuit of degree qualifications.

SOCIAL SUPPORT: The sharing--including personal conversations, between relatives, friends, neighbors, and romantic partners--of concrete aid, information, and caring.

WELL-BEING: A psychological construct which is used to describe a state of personal satisfaction with one's life. The term implies a sense of happiness, the lack of feeling isolated and lonely, and a low frequency of problems.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been derived from a review of the literature (see Chapter II), which suggests that social support may affect

the well-being of single-mothers involved in community college educational programs:

- 1) Does total social support affect total well-being?
- 2) Which components of social support have the greatest effect upon total well-being?
- 3) Which components of well-being are most affected by the separate components of social support?
- 4) What are the demographic characteristics of single-mother students?
- 5) Is the well-being of single-mothers significantly influenced by demographic characteristics?

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Discussion of the needs of single-parents for social support and well-being is rooted in the sociology of marriage and the family. Therefore, a general overview of the changing trends in the American family structure is provided as a preface to the literature review. It is followed by a detailed review of research on the demographics of (1) single-parent families and (2) single-mothers, including considerations of the relationship of social support and well-being and the single-mother and higher education.

Current Trends in Changing Family Patterns

Over the past quarter century the structure of the American family has evolved from the stereotyped nuclear family (husband-provider, wife-housewife, and two children) into a conglomerate of singles (never-marrieds or divorced) living alone or in communal living situations, single-parents maintaining households with their children, two-parent families with both parents employed, and other varieties of family and single lifestyles.

One of the results of this trend, which would appear to be closely connected to the rise in the divorce rate in the United States, has been a dramatic increase in the proportion of unmarried adults within the total population. Data provided by the U.S. Bureau of the Census indicate that 33

percent of American men over age 18 and an almost equally large number of American women of the same age group are unmarried. Moreover, the formerly-married are a particularly diverse group of adults who constitute a growing percentage of the total unmarried population (Austrom, 1984).

As the divorce rate increased by 435 percent between 1952 and 1977, social scientists responded to the resultant alterations in family structure with renewed exploration of the effects of divorce on the family and its individual members (Weiner, 1986). Since American society has tended to view divorce unfavorably, this research focused upon the negative effects of divorce upon families and individual family members. It has been only within the past few years that research focused on the positive adaptations to divorce.

Furstenberg and Spanier (1984) have theorized that rather than viewing divorced persons as unable or incompetent of maintaining marriages, there are various personality factors which predispose individuals to be "stayers" or "movers." In this view, "stayers" are people opposed to divorce on the basis of religious beliefs, while "movers" (i.e., the divorced) may be less committed to marital continuity. This hypothesis appears closely related to the psychological theories of "locus of control" and "attribution," describing the personality characteristics of control: i.e., how individuals view the issue of control within their own lives, put in the form of the question of whether someone or something else is running the show or if the individual is in control of his/her own destiny?. In this case, "stayers" may attribute an uncomfortable marital situation to causes outside of their control; therefore, believing that they lack the elements of control necessary to alter their condition. On the contrary, "movers" may believe

that they have the control (power) necessary to alter their marital situation (Furstenburg & Spanier, 1984).

Research on trends in the evolution of family patterns and practices of divorce has not specifically focused on the psychological postulates of control and attribution, but there has been an increasing number of studies which have focused on the more positive and adaptive aspects of divorce and the single-parent family (Austrom, 1984).

Single-Parent Families

It has been only in the last decade that researchers within various disciplines have begun to focus on the single-parent family population. The trend of previous research was in part a reflection of general societal values regarding the single lifestyle as non-normative or socially unacceptable (Austrom, 1984). More recent studies have reflected the increased incidence of single-parents, as well as a more balanced view of the characteristics and consequences of single-parent families. Such studies have recognized that single-parenting is not merely a transitional lifestyle, but a continuing lifestyle for many individuals (Gladow & Ray, 1986; Hanson & Sporakowski, 1986).

This section provides a demographic profile of single-parent families, including consideration of the definitions of single-parent families, household and family types, numbers, reasons for becoming a single-parent, and related gender and race issues. It also examines the relationship of age and marital status, issues of economic and work force status, and educational indices.

The single-parent family has also been structurally described in many ways, including the one-parent, the lone-parent, and the solo-parent family,

among others (Hanson, 1986). There is no single definition that addresses the different forms of single-parent families. Single-parent status implies that a mother or father is parenting single-handedly, but this may not be the case (Norton & Glick, 1986). The term one-parent family suggests that there is only one-parent, but this can also be misleading. "Lone" or "solo" parent family are equally limited terms subject to misunderstanding since the noncustodial parent may be highly involved in child rearing (Melli, 1986). Throughout the literature, however, the predominantly accepted term is "single-parent family," defined as a mother or father parenting single-handedly (Hanson, 1986).

The federal Bureau of the Census identifies only two major household categories: family and non-family. A family household is comprised of a householder (a person who owns or rents living quarters) and at least one other person related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. The three types of family households are: married couple families, female heads of household, and male heads of household (Hanson, 1986). Married couples with children under 18 years old comprised about 29 percent of all households in 1984, while single-parent family households accounted for nearly 26 percent of all family groups (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985).

For census purposes, family groups also include related and unrelated subfamilies. A related subfamily is a single-parent with one or more of his/her own single (never married) children under 18 years of age, living in a household and related to the person(s) who maintain the household. An example of this type of subfamily would be a single-mother and her child living with the mother's parents. Related subfamilies, groups of two persons or more who are related to each other by birth, marriage, or adoption, but who are not related to the householder, are not included in the count of fam-

ilies. A single-mother and her child who live with a friend is an example of an unrelated subfamily (Hanson & Sporakowski, 1986; Norton & Glick, 1986; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985). The percentage of subfamilies with a single-parent is much larger than the corresponding percentage of family households. In 1984, only 22 percent of all family households represented one-parent families, but 81 percent of related subfamilies and 95 percent of unrelated subfamilies were partially comprised of one-parent families (Hanson & Sporakowski, 1986).

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1985) and *Parents without partners* (1983), 25.7 percent of all family groups were headed by a single-parent in 1984. This percentage represents a total of 6.7 million families, in contrast to the much smaller figure of 3.2 million single-parent families in 1970. A more impressive way to document this recent and sharp increase in single-parent families is to note that one of every five families with children under 18 years of age in 1984 was a single-parent family, compared to one of every 10 in 1970 (Norton & Glick, 1986; McLanahan et al., 1981). During nearly the same time period (1970 to 1983), two-parent families decreased in number by four percent (Hanson & Sporakowski, 1986).

Moreover, the above statistics on the numbers and growth of single-parent families do not take into account the subfamily types such as related and unrelated subfamilies, which amount to about five million families. Nevertheless, because of the difficulty in assessing the other single-parent family types, most analyses of single-parent families concentrate on the primary type of family (female- and male-headed households) (Norton & Glick, 1986).

Norton and Glick (1986) are family demographers who have completed the most comprehensive documentation on the status of single-parents, largely in the context of comparing types of single-parent families with other family types (generally the two-parent family). They maintain that family statistics are period or point demographics; therefore they often fail to show the true magnitude of the transitional demographic phenomena which characterize single-parent families. The proportion of adults and children who experience life in a one-parent family is much greater than can be observed through period statistics. In effect, in 1984 only 23 percent of all children under 18 years of age were living with a single-parent, but projections are that nearly 60 percent of all children born in 1984 will spend significant time in a single-parent family before they reach the age of 18. Furthermore, Norton has estimated that the majority of children whose parents' marriages are disrupted, and who remain with their mothers, will spend at least five years in a mother-child family and that many may experience at least two periods of living in a one-parent family during the course of childhood. Twelve percent of all children will live in one-parent families for reason of premarital birth; two percent because of the death of a parent; five percent for reason of long-term marital separations; and 40 percent for reason of divorce (Bumpass, 1984). These are speculative projections in the sense that they assume that current levels of premature births and marital dissolution will not appreciably change during the 18 years following the projections.

Additional statistical projections include the probability that 37 percent of all women in their late 20s can expect at some point during the span of their adult years to maintain a single-parent family with children under the age of 18 years (Norton & Glick, 1986). Thus, statistical conclusions, using

a life course probability perspective, offer a broader perspective than is usually considered in context of family studies, effectively pointing out that experiencing life in one-parent families is much more pervasive than usually believed.

Reasons for Becoming a Single-Parent

A person can become a single-parent for a variety of reasons: separation, divorce, widowhood, adoption, and premarital birth are the most common (Hanson & Sporakowski, 1986). Of all single-parent families, the largest group is headed by divorced mothers (37.3 %), the second largest group by never-married mothers (24.4 %), and the third largest by separated mothers (18.5 %). Other categories of single-parent families include widows (6.8%); divorced fathers (5.8%); separated fathers (2.4%); spouse-absent mothers (2.4%); never-married fathers (1.5%); and widowers (0.9%) (*Parents without partners*, 1983).

Gender and Race

Ninety percent of all single-parents are women (Gladow & Ray, 1986; Norton & Glick, 1986). Most single-father parents tend to maintain households with older children, particularly male children, whereas most single-mother parents maintain households with younger children (Hanson & Sporakowski, 1986). Mother-child families are disproportionately concentrated among blacks, whom, in 1984 represented one-third of all mother-child families. One-half of all black children under age 18 currently live with a single-mother, compared to only one-sixth of all white children living in a comparable situation.

Age and Marital Status

The mothers of mother-child families have statistically become younger in terms of their average ages. The median age of the mother dropped from 37.2 in 1970 to 34.6 in 1984 (there was a similar drop for mothers in two-parent families) (Hanson & Sporakowski, 1986). Moreover, there is a high concentration of very young mothers among single-parent families because of the young average age of never-married mothers and high divorce rate among women who were very young at the time of marriage. In contrast, the fathers in father-child families have a median age of about five years older than that for mothers in mother-child families (Norton & Glick, 1986).

Marital Status

Widowhood, as a major cause for single-parent family status, has gradually given way to divorce. In recent years, premarital births have also become an increasingly important contributor to the growth of mother-child families. During the period 1970 to 1984, divorced mothers maintaining families increased by nearly 300 percent. In 1984, they represented 46 percent of all mother-child families. Families maintained by never-married mothers increased by a startling 500 percent during the same period and presently represent 20 percent of all mother-child families. At the same time, families maintained by widows declined by 21 percent and now represent the smallest marital status category (9 percent in 1984) among mother-child families. As recently as 1960, widows maintained the majority of

mother-child families and in 1970 they constituted 25 percent of all single-mothers (Norton & Glick, 1986).

Children in Single-Parent Families

There is some statistical variation in the number of children presently living in female-headed households. Hewlett (1986) stated that in 1983 children from households headed by single women constituted almost a quarter of the entire population of children, while Edelman (1987) maintains that at present one in every five American children presently live in female-headed households. In either case, one projection is that half of the children born during the 1980s will spend a part of their first 18 years living in a single-parent family (Gladow & Ray, 1986).

Children in single-parent families are less likely than those in two-parent families to have one or two siblings living with them, but they are just about as likely as those in two-parent families to have three or more siblings in their home. It has been speculated that the parents of several children tend either to be content in their first marriage or they find it advantageous to quickly remarry if their first marriage ends in divorce (Norton & Glick, 1986).

Nevertheless, it is a basic observation (Hewlett, 1986) that within the mother-child family it is the children who bear the greatest weight of poverty. In 1983, 24 percent of all children under age 18 lived in families which fell below federal poverty levels. This was true of 57 percent of all children in single-parent families and of 60 percent of the children in mother-child families (as opposed to 26 percent of children in father-child families). These are statistics which would prove difficult to offset by the

weight of public assistance, since in the same year only 10 percent of children received Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), including 34 percent of the children in mother-child families and six percent of the children in father-child families.

Economics and Family Income

Hewlett (1986), an economist with the United Nations, has provided startling information on the economic repercussions of divorce for the mother-child household under the rubric, "the economic fallout of divorce." In effect, few divorced men help support their children. According to a 1982 Census Bureau survey, 41 percent of custodial mothers are not awarded any child support and of the five million single-mothers who are legally entitled to child support, only one-third receive the full amount. A further one-third collect only lesser proportions of the amounts awarded and the remainder collect nothing at all. Indeed, 60 percent of divorced fathers contribute nothing at all to the financial support of their children (Everett, 1984).

In 1985, the Congressional Budget Office released a document, "Reducing poverty among children," indicating that divorce can lower a single-mother's income as much as 70 percent. Since 9 out of 10 children of divorce live with their mothers, the children suffer accordingly. The economic ramifications for the mother-child family approaches catastrophic proportions since only a small percentage of the awards granted custodial mothers (59 percent of whom are legally entitled to support) are ever collected and the estimated costs of raising a child have continued to rise (i.e., estimates from \$71,000 to \$160,000) (Espenshade, 1979; Hewlett, 1986; Weitzman, 1981).

Other studies have shown similar economic consequences of divorce. For example, a 1983 New Jersey Supreme Court study found that divorce portends long-term, deepening poverty for a large proportion of women and their custodial children (Hewlett, 1986). In 1985, the Ford Foundation found that because of the increase in the rate of divorce, the number of female-headed families potentially headed toward poverty status has more than doubled since 1960 (Weiner, 1986). Pett and Vaughn-Cole (1986) reported that 56 percent of all single-parent families, including those separated, widowed, or never married, with children under the age of 18, were living at or below the poverty level in 1982 .

Regardless of the type of income measure used, the conclusion has been reached that men who maintain one-parent families are much better situated economically than their female counterparts (Norton & Glick, 1986). The median income of father-child families in 1983 was \$19,950, more than twice as high as for mother-child families. A comparison of two-parent, father-headed, and mother-headed families indicates the following median incomes: two-parent families, \$28,165; father-headed families, \$19,950; and mother headed families, \$9,153. Perhaps a more equitable basis for comparing the monetary well-being of various family types is the average income per family member. However, even from this perspective father-child families, with 1.5 children per family, are advantaged; mother-child families are next with 1.76 children per family, followed by two-parent families with 1.89 children per family. When these statistics are coupled with the considerably higher average income of men than women, father-child families head the list with a mean income per family member of \$9,103, somewhat higher than the \$8,177 for two-parent families, and considerably higher than the figure of \$4,251 for mother-child families.

Education

One of the ways in which father-headed families are economically better situated than their female counterparts lies in a higher average level of educational attainment. In 1984, 36 percent of the men under 45 maintaining one-parent families had completed 13 or more years of school, compared to 25 percent of the women in the same category. Both genders were lower than the corresponding proportion for householders in two-parent families (44 percent). In fact, there is a strong inverse relationship between educational attainment and being a single-parent. Clearly, the fewer years of schooling a parent has completed, the greater the likelihood the parent is to maintain a one-parent family.

Single-parents are less likely to have completed a high school education, whereas married couple parents are more likely to be college graduates. Specifically, in 1984, 28 percent of single-parents (usually mothers) under 45 years old, with children under 18 years of age, had not received a high school diploma and only nine percent had earned a college degree. Fathers in single-parent families had significantly less education than fathers in married couple families, but significantly more education than the mothers in single-parent families. In 1984, only 23 percent of all families whose principal householder was under the age of 45 years were one-parent families, but they represented 35 percent of custodial parents who were characterized by having less than four years of high school (only 10 had 4 or more years of college).

Since 1970, however, there is evidence of significant improvement in the educational level of lone custodial parents. By 1984, significantly

smaller proportions had terminated their education at high school graduation and significantly larger proportions had completed at least some college education. The most impressive statistic was the sharp jump, exceeding 300 percent, in the number of college educated women maintaining families with children. Thus, at present children in one-parent families benefit from sharing the home of a better educated parent than was the case for their counterparts in 1970 (Norton & Glick, 1986).

The educational distribution of lone black mothers is generally quite similar to that of other lone mothers. Lone black fathers who head families, however, compare less favorably to fathers in married couple families with regard to their educational distribution. These facts are reflected in the generally greater competitive disadvantage of black men when compared to black women involved in the workplace. Information for Hispanic mothers in one-parent families in 1984 indicates that their proportion was twice as large as that for black mothers with less than a full high school education, and only about one-half as large a proportion with one or more years of college training.

Work Force Status

The greater likelihood that single-fathers than single-mothers of young children are in the work force is another way in which the former are more economically well situated than the latter. For example, 88 percent of the men and 69 percent of the women in one-parent families were in the labor force in 1984. Focusing upon single women for the same year, two of every three mothers having sole custody of children under 18 years of age were members of the labor force and the rate was considerably higher for the mothers with children of school age (77 percent) than it was

for those with preschoolers (53 percent). The rate falls still lower, but yet significantly higher than the rate for a few decades ago, for single-mothers of very young children under the age of three (45 percent). All of the corresponding rates were higher for divorced mothers and lower for never-married mothers. These differences by marital status reflect the higher educational level and the larger amount of work experience, hence the greater employability, of divorced mothers (Norton & Glick, 1986).

The range of labor force participation rates by marital status and age of children varied from a high level of 84 percent for divorced mothers with children of school age (but none younger) to a low level of 40 percent for never-married mothers with the care of children under three years of age. Among the reasons for this wide gap is the fact that divorced mothers were far less likely than never-married mothers to make their homes with parents and it is likely that they felt more urgency to obtain work to support themselves and their children. The worker rate for married mothers was relatively low since virtually all married mothers could count on their husbands to help with family expenses (Norton & Glick, 1986). In contrast, only about one-half of divorced mothers could count on obtaining child support payments from the fathers of their children (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985).

Black single-mothers were less likely than white single-mothers to be in the labor force. However, black married mothers were more likely than white married mothers to be in the labor force, especially with regard to mothers of children below school age. Mothers of Hispanic origin had consistently lower worker rates than either white or black mothers. Not only do Hispanic mothers have less education to make them employable and, on the average, more children to provide care for, but their culture also tends

to be less approving of the employment of mothers away from their homes (Norton & Glick, 1986).

Single-Mothers

From the review of the literature in the previous section, the following single-mother demographics can be summarized: Single-mothers comprise 90 percent of single-parent households and approximately 26 percent of all family households; one-third of all single-mother families are black; the median age of women heading single-mother families is 34.6; the average number of children is one. This section will examine the effect of social support systems upon the well-being of the mothers in question, concluding with considerations of the concept of well-being, its relationship to social support, and the relationship between single-mothers and higher education.

Single-Motherhood, Social Support, and the Concept of Well-Being

The burgeoning growth in the number of single-parent families, and awareness that single-parents constitute about 26 percent of all family households, with 50 percent of these households living in poverty, has led to an increased awareness of the major process of family structural change that American society is undergoing. Austrom (1984) examined 1,093 single and married males and females (20 percent of whom were single-mothers), assessing differences in their sense of well-being due to marital status. The study concluded that social support is a better predictor of life satisfaction and well-being than is marital status. The emotional well-being and life satisfaction concepts of single adults are a function of social support, be it friendships or some other form of close companionship.

Given the general characteristics of the single-mother, in particular financial stress often due to poverty, and the multiple responsibilities of household maintenance and child raising, researchers are asking how this family form is doing and how these mother-headed families are surviving? Earlier research abounds on the essential qualities of affiliation and necessity of social support for the survival of the human species. Van den Berghe (1978) has written that "Human beings are so gregarious, in fact, that they are simply unthinkable as isolated individuals. Our sociability is rooted, not only in our culture, but also in our biology" (p.40). Humans evolved as a social species, specifically as primates that historically lived in biologically related groups of 10 to 100 individuals (Austrom, 1984; Van den Berghe, 1978). Most primates are equipped with a disposition to avoid isolation and to maintain proximity. Bowlby (1973) has suggested that this disposition may be instinctive. The proclivity for attachment is genetically selected because it contributes to the survival of the organism and to the fitness of the interactants. In line with a sociobiological perspective, animals interact to survive and to reproduce and Bowlby notes that "this affectional bonding is no recent development--still less a perquisite of being human; it is built deep into our biological inheritance" (p. 39).

Bowlby (1973) further suggests that understanding the nature of attachment behavior is necessary to have an understanding of the human personality and its health or ill health. Attachment behavior is a normal and healthy aspect of human nature, "from the cradle to the grave" (p. 47). Studies have shown that infant deprivation from the mother, separation and estrangement from significant others, and traumatic disruption of social relations has led to the occurrence of pathologies and disease (Austrom, 1984). In contrast, by creating a buffering system which operates to reduce

the risk of illness, social support has been shown to be an effective means of mediating stress (Cassel, 1974; Kaplan, Cassel, & Gore, 1977; Taylor, 1986).

Slater (1970) has suggested that the social fragmentation occurring in the U.S. is so severe that it may be reaching the breaking point and that people are in need of expressive support systems, such as marriage and the family, to offset the deleterious effects of disordered social relationships. However, the contrary seems to be the case: More and more people are postponing marriage, avoiding marriage, voluntarily not having children, living alone, and living as single-parents heading families. However, it should be added that the lack of a primary affectional bond (e.g., husband, wife, or lover) does not preclude other sources of intimacy and social support (Austrom, 1984).

Social Support--Methodological and Conceptual Issues

If social support is essential to the well-being of individuals, and in this context, the well-being of single-mothers, the question then becomes: what is meant by social support and how can we measure the effectiveness of social support? In the 1970s, a number of influential findings originating in diverse fields of inquiry suggested that the beneficial effects of social support may be more amenable to change than a) individual efforts to obviate stress or b) other means of mediation to effect changes in personality traits or coping styles (Caplan, 1974; Caplan, Robinson, French, Caldwell, & Shinn, 1976; Dean & Lin, 1977; Kaplan et al., 1977).

In recent years, the initial enthusiasm surrounding the beneficial effects of social support on physical and psychological well-being has been replaced by a more critical examination of the earlier claims from the 1970s.

Wortman and Dunkel-Schetter (1987) compiled a lengthy review of the literature on concepts and methods in the study of social support. Noting that the term "social support" is used widely to refer to the mechanisms by which interpersonal relationships offer protection from the deleterious effects of stress, the authors recommend precise and specific definitions as crucial to the construction of a valid instrument for the measurement of the success of social support. The following examples were included in the study as examples of precise definitions:

- 1) "Interpersonal transactions involving expression of positive affect, the affirmation or endorsement of persons beliefs or values, and/or provision of aid or assistance" (Kahn and Antonucci, 1980, cited in Wortman & Dunkel-Schetter, 1987, p. 68).
- 2) "Behavior that assures people that their feelings are understood by others and considered normal in the situation" (Walker, MacBride, & Vachon, 1977, cited in Wortman & Dunkel-Schetter, 1987, p. 68).

A more general and comprehensive definition was provided by Cobb (1976), who defined social support as the exchange of information that provides individuals and families with a) emotional support, leading them to believe they are cared for and appreciated, b) esteem support, leading them to believe they are valued, and c) network support, providing a network of mutual obligations through which they can obtain problem solving information, material assistance, and a sense of belonging.

House (1981) has emphasized that, though definitions of social support differ slightly in their focus, there is some consensus about the aspects of relationships that are within the general domain of social support, given that

there is some disagreement among investigators on the question of which aspects of social support are most important. Unlike earlier definitions, each of the definitions given above is sufficiently precise to permit a clear operational definition of the construct. From the literature, it may be concluded that a definition of social support should: (1) be as specific as possible; (2) avoid combining diverse social assets into a single measure; (3) avoid the assumption within the definition that social support is beneficial. The presumed benefits should be forecast as hypothesized effects rather than elements of the definition (Antonucci, 1985; Caplan, 1974; House, 1981).

Wortman and Dunkel-Schetter (1987) call for greater conceptual and research specificity, offering the following recommendations in developing future research on social support:

- 1) the importance of measuring support in a way that will permit assessment of the distinct types of support, e.g., emotional support or advice from specific providers (a spouse or physician), since available evidence suggests that the impact of support is strongly affected by these factors;
- 2) the importance of using a multimethod approach to support the measurement, including both structural aspects and subjective assessments of the adequacy of the support network, and the problems inherent in assuming that structural variables alone are an indication of the adequacy of support;
- 3) the importance of considering negative as well as positive support, since there is evidence suggesting that such behaviors may be very prevalent in interactions between stressed persons and those in their support network, and that they may have a strong influence on subsequent health outcomes; and

- 4) the need to consider the perspective of the provider as well as the recipient in obtaining judgements of effectiveness of particular kinds of support, given evidence that providers sometimes offer attempts at support that are regarded as unhelpful.

Social Support, Support Types, and Well-Being

Gottlieb (1981), who examined the development and the application of a classification scheme of informal helping behaviors extended to single-mothers, asked women to identify problems they were having and the persons who had been helpful in dealing with these problems. They were then asked to indicate specifically what the person had done or how he or she had behaved. Gottlieb then analyzed the content of the women's responses, developing a classification scheme for the types of helping behaviors mentioned. Respondents identified a range of behaviors frequently included in taxonomies of social support, such as listening or providing reassurance, and accompanying the respondent in stressful situations.

This study is concerned with these forms of support, which can be both of an emotional nature and in the form of a network, for single-mother families. Support may be provided through a variety of relationships, such as social support or support from friends, relatives, romantic involvements, neighbors, and specially created groups for single-parents. Support may be characterized as one of three types:

- 1) formal, provided by professional helping relationships, such as those with counselors or agency workers;
- 2) structured informal, provided as a by-product of involvement in structured group activities, such as P.T.A., churches, clubs, etc;
and

- 3) informal, provided by relationships with kin, neighbors, or friends, etc.

McLanahan et al. (1981), basing their research on the prior studies of Bachrach (1975), Guttentag et al. (1980), Pearlin & Johnson (1978), and Radloff & Rae (1979), examined the relationship between network support and psychological well-being in single-mothers and found higher rates of anxiety and depression among single-mothers and their children than among other marital status groups. The results indicated that the effectiveness of network structures (friends, relatives, or romantic partner) is mediated by the role orientation of the single-mother. There are those who are "stabilizers," and who want to maintain their pre-divorce roles of wife or mother, and there are "changers," those who attempt to establish new identities (e.g., career or professional roles) (McLanahan et al., 1981).

Because their social support needs differ, "stabilizers" and "changers" tend to establish different kinds of networks and appear to prosper in different kinds of network environments. The implications of the McLanahan et al. (1981) study are that not only does the success of the support network depend on the availability of friends and other types of supporters, but also on the fit between the role orientation of the woman and the way in which her network is organized.

From a more positive perspective, Hanson (1986) built on the current body of research focusing on the strengths in single-parent families, investigating the characteristics of healthy single-parent (both male and female) families with dimensions typically used in research studies of healthy two-parent families: 1) socioeconomic status, 2) social support systems, 3) level of communication, 4) problem solving, 5) degree of religiousness, and 6) physical and mental health of the mother-child dyad. Hanson found that

there is a relationship between physical and mental health, and that good health in single-parents is highly related to good health in their children. Moreover, children living with female parents reported better health than those living with male parents, but fathers reported better health than did mothers. Hanson concluded that good health may be predicted by parental gender, social support, communication, and custodial arrangement.

Loveland-Cherry (1986) examined the differences in personal health practices between the single-parent and the two-parent family. The study focused upon the relationship of family characteristics, including socialization practices, extent of social networks, health training efforts, family socioeconomic status, and personal health practices. A positive relationship was found between personal health practices and the extent of social networks for both family types, both for parents and for children.

An earlier study by Colletta (1979) addressed the effect of support systems on the well-being of low-income parents. Findings indicated that low income single-mothers, compared to middle income single-mothers, received the highest levels of support, yet were generally dissatisfied with the support they received. Colletta's conclusions were based upon the inclusion of financial support from agencies, which is typically impersonal and ego-deflating, with other sources of social support. The combination of agency support with informal support may have obscured the question of whether informal support systems have a positive effect on the well-being of low income single-parent families. The question arises as to whether the financial stress that low-income single-parent families experience (Cebollero, Cruise, & Stollak, 1986; Hanson, 1986; Hewlett, 1986; Norton & Glick, 1986; Pett & Vaughn-Cole, 1986) is so great that no amount of social support could compensate for it.

Several studies examined primarily middle-income single-mothers in the transitional period immediately following separation or divorce (Berman & Turk, 1981; Bowen, 1982; Chiriboga, Coho, Stein & Roberts, 1979; Hunt & Hunt, 1977; Pett, 1982; Spanier & Casto, 1979). Findings suggested that positive post-divorce adjustment is strongly related to the existence and to the utilization of support systems.

In addition to the value of support to single-parents, there is the question of the value of specific types of support. The two most commonly mentioned sources of informal support for single-parents are relatives and friends (Albrecht, 1980; Anspach, 1976; Barry, 1979; Bowen, 1982; Chiriboga et al., 1979; Colletta, 1979; McLanahan et al., 1981; Pett, 1982; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Colletta found that low income single-parent mothers showed greater reliance on kin than did those of middle income levels, but Spanier and Hanson (1981) found that following divorce, women who obtained support exclusively from relatives were not as well adjusted as those whose support came from friends or from both friends and relatives. Therefore, support from relatives and friends may differ in its effect upon the well-being of single-parents.

Involvement with a romantic partner is another source of informal social support for single-parents. It would appear that in the past this form of support was overvalued, suggesting that a steady romantic partner can offer single-parents a magnitude of support unobtainable from any other source. Implicit in this assumption was the idea that remarriage was the best means for single-parents to obtain an adequate level of emotional and network support (Gladow & Ray, 1986). McLanahan et al. (1981) commented on the inconsistency of situations where some studies used marital status as an indicator of support, while others defined intimacy exclusively

in terms of a close relationship with a spouse or boyfriend. By way of contrast, Brandewein (1977) found that divorced women, even those who were in fairly affluent circumstances, but who were isolated in their homes, did not seem to be doing as well as those who could draw on neighborly supports. In the available literature, there is relatively little consideration of how single-parents' sense of general community support influences their well being.

Single-parents' groups have also been frequently mentioned as a source of support (Albrecht, 1980; Cebollero et al., 1986; Clayton, 1971, Colletta, 1979; Jauch, 1977). However, it should be noted that members of Parents without Partners, the most widespread organization specifically created for single-parents, consists primarily of middle-income and middle class members and does not speak to the interests of single-parents from other social classes. At present, there are no studies specific to other parents' groups. Of sources of support that could be expected to be active in this respect, little is known about churches as a source of social support for single-parents. Moreover, Colletta (1979) has demonstrated that very few single-parents utilize this potential source of support.

From a typological point of view, Gladow & Ray (1986) investigated the effect of informal and structured informal sources of social support, including relatives, friends, steady romantic involvements, neighbors, community resources, and organizations, on the well-being of single-parents. Their sample was a non-randomized group of 63 parents, primarily white females, ranging in age from 20 to the mid-50s (mean age category, 30 to 34). The sample of rural single-mothers was obtained from the files of a county agency which administered low income assistance programs showed that all families were living below nationally established poverty levels (125 percent

of minimum income for each family type). The average number of children living with the single-mother was two (with a range from 1 to 6). There was a wide range in educational level (from an 8th grade education to some graduate school experience). The median educational level attained was graduation from high school. Forty-one percent of the respondents were employed, 23 percent were unemployed, 25 percent were community college or university students; 33 percent of the sample were involved in a steady romantic relationship; and 73 percent of the women had been single-parents for over two years.

Designed specifically for the single-mother population, and administered by personal interviews, Gladow & Ray (1986) developed a scale of four measures to assess well-being, including: 1) problems, 2) happiness, 3) loneliness, and 4) isolation. A support scale of six measures, including support from friends, support from relatives, neighbors, romantic involvement, community, and support of personal conversations, was used to assess the social support of the subjects. Both the support and well-being scales had, respectively, Cronbach alpha coefficients of reliability of .88 and .74.

Pearson correlations and stepwise multiple regressions were run between measures of support and measures of well-being. Results showed total informal support had a positive yet varying effect on general well-being. Specifically, friendship support and relative support appeared to make significant but differential contributions to the reduction of problems in single-mothers lives. Support from friends had the greatest effect on reducing loneliness, whereas relative support had no relationship to loneliness (Gladow & Ray, 1986).

Happiness was correlated with the total support scale for all five subscales, except relative support. Isolation was affected by a number of

support sources: romantic involvement, friends, relatives, and community support. Gladow & Ray's (1986) study indicated that social support contributes to fewer problems in the lives of the low-income single-mothers.

Concepts of Well-Being

Unlike the large and increasingly definitive body of literature on social support, well-being is viewed as a general state of health. In other words, well-being is poorly defined, encompassing personal states such as happiness, adjustment, mental health, and stress (Berman & Turk, 1981; McLanahan et al., 1981; Probst et al., 1986; Taylor, 1986). For example, the study of Furstenberg and Spanier (1984) on remarriage and Austrom's (1984) research on single living conceptualized well-being as an array of social, psychological, and health indices. Other researchers have focused their view of well-being on singular, or at the most, dual definitions (Gladow & Ray, 1986). The following section addresses the literature of well-being in terms of social support and the well-being of single-parent families.

Pett (1982) used the General Well Being Schedule (GWB) (Fazio, 1977) to assess well-being resulting from the effect of income issues and changed social status in divorced custodial parents. The GWB assesses "personal adequacy" (defined as well-being), ranging from health condition, state of anxiety, energy levels, to life satisfaction. A strong inverse relationship was found between economic stress and well-being.

In an extensive study on single living, Austrom (1984) measured a broad concept of well-being related to the sense of satisfaction with conditions of life. His findings indicated that married people are happier and more satisfied with their lives, particularly with their friendships, and that

women have higher rates of depression than men. Overall, however, Austrom concluded that "social support is actually a better predictor of depressive symptomatology and life satisfaction than marital status" (p. 110). All domains included in Austrom's study (e.g., friendship, love relationships, marital status, quality of working life, financial and living situations) were significantly related to the indices of well-being. Results of the study indicated that in the achievement of a sense of well-being, networks of supportive relationships may prove to be effective alternatives to the normative model of the romantic couple, married or not. Specifically, for single adults emotional well-being and life satisfaction were a function of social support, be it friendship or some other form of close relationship.

To investigate the relationship of single-motherhood and psychological distress (or, psychological well-being), McLanahan et al. (1981) asked 45 divorced mothers about their social support networks and their current self-images in comparison to their pre-divorce self-images. Results indicated that the social support of friends, relatives and romantic partners was related to well-being, but that its effects were moderated by a third factor: the role orientation of the mother (i.e., whether they were "stabilizers" or were "changers"). The recommendations of the study were that professionals working with single-mothers first determine personal goals and then move to assist them with the creation of networks suitable to the present orientation of the women.

Other writers have utilized problem scales to measure well-being among divorced female populations (Berman & Turk, 1981; Gladow & Ray, 1986; Hetherington et al., 1977). The studies of Hetherington and Berman and Turk utilized a Checklist of Problems and Concerns (CPC) to assess the nature of problems encountered during the process of adapting to divorce.

Four problem areas were assessed, including the practical ("taking care of my car"), the interpersonal ("maintaining old friendships"), the family ("having enough time for my children"), and emotional difficulties ("losing my temper at my family"). Moreover, the moods of the subjects were assessed by a nine-item scale which rated the frequency of certain felt emotions during the previous three months, including feelings of unhappiness and loneliness. The results showed the importance of coping strategies and confirmed the efficacy of problem and mood scales in well-being or adjustment analysis.

Through multivariate techniques, Probst (1986) examined the effects of demographic variables on the adjustment of single-mothers, assessed by a depression check list and an anxiety inventory. The study demonstrated that the length of time of separation or divorce was a significant factor in the adjustment process, as those separated women who had not finalized their divorces demonstrating greater depression and anxiety. The total number of children was a significant predictor only for depression, but the number of children under 10 years of age living with the mother was a highly significant predictor of both anxiety and depression. Thus, the age of the children, rather than their numbers, seemed to be the more significant predictor of adjustment or well-being for single-mothers. In terms of other considerations, the mother's educational level was a highly consistent predictor of adjustment with the more effective adjustments related to the higher levels of education.

Gladow & Ray (1986) measured the effects of social support on four measures of well-being, including: (1) total problems, a checklist of 20 problems designed to assess problems of daily functioning in low-income,

single-mother families; and (2) three separate measures of feelings of isolation, happiness, and loneliness. Findings indicated that as scores on the support scales increased, total problems decreased in number, as did the sense of loneliness and isolation. At the same time, a sense of happiness increased. However, various types of support had different effects on different components of well-being. Friendship and relative support made singular contributions to the reduction of problems in the lives of these mothers and the support of friends was of the greatest utility in reducing the sense of loneliness. The most significant effect on happiness was frequency and satisfaction with personal conversations, with the evidence suggesting that intimacy with the conversant bore a close relationship to the subjects sense of happiness. This finding complements those of Lowenthal and Haven (1969), who documented the importance of confidant relationships for psychological well-being, and with those of Peplau and Pearlman (1982), who observed that the capacity to develop and maintain an intimate relationship is an important index of psychological health.

The well-being component of isolation was affected by a number of support sources, including romantic involvement, friendship support, relative support, community support, and the composite of all support subscales. Romantic involvement was a predictor only of isolation, corroborating Austrom's (1984) findings that forming friendships may enhance the quality of well-being as well as romantic involvement. This was explained in terms of the romantic partner's involvement with the children, similar to that of a father's, which resulted in the respondents feeling less alone in their role as parents (Gladow & Ray, 1986).

Mothers in Higher Education

The voluminous literature on "reentry" women in higher education, consists primarily of population profiles, discussions of their unique problems, and the programs that have been implemented to address the needs of women returning to higher education. However, few of these studies have specifically addressed the issue of single-mother students. These studies, many of which emanate from college and university counseling departments, are primarily descriptive in nature, driven by the statistical awareness of the tremendous increase in the enrollment of adult women (the enrollment of women over the age of 30 in colleges doubled in the 10 years between 1970 and 1980) (Grant & Snyder, 1986; Hughes, 1983; Smallwood, 1980).

Smallwood (1980) examined the needs of 392 adult women (divorced and married, over 25 years of age) community college students, seeking to identify and assess the intensity of their problems and the nature of the relationship between the intensity of the problems and variables of credit hours (number earned), age and marital status, family income, and the number and age range of dependent children. The demographic findings were that the typical subject was married, in her early thirties, and the mother of two children with a family income range between \$11,000 and \$15,000. She was typically a part-time student, taking six credit hours, and had previously earned from 16 to 30 credit hours.

In terms of problems, the respondents reported that coordinating child care and family responsibilities with their college schedule was the number one problem. Marital status was found to be significantly related to approximately one-third of the problems in Smallwood's (1980) study, with

divorced and separated women indicating this as their greatest concern, along with financial and legal problems. The most crucial issues to divorced and separated women were their relationships with their children and with men.

Women's age was significantly related to certain problems, as younger adult women students were more concerned with child care and child-oriented issues and the older women students were more worried about their ability to succeed in college and their desire to pursue careers traditionally open to men. Smallwood (1980) recommended that top priority be given to the creation of child care facilities, and that it was incumbent upon the institution to provide such facilities. It was suggested that colleges which provided this service would increase their enrollment of adult women students. Additional recommendations called for an increase in the number of student support services, including academic, financial, and personal counseling, in addition to open encouragement.

The results of McClain's (1979) needs assessment of adult women returning to higher education substantiated Smallwood's (1980) findings, in addition to noting that the withdrawal of adult women from institutions mainly reflects internal family conflicts, role conflicts, and financial problems. In contrast, a study by Roehl and Okun (1985) on life events and the use of social support systems among re-entry women showed that this population tended not to use student services.

McGraw (1982) selectively reviewed programs and counseling interventions. The study revealed that peer groups were efficacious in facilitating the reentry experience. It was concluded that many programs lacked evaluative means and therefore the effectiveness of the programs was difficult to measure. Other studies (Christian & Wilson, 1985; Hall & Gleaves, 1981; Kahnweiler & Johnson, 1980; Wheaton & Robinson, 1983) of reentry

women reached similar conclusions, and called for additional empirical research on the adult women student population and recommended programs and services that facilitate the experience of these women, while at that same time serving to increase college and university enrollments.

The consistent theme emerging throughout the literature on mothers in higher education is that the student mothers' primary concerns are child care, home, and financial responsibilities. Unless these needs are satisfied, the mothers were not able to successfully participate in educational pursuits (McClain, 1979; Smallwood, 1980).

Noel, Levitz and Saluri (1987) viewed student success in general from the perspective of institutional marketing, i.e., what can institutions of higher education do to attract new students and to retain current students? Their recommendations focused on institutional support systems and on giving attention to student needs. Rather than asking the student to adapt, Noel et al. suggest that education adjust its methods and goals for the service and support of students. Weiner's (1986) study on the needs of reentry women also urged that higher education be more responsive to the unique requirements of older women and single-mothers.

III. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the extent, if any, to which total support and selected sub-measures of social support affect total well-being and selected submeasures of well-being of single-women parents who are engaged in community college education. Furthermore, a determination of the influence of the individual demographic variables on well-being was investigated.

This chapter reviews the specific methodology used to address the central purpose of the study. It details the data collection instruments, the specific procedures for collecting the data, as well as a description of the population and the sample. In addition, information on the characteristics of the respondents, the main null hypotheses to be tested, and the statistical methods for analyzing the data are included.

Data Collection Instruments

A mail survey instrument (see Appendix B), comprised of three sections, social support, well-being, and demographics, was utilized for the collection of data. This survey was based on a personal interview instrument developed by Gladow & Ray (1986), for which Cronbach's alpha measure of reliability ranged from .74 (total problem scale) to .88 (total support scale). In order to specifically target the single-mother student, one item was added to Gladow's original problem scale, while the Community

Support, Religious, and Group Support subscales, and one item from the Problem scale, were deleted. In order to equate all survey items for statistical evaluation, items were rescaled from zero to four.

Dependent Variable: Well Being

The dependent variable of well-being was measured by the five following components:

- 1) Problems scale: A 20-question measure of potential problems, such as transportation, medical/dental care, lack of emotional support, relationship with the children, and decision making. For each problem, the subject was asked the frequency of the problem (responses ranging on a five-point scale between "never" and "always"). The mean frequency of responses forms the total problem scale. This scale is specifically targeted for single-mothers enrolled in higher education.
- 2) Happiness measure: A single item measure, based on the question, "thinking about your life as a whole, how happy would you say you are these days?" The measure uses a five point scale where responses range from "extremely unhappy" to "extremely happy."
- 3) Loneliness measure: A single item measure, based on the question, "which of the following statements best describes your feelings of loneliness at the present time?" The measure uses a five point scale where responses range from "I never feel lonely" to "I always feel lonely."
- 4) Isolation measure: A single item measure, based on response to the statement, "I feel isolated from other people: like I'm the

only one who really cares about what's going on in my life and with my children." The measure uses a five point scale where responses range from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree.". This item is designed to measure a unique dimension of loneliness/isolation, or how alone the subjects feel in their role as single-parents, unlike the loneliness measure that focuses solely on the single-mother as an individual.

- 5) Total Well-Being scale: A composite measure of the Problem, Happiness, Loneliness, and Isolation measures.

Independent Variables: Social Support

The independent variable of social support included the following six scales:

- 1) Support from Friends: A subscale with five point Likert-type scales. Three questions address interactions with and numbers of friends. The fourth question asks, "overall, how much emotional support would you say you receive from friends?"
- 2) Support from Relatives: A subscale with five-point Likert type scales. Three questions address interactions with relatives, and the fourth question asks, "overall, how much emotional support would you say you receive from relatives?"
- 3) Support from Neighbors: A subscale of four questions with five point Likert-type scales. Two questions address interactions with neighbors and two with familiarity and closeness with people in the neighborhood.
- 4) Personal Conversations: Two questions with six point Likert-type scales and encompassing all three sources of support:

"When you are concerned about a personal matter, about how often do you talk with someone else about it?" and "How often do you feel that these conversations about personal matters are satisfying to you?"

- 5) Romantic Involvement: A single item dichotomous subscale, which asks: "At this time, are you romantically involved with a partner?"
- 6) Total Support: A composite of the support subscales, Friends, Relatives, Neighbors, Personal Conversations, and Romantic Involvement.

Demographic Variables

- 1) Age category and ethnicity.
- 2) Number and age category of children.
- 3) Reasons for becoming a single-mother (divorced, separated, never-married, or widowed).
- 4) Length of time lived as single-parent.
- 5) Credits currently enrolled.
- 6) Household income and financial aid categories.
- 7) Employment status.
- 8) Type of single-parent family.

Procedures

The specific procedures utilized for this study were as follows:

- 1) Determination of an appropriate sample size by application of the over-sampling blind technique to a Linn-Benton Community

College (LBCC) female student population of 1,000. To obtain the desired sample size, this procedure allowed for a) normal non-response rates and b) unknown sample frame.

- 2) Through the cooperation of LBCC, Office of Instruction, access was granted to mailing labels of randomly selected female students.
- 3) Mailing the cover letter, the questionnaire, and return envelope (see Appendix C).
- 4) Subsequent mailings to non-respondents, including one postcard and two additional full questionnaire mailings, within a seven week period.
- 5) Data analysis and testing of the hypotheses for significant differences and strengths of relationships.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of single-mother students at a local community college during the spring term of 1988. The number of single-mother students was unknown. However, the following general information about the LBCC population and the institution, coupled with information gleaned from the demographic literature on single-parents, allowed an estimation of the number of single-mother students currently enrolled. From the estimate, a population of female students was over-sampled blind.

Information Leading to Over-Sample Blind Estimates

- 1) The average age of the LBCC student is 37 years of age.

- 2) Access to the campus child care center, relatively low tuition costs, ease of parking, smaller class size, availability of vocational training and two-year degree programs, and separate community locations may attract single-parent students to LBCC.
- 3) Nationally, 26 percent of family households are single-mother headed.

From the entire list of female students at LBCC (of a total enrollment of approximately 6,000 total female students), 1,000 female students were randomly selected.

Linn-Benton Community College is a rural, two-year institution, located in the Willamette Valley of Oregon, with facilities that include a central campus in Albany, and community education centers in Corvallis, Lebanon, Sweet Home, and other outlying locations. The curriculum offers vocational and college transfer courses at the central campus and community education courses at ancillary locations.

The student population for LBCC in the spring of 1988 was approximately 11,000. This number included part-time and full-time students and degree and non-degree students. The average student age was 37.65. There were three distinct advantages in conducting research on single-mother students at a community college such as LBCC: (1) the average age of the student (37.65 years) closely approximated the average age of single-mothers (34 years); (2) given the financial and educational profile of the average single-mother, a community college would attract these women because of the more reasonable tuition and less pressure to perform than at state universities; and (3) since LBCC has several smaller community education campuses, the single-mother would find the small size of classes and the geographical proximity of the smaller campus to be attractive. In general, an

older population, affordable tuition, less pressure to perform, and ease of access all contribute to facilitating the single-mother's education.

Data Collection Procedures, Administration of the Survey

The survey construction and administration was performed according to standards specified by Dillman (1978) and the Survey Research Center at Oregon State University (OSU). The survey instrument was pilot tested with one individual selected from each of the following: (1) a graduate student from the OSU department of post-secondary education, 2) an OSU School of Education professor, and 3) a subject matter expert, a single-mother student. As suggested by Zemke and Kramlinger (1986), these three pilot testers were asked to read the survey aloud and talk their way through the answers. The investigator recorded ambivalences or misinterpretations of meaning and used the testers to help correct the problem on the spot.

A second phase of pilot testing involved administering the survey to a small sample of single-mother students. The investigator then performed a dry run for scoring, compiling, and interpretation. The finalized instrument was constructed and prepared for mailing according to the Dillman (1978) total design method.

Statistical Design

To test for possible effects of social support on the well-being of single-mother students, the following statistical analyses were performed:

- 1) Step 1, Investigate the demographics:
Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were computed to describe the population of single-mother students.
- 2) Step 2, Investigate the effect of Total Social Support on Total Well-Being:
 - a) Step 2.1, Investigate the effect of Total Support on Well-Being subscales.
 - b) Step 2.2, Investigate individual effects of support subscales on the individual six Well-Being subscales.

The above steps, 2, 2.1, and 2.2, were analyzed by regression analyses, which provided an overall indication of the effect, if any, of the independent variables (social support) on the dependent (well-being) variables, and second, provided an in-depth view of the specific effects of the social support subscales on specific well-being indices.

- 3) Step 3, investigate the influence of demographics on each Well-Being subscale. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run between demographic variables and Well-Being subscales.

Hypotheses

Dependent Variables: Well-Being

- H₁ There is no effect of age on the Problem, Happiness, Loneliness, Isolation and Total Well-Being subscales.
- H₂ There is no effect of the type of family household on the Problem, Happiness, Loneliness, Isolation and Total Well-Being subscales.

- H₃ There is no effect of single-mother status (i.e., how the subjects became single-mothers) on the Problem, Happiness, Loneliness, Isolation and Total Well-Being subscales.
- H₄ There is no effect of the length of time as a single-mother on the Problem, Happiness, Loneliness, Isolation and Total Well-Being subscales.
- H₅ There is no effect of the total number of children on the Problem, Happiness, Loneliness, Isolation and Total Well-Being subscales.
- H₆ There is no effect of income on the Problem, Happiness, Loneliness, Isolation and Total Well-Being subscales.
- H₇ There is no effect of financial aid on the Problem, Happiness, Loneliness, Isolation and Total Well-Being subscales.
- H₈ There is no effect of employment status on the Problem, Happiness, Loneliness, Isolation and Total Well-Being subscales.
- H₉ There is no effect of the number of current enrollment credits on the Problem, Happiness, Loneliness, Isolation and Total Well-Being subscales.
- H₁₀ There is no effect of degree program enrollment on the Problem, Happiness, Loneliness, Isolation and Total Well-Being subscales.

Independent Variables: Social Support

- H₁₁ There is no effect on Total Well-Being from Friends, Relatives, Neighbors, Personal Conversations, Romantic Involvement, and Total Support subscales.

- H₁₂ There is no effect on Problems by Friends, Relatives, Neighbors, Personal Conversations, Romantic Involvement, and Total Support.
- H₁₃ There is no effect on Isolation by Friends, Relatives, Neighbors, Personal Conversations, Romantic Involvement, and Total Support.
- H₁₄ There is no effect on Happiness by Friends, Relatives, Neighbors, Personal Conversations, Romantic Involvement, and Total Support.
- H₁₅ There is no effect on Loneliness by Friends, Relatives, Neighbors, Personal Conversations, Romantic Involvement, and Total Support.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are discussed in three sections: 1) descriptive statistics of the sample demographics, 2) analyses of variance between the demographic and well-being variables, and 3) regression analyses of the social support and well-being variables.

A random sample of 1,000 female students was derived from the spring term enrollment list of Linn-Benton Community College. Although the survey asked that only single-mothers respond to the survey questions, the majority of the surveys were returned by non-single-mothers with a variety of comments, indicating a range from grandmothers registered for non-credit courses, to 18-year old high school graduates in their first year of college.

Of the 1,000 questionnaires mailed (in a series of four mailings), 82 percent (820) were returned, of which 39 were omitted for reason of incomplete data. Of the 781 usable responses, 76 (or nearly 10 percent of the usable returns) were by single-mothers. After one of the 76 responses was omitted for failure to complete the survey questions, the sample numbered 75, which was determined to be an acceptable sample size for the purposes of the study (Maresh, 1988). Of the 705 women responding who were not single-mothers, many offered a variety of comments and information useful to Linn-Benton Community College for purposes of future planning.

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Of the total number of single-mother respondents, 92 percent ($n = 69$) were white (Caucasian), two respondents were Native American and the remaining four represented four different racial categories.

Age

The sample of single-mothers was comprised of 75 women with children, age 18 years and younger, enrolled at Linn-Benton Community College during spring quarter of 1988. Ages of the respondents ranged from 18 to over-50, with the largest percentage ($n = 18$ or 24 percent) falling in the 35 to 39 age category. One subject did not respond to the age question (Table 4-1 and Figure 4-1).

The modal age category (35-39) is consistent with Norton and Glick's (1986) family demographic profile, where the average age of the single female parent is 35 years. Norton and Glick indicated that the age of single-mothers is dropping, a trend reflecting the increasing proportion of never-married single-mothers. This group is comprised primarily of younger women, particularly teen-age mothers. However, the increasing numbers of never-married single-mothers may as well reflect growing social acceptance of alternative life styles, wherein older women (25-40) are choosing to parent alone.

Table 4-1. Distribution of Age Categories.

Age Category	Frequency	Valid Percent
18-24	9	12.2
25-29	12	16.2
30-34	14	18.9
35-39	18	24.3
40-44	14	18.9
45-49	6	8.1
50+	1	1.4
Total:	74	100.0

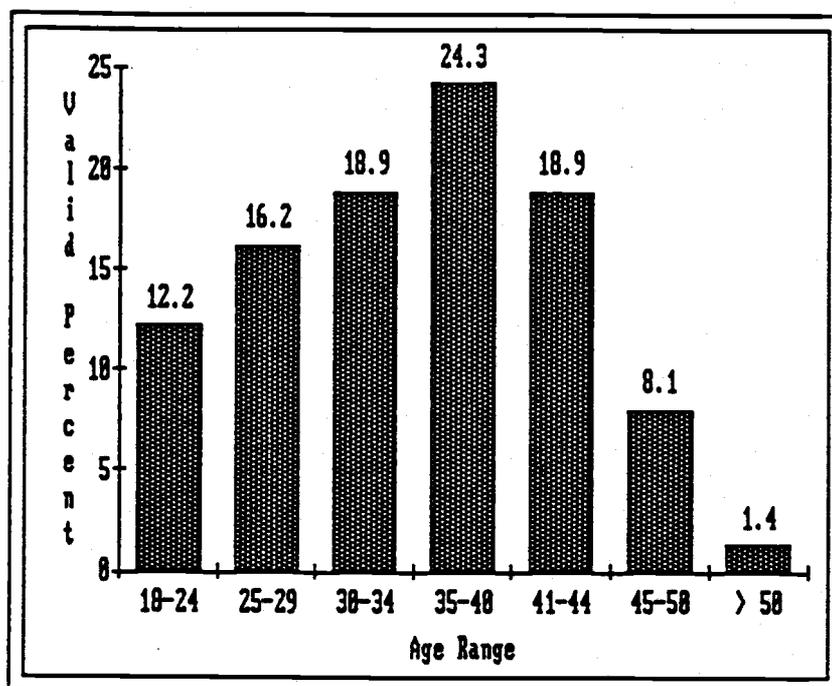


Figure 4-1. Age Categories of Respondents.

Type of Family Household

Two survey questions (16 and 16a), "do you and your children live in a household with other adults?" and "which adults do you and your children

live with?", were designed to ascertain the type of family household in which the single-mothers and their children lived. The U.S. Census (1985) identifies two major household categories, "family" and "nonfamily." Single parent heads-of-households are in the family category and comprise 26 percent of all family groupings.

In this study, 54 (72 percent) women indicated that they maintained their own household, while 21 (28 percent) indicated that they lived in a household with other adults (Table 4-2). Of the latter respondents, the U.S. Census (1985) defines the type of family category as "related" (living with relatives) or "unrelated" (living with friends or other unrelated individuals) subfamilies. In this study, 21 (28 percent) of the families were a subfamily type (either related or unrelated) and 54 (72 percent) of the women maintained their own household. Since the U.S. Bureau of the Census does not include single-parents of the subfamily type in the total family household figures, these results suggest that related and unrelated subfamilies include a potentially large number of single-parents with children.

Table 4-2. Type of Family Household.

Family Type	Frequency	Valid Percent
Maintain Own Household	54	72.0
Related Subfamily:		
Live With Relatives	8	10.7
Unrelated Subfamily		
Live With Friends	4	5.3
Live With Romantic Partner	9	12.0
Total:	75	100.0

Origin of Single-Mother Status

The majority of respondents became single-mothers through divorce (n = 39, 52 percent), but those surveyed also included 21 single-mothers (28 percent) who had never married, 10 women (13.3 percent) who were separated, and 5 women (6.7 percent) who had been widowed (Table 4-3). The reasons given within this group for becoming single-mothers closely approximate the available national demographics on single-mother families (Hanson & Sporkowdki, 1986; Norton & Glick, 1986; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985), where divorce represented the largest group of single-mothers (46 percent), the second largest group by never-married mothers (20 percent), and the third by separated mothers (18.5 percent). Other categories of single-mothers were widows (9 percent), with adoption and spouse-absent categories comprising the remaining percentage (6.5 percent). Comparatively, this group reported a higher incidence of divorce (52 percent) and never-married (28 percent), and a lower incidence of separation (13.3 percent) and widowhood (6.7 percent). As this research did not assess the adoption and spouse-absence as reasons for being a single-mother, a comparison of these categories is not possible.

In Gladow & Ray's study (1986) on low income single-mothers, the following percentage categories for being single-mothers were reported: Divorce (84 percent), never-married 13 percent), and widowhood (3 percent). A "separated" category was not given, yet could have been included in the divorced figure.

Table 4-3. Origin of Single-Mother Status.

Status	Frequency	Valid Percent
Widow	5	6.7
Divorce	39	52.0
Separated	10	13.3
Never Married	21	28.0
Total:	75	100.0

Length of Time as Single-Mother

Twenty-nine (38.7 percent) of the respondents had lived more than 5 years as a single-parent, 25 women (33.3 percent) had lived 2 to 5 years, and 12 women had lived 1 or 2 years as a single-mother (Table 4-4). These findings indicate that 72 percent of these single-mothers have weathered the first two years of single-mothering and may have opted for single status in preference to remarriage (Austrom, 1984). Second, the findings corroborate a similar trend in Gladow & Ray (1986), who found that 73 percent of their subjects had been single-mothers for two years or more.

Table 4-4. Length of Time as Single-Mother.

Time	Frequency	Valid Percent
Less than 12 Months	9	12.0
Between 1 and 2 Years	12	16.0
Between 2 and 5 years	25	33.3
More than 5 Years	29	38.7
Total	75	100.0

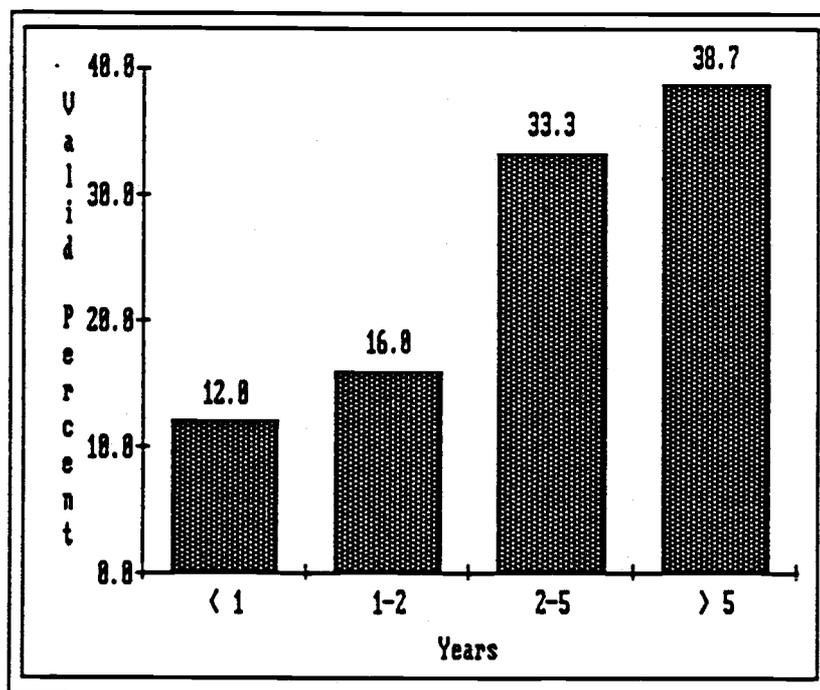


Figure 4-2. Length of Time as Single-Mother.

Number and Age of Children

Altogether, the 75 respondents reported a total of 134 children: 35 (46.7 percent) of the mothers had only one child, followed by 26 women (34.7 percent) with two children (Tables 4-5 and 4-6). The average number of children was 1.8, consistent with census averages (Norton & Glick, 1986).

The data in Table 4-6 was confounded by the repetition of the age "14" in the age categories of 10-14 and 14-18, resulting in a total number of children of 137, wherein the actual total number of children (Table 4-5) was 134. However, it appears that single-mothers with older children, who

experience less difficulty with child care than the mothers of younger children, are those who tend to enroll at LBCC.

Table 4-5. Number of Children for Single-Mothers.

Number of Children	Frequency Single-Mothers	Valid Percent
1	35	46.7
2	26	34.7
3	9	12.0
4	5	6.6
Total 134	75	100.0

Table 4-6. Age of Children.

Age Category (yrs)	Frequency of Children
Under 3	24
3-5	13
6-9	27
10-14	37
14-18	37
Total:	137

Income

In this study, over 58 percent of the single-mothers had a gross monthly income of \$1,000 or less, including 21.6 percent who lived on an income below \$500 per month. Nearly 80 percent of the entire population reported incomes of \$1,500 or less. One respondent did not answer this question (Table 4-7 and Figure 4-3). Norton and Glick (1986) and Hewlitt (1986) reported median annual income of \$9,000 to \$9,153 (approximate aver-

age = \$750/month) in 1983-1984 for mother-child families. In this study, approximately 58 percent of the respondents lived on a gross monthly income of \$1,000 or less, closely corresponding to the 1982 poverty level income of \$9,862 (Pett, 1986).

Table 4-7. Gross Monthly Income.

Income (\$)	Frequency	Valid Percent
< 500	16	21.6
501-1,000	27	36.5
1,001-1,500	16	21.6
1,501-2,000	8	10.8
2,001-2,500	3	4.1
2,501-3,000	2	2.7
> 3,000	2	2.7
Total:	74	100.0

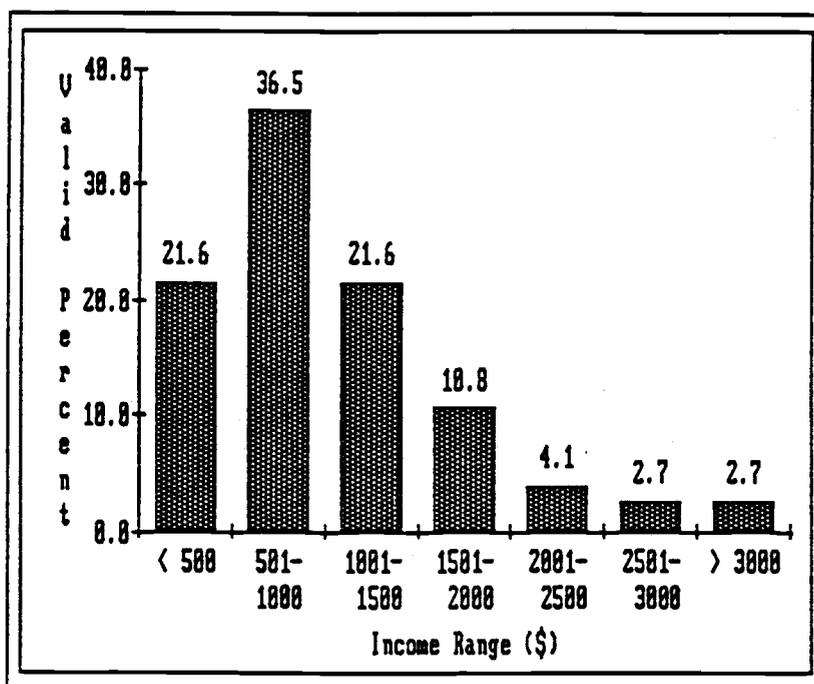


Figure 4-3. Monthly Income.

Income and Financial Aid

In this study, 48 women (64 percent) responded that they did not receive financial aid, while 27 (36 percent) responded affirmatively. Table 4-8 indicates the percentage of contribution to income from financial aid. Three women (12 percent of those receiving aid) reported that all their income came from financial aid, and 7 (28 percent) reported that most of their income was derived from financial aid. Two respondents did not answer this question. Although this study did not examine the relationship between those single-mothers enrolled for 7 credits or more and those receiving financial aid, it is of interest to note that 28 reported taking 7 or more units (refer to Table 4-10) and 27 reported receiving financial aid.

Table 4-8. Contribution of Financial Aid to Income.

Contribution	Frequency	Valid Percent
All Income	3	12.0
Most Income	7	28.0
1/2 Income	8	32.0
1/4 Income	7	28.00
Total:	25	100.0

Employment Status

In this study, 26 women (35.1 percent) were employed full-time, 27 (36.5 percent) were employed part-time, and 21 women (28.4 percent) were not employed. One woman did not respond to the employment status question (Table 4-9 and Figure 4-4).

Table 4-9. Employment Status.

Status	Frequency	Valid Percent
Full-time	26	35.1
Part-time	27	36.5
Not Employed	21	28.4
Total:	74	100.0

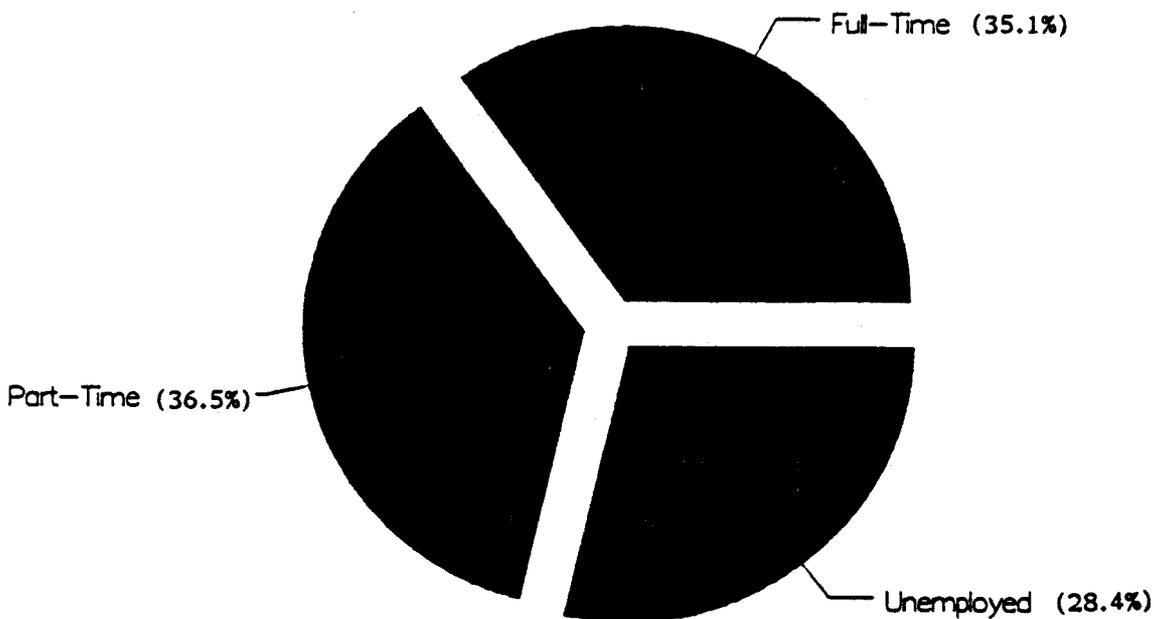


Figure 4-4. Employment Status.

Educational Information

From the survey comments it could be determined that 44 women who enrolled for 6 credits or less (61.1 percent) were often those who had enrolled for a non-credit class, such as a cycling or a cooking class (Table 4-10). In response to a question regarding enrollment in a degree program, 52 women (70.3 percent) responded that they were not enrolled in a degree program, while 22 (29.7 percent) indicated they were enrolled in a degree program. One subject did not respond to the question (Table 4-11).

Table 4-10. Number of Credits Enrolled.

Credits	Frequency	Valid Percent
6 credits or less	44	61.1
7 credits or more	28	38.9
Total:	72	100.0

Table 4-11. Enrollment Status.

Seeking Degree	Frequency	Valid Percent
No	52	70.3
Yes	22	29.7
Total	74	100.0

Summary of Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Based on the modal values of the demographic variables, the results from this study portray the single-mother enrolled at LBCC as Caucasian, between 35 and 39 years of age, and maintaining her own household on a gross monthly income of \$1,000 or less earned through part-time employment. Divorced for more than two years, this mother has one child, and is enrolled for six or less credits per term at LBCC. However, it should be noted that the above summary was based on modal values, which include atypical single-mothers in the sample, such as the 17 mothers age 29 and under, the 9 women with 3 children, and the 7 single-mothers who reported an income exceeding \$2,000.00 per month.

Effect of Demographic Characteristics on Well-Being

To test the null hypotheses that the demographic variables have no effect on well-being variables, one-way ANOVAs were computed, using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) ANOVA program (refer to Appendix A for table of F probability values). For those cases involving more than two group means, the Student Newman-Keuls Multiple Range Test was employed to identify the exact group differences. Those demographic variables which indicated a significant correlation with well-being are indicated in Table 4-12 (see Appendix A for the results for all demographic variables).

Table 4-12. Significant p-Values Between Well-Being and Demographic Variables.

	Demographic Variables			
	Receive Fin/Aid	Employment Status	Enrollment Status	Number of Credits
Total Well-Being		.02		
Problems	.00	.05	.04	.00
Isolation		.01		

Note: $p = < .05$ confidence level.

Problems and Receiving Financial Aid

H₇ There is no effect of financial aid on the Problems, Happiness, Loneliness, Isolation and Total Well-Being subscales.

For the Problems subscale, null hypothesis H₇ is rejected. Group 1, the respondents who did not receive financial aid, indicated they had fewer

problems ($x = 1.5931$) than Group 2 respondents who did receive financial aid ($x = 2.0703$), suggesting that single-mothers who receive financial aid may feel a stigma attached to institutional financial support, a finding corroborated by Colletta's (1979) research on low-income divorced women. Also, the red tape which is involved with receiving financial aid may add to the problems experienced by single-mothers. Another rationale for the evidence of increased problems associated with financial aid may be explained by the banking and educational institution regulations which require students to enroll for five units or more in order to receive aid. Therefore, in this study the single-mothers receiving aid are most likely the respondents who enrolled in at least five units and are committed to a degree program, both factors which contribute to increased problems with studying and finances.

Total Well-Being and Employment Status

H_8 There is no effect of employment status on the Problems, Happiness, Loneliness, Isolation and Total Well-Being subscales.

For the Total Well-Being subscale, null hypothesis H_8 is rejected. The p-value of .02 and the Student Newman-Keuls Test indicated differences between the means of Group 1--Employed Full-Time ($x = 1.4392$) and Group 2--Employed Part-Time ($x = 1.9728$) (Student Newman-Keuls Table 4-13).

Those single-mothers who worked full-time appear to have enjoyed a greater degree of overall well-being than did those who were employed part-time. There would seem to be no logical explanation why there were significant differences between full-time (Group 1) and part-time employment (Group 2) and no significant differences between the unemployed (Group 3) and either other group.

Table 4-13. Student Newman-Keuls Multiple Range Test for Well-Being Scale.

Means	Employment Group	Gp 1	Gp 3	Gp 2
1.44	1-Employed Full-time			
1.57	3-Not Employed			
1.97	2-Employed Part-Time	*		

* denotes pairs of groups significantly different at .05 confidence level.

Problems and Employment Status

H_8 There is no effect of employment status on the Problems, Happiness, Loneliness, Isolation and Total Well-Being subscales.

For the Problems subscale, null hypothesis H_8 is rejected. The results of this analysis were similar to the first analysis. A significant p-value of $< .05$ and results of the Student Newman-Keuls Multiple Range Test indicated that there were significant differences between the means of Group 1 (employed full-time, $x = 1.5261$) and Group 2 (employed part-time, $x = 1.9769$). See Table 4-14 for the results, which once again indicate that single-mothers employed full-time experience fewer problems than those single-mothers employed part-time. Those employed full-time may be more self-confident, economically stable, and self-directing than the women employed part-time. Significant differences were not found, however, between the unemployed group and either the part-time or the full-time employed groups. Perhaps the unemployed group experience fewer problems because they do not have the additional responsibility of working. These may be mothers with sufficient income from other sources (perhaps child support or

relatives), who choose not to work or to stay at home with their children when they are not involved at LBCC.

Table 4-14. Student Newman-Keuls Multiple Range Test for Problems.

Means	Employment Group	Gp 1	Gp 3	Gp 2
1.53	1-Employed Full-time			
1.84	3-Not Employed			
1.98	2-Employed Part-Time	*		

* denotes pairs of groups significantly different at < .05 confidence level.

Isolation and Employment

H_8 There is no effect of employment status on the Problems, Happiness, Loneliness, Isolation and Total Well-Being subscales.

For the Isolation subscale, null hypothesis H_8 is rejected. Respondents in Group 1 (employed full-time, $x = 1.3846$) differed significantly in feelings of isolation from those in Group 2 (employed part-time, $x = 2.4444$), paralleling the results discussed previously in this section pertaining to employment issues (Table 4-15). Single mothers who work full-time appear to feel less isolated than their part-time counterparts.

Table 4-15. Student Newman-Keuls Multiple Range Test for Isolation.

Means	Employment Group	Gp 1	Gp 3	Gp 2
1.39	1-Employed Full-time			
2.00	3-Not Employed			
2.44	2-Employed Part-Time	*		

* denotes pairs of groups significantly different at < .05 confidence level.

Problems and Number of Credits

H₉ There is no effect of the number of current enrollment credits on the Problems, Happiness, Loneliness, Isolation and Total Well-Being subscales.

For the Problems subscale, null hypothesis H₉ is rejected ($p = .00$). Group 1 (single-mothers enrolled for 6 or fewer college credits, $x = 1.5226$) experienced significantly fewer problems than Group 2 (single-mothers enrolled for seven or more credits, $x = 2.1482$).

Problems and Degree Program

H₁₀ There is no effect of degree program enrollment on the Problem, Happiness, Loneliness, Isolation and Total Well-Being subscales.

For the Problems subscale, null hypothesis H₁₀ is rejected ($p = .04$). Group 1 (those not enrolled in a degree program at LBCC, $x = 1.6727$) had fewer problems those in Group 2 (those enrolled in LBCC degree programs, $x = 2.0211$).

Discussion of the ANOVAs Between Demographic Variables and Well-Being Variables

Significant differences in the ANOVAs appeared in the effects of four demographic indices for the Problems subscale: receiving financial aid, employment status, degree status, and number of credits. Employment status also affected Total Well-Being, Problems, and Isolation. For all the effects of employment status on the three well-being components, differentiation was

found between the group that worked full-time and the group that worked part-time, with part-time single-mothers scoring lower on the Well-Being, Problems, and Isolation indices. A limitation of this research in terms of an interpretation of this specific employment status effect lies in a lack of statistical analysis of the interaction between demographic variables. These analyses could have been used to indicate possible relationships between employment and other demographic indices, including income, total number of children, age of the mother, or such educational information as number of credits enrolled and degree orientation. As the results of this study indicate, single-mothers who worked part-time had more problems, felt more isolated, and scored lower on Total Well-Being than did the single-mothers employed full-time.

Besides the effects of employment status, single-mothers who a) received financial aid, b) were in a degree program, and c) registered for seven or more credits had more problems than their counterparts. Although it is difficult to explain why income categories did not effect problems, this research implies that, in terms of educational programs or services, single-mothers in these categories may need added support and guidance from counseling, advising, and financial aid departments to deal with their problems.

Several studies on re-entry women in higher education have recognized that female students with children face greater barriers to success (Hall, 1980; McClain, 1979; Smallwood, 1980; Weiner, 1986). Smallwood reported that child care and family responsibilities were the greatest concerns for divorced and separated women students with young children. Departments could develop strategies and programs specifically targeted for the single-mother student. Previous studies (Hall, McClain, and Smallwood) have shown that single-mothers in higher education, already overburdened with

multiple responsibilities, do not take the time to participate in counseling or advising groups. Video taped programs that could be conveniently viewed either on or off campus may provide an alternative form of counseling, information, and advising suitable to this population. Video tape programs could provide information on social support systems, emphasizing the positive effects of support on the well-being of the mother-child family.

The majority of open-ended comments offered by both single-mothers and other respondents from this survey support findings from earlier studies. Typically, the comments focused on the need for adequate child care and a sense of role overload. Some of the comments in this regard are as follows:

1) It's extremely hard to find someone you trust to leave your child with, not to mention being able to afford it.

.....

2) It's very frustrating not having dependable child care whether for work or school. I have not shown up for some classes due to it. I have, one month ago, contacted child referral for a sitter that charges a fair price--but too much for me (four children and another on the way).

One woman commented on the specific difficulties of being a single-mother student: "It is literally twice as hard for a single-mother/student than it is for a student with no children, or a student with a partner who helps take care of the children and household." Another single-mother summarized her reasons for contending with the added difficulties of being a student: "It's hard to divide my time, but I feel that job prospects are better because of my education." And lastly, "It's like having two jobs."

Regression Analysis

To address the primary research question regarding the effect of social support on the well-being of single-mothers, regressions were computed using the Statistical Interactive Programming System (SIPS) (Rowe & Stillinger, 1987). The regression analyses explained the proportion of reduction in the dependent variable, expressed in terms of R^2 (the coefficient of multiple determination) accounted for by the independent variable (social support).

In the simple linear regression model, R^2 describes the individual contribution of the support variable(s) to the reduction of the variability of well-being. Since this study was also concerned with the effects of multiple variables, the stepwise multiple regression model provided a measure (also expressed as R^2) of the "best set" of support predictors. The following section describes the results of the simple linear regressions, as well as the results of stepwise multiple regressions.

Results of Simple Linear and Stepwise Multiple Regressions

Table 4-16 depicts the R^2 and p-values for the Total Support scale on the Well-Being scale (including the subscales of Problems, Happiness, Isolation, Loneliness, and Total Well-Being). Total Well-being ($R^2 = .12$, $p = .0022$), Problems ($R^2 = .17$, $p = .0003$), Happiness ($R^2 = .09$, $p = .008$), and Loneliness ($R^2 = .07$, $p = .026$) were significantly affected by the Total Support Scale. The amount of variability in Isolation ($R^2 = .02$, $p = .2666$)

attributable to Total Support was not significant. Therefore, of the following null hypotheses, the Total Support subscale for hypotheses H_{11} , H_{12} , H_{14} , and H_{15} is rejected and H_{13} is retained:

- H_{11} There is no effect on Total Well-Being from Friends, Relatives, Neighbors, Personal Conversations, Romantic Involvement, and Total Support subscales,
- H_{12} There is no effect on Problems from Friends, Relatives, Neighbors, Personal Conversations, Romantic Involvement, and Total Support,
- H_{13} There is no effect on Isolation from Friends, Relatives, Neighbors, Personal Conversations, Romantic Involvement, and Total Support,
- H_{14} There is no effect on Happiness from Friends, Relatives, Neighbors, Personal Conversations, Romantic Involvement, and Total Support, and
- H_{15} There is no effect on Loneliness from Friends, Relatives, Neighbors, Personal Conversations, Romantic Involvement, and Total Support.

Table 4-16. Simple Linear Regressions of Total Social Support on Well-Being.

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	R ²	p-Value
Problems	Total Support	.17	.0003*
Loneliness	Total Support	.07	.0260*
Isolation	Total Support	.02	.2666
Happiness	Total Support	.09	.0080*
Total Well-Being	Total Support	.12	.0022*

* indicates significance at the $p = < .05$ confidence level.

From Table 4-16, Total Support has the greatest effect on Problems ($R^2 = .17$), suggesting that the combined support of friends, relatives, personal conversations, neighbors, and romantic involvement may alleviate the problems experienced by single-mothers. Overall, the results suggest that Total Support accounts for approximately 12 percent ($R^2 = .12$) of the variability in Total Well-Being. Therefore, the Total Support subscale for hypothesis H_{12} is rejected.

Table 4-17 provides a detailed account of the individual effects of the support subscales on all Well-Being subscales. A majority of the simple linear regression computations yielded significant p-values. As shown in Table 4-16, Total Support influenced each Well-Being variable, with the exception of Isolation. In Table 4-17 Friends accounted for approximately 17 percent of the variability of both Total Well-Being ($R^2 = .17$) and Problems ($R^2 = .17$), and 13 and 8 percent, respectively, of Happiness and Loneliness.

Similar to the findings for Total Support, Isolation was not significantly affected by Friends ($R^2 = .04$). Therefore, for the Friends subscale, the null hypotheses H_{11} , H_{12} , H_{14} , and H_{15} were rejected and H_{13} was retained.

Relative support significantly influenced Total Well-Being ($R^2 = .18$), Happiness ($R^2 = .13$), Loneliness ($R^2 = .06$) and Isolation ($R^2 = .14$), but did not affect Problems ($R^2 = .02$). Therefore, for the Relatives subscale, the null hypotheses H_{11} , H_{13} , H_{14} , and H_{15} were rejected and H_{12} was retained. The support of neighbors accounted for approximately 9 percent ($R^2 = .09$) of the variability in Total Well-Being, but did not significantly influence the remaining Well-Being measures. Therefore, for the Neighbors subscale, the null hypothesis H_{11} was rejected and null hypotheses H_{12} , H_{13} , H_{14} , and H_{15} were retained.

Personal conversations was the only support variable that significantly influenced all Well-Being measures, as it accounted for 20 percent of the variability ($R^2 = .20$) of Total Well-Being, 17 percent ($R^2 = .17$) of Happiness, 8 percent ($R^2 = .08$) of Loneliness, 7 percent ($R^2 = .07$) of Problems, and 6 percent ($R^2 = .06$) of Isolation.

On the other hand, romantic involvement support did not significantly affect any Well-Being measures. Therefore, for the Personal Conversations subscale the null hypotheses H_{11} , H_{12} , H_{13} , H_{14} , and H_{15} were rejected and for the Romantic Involvement subscale the null hypotheses H_{11} , H_{12} , H_{13} , H_{14} , and H_{15} were retained.

Table 4-17. Simple Linear Regressions of Independent Social Support Variables and Dependent Well-Being Variables.

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	R ²	p-Value
Problems	Friends	.17	.0003*
	Conversations	.07	.0202*
	Romance	.05	.0650
	Neighbors	.04	.0950
	Relatives	.02	.2289
Happiness	Conversations	.17	.0002*
	Friends	.13	.0013*
	Relatives	.13	.0017*
	Neighbors	.04	.0788
	Romance	.01	.5167
Loneliness	Friends	.08	.0149*
	Conversations	.08	.0158*
	Relatives	.06	.0333*
	Neighbors	.05	.0556
	Romance	.00	.9243
Isolation	Relatives	.14	.0009*
	Conversations	.06	.0322*
	Neighbors	.04	.0767
	Romance	.04	.0772
	Friends	.04	.0811
Total Well-Being	Conversations	.20	.0001*
	Relatives	.18	.0001*
	Friends	.17	.0002*
	Neighbors	.09	.0111*
	Romance	.01	.4990

* indicates significance at the $p = < .05$ confidence level.

Using a summary format, Table 4-18 reiterates the R² values for simple regressions shown in Table 4-17, allowing examination of the effect of a specific independent variable (e.g., Friends) across the dependent variables. Overall, Personal Conversations made the greatest contribution to the well-being of these mothers. Each well-being scale was significantly influenced by these conversations, yet the greatest influence was on Happiness

($R^2 = .17$). This finding is congruent with the research of Gladow and Ray (1986), in which the strongest influence on the happiness of single-mothers was frequency and satisfaction of personal conversations.

The effect on Total Well-Being from Relative Support resulted in an R^2 value of .18, which was the second highest coefficient in the simple linear regression analysis. As did Personal Conversations, Relative Support affected Happiness ($R^2 = .13$), yet had the strongest effect on Isolation. In this study, relatives seem to provide the type of support that helps single-mothers feel less alone with the concerns and worries about their children. In contrast to this study, the research by Gladow and Ray (1986) indicated that relatives did not affect the happiness, loneliness, or isolation of low-income single mothers, yet did help to alleviate the mother's problems. The different research results may be explained by the sample differences. Gladow and Ray's sample was not, on the whole, drawn from an educational milieu. Relatives provide a special type of emotional support as kin to the children of these mothers, yet relatives were not instrumental in reducing the problems experienced by the single-mothers in this educational sample.

Next to Personal Conversations, Friends made the second greatest overall contribution to the well-being variables, particularly to the Problems scale ($R^2 = .17$). This finding is substantiated by previous research where the informal support of friends was found to assist with post-divorce adjustment (Austrom, 1984; Berman & Turk, 1981; Gladow & Ray, 1986; Spanier & Hanson, 1981).

Table 4-18. R^2 Values for Simple Linear Regressions of Independent Social Support Variables and Dependent Well-Being Variables.

Dependent Variable	^a Independent Variable					
	TS	F	R	N	C	RI
Total Well-Being	.12*	.17*	.18*	.09*	.20*	.01
Problems	.16*	.17*	.02	.04	.07*	.05
Happiness	.09*	.13*	.13*	.04	.17*	.01
Loneliness	.07*	.08*	.06*	.05	.08*	.00
Isolation	.02	.04	.14*	.04	.06*	.04

^a TS = Total Support, F = Friends, R = Relatives, N = Neighbors, C = Personal Conversations, and RI = Romantic Involvement.
* indicates significance at the $p = < .05$ confidence level).

The simple regressions explained the singular impact of each of the support variables, but this study was also concerned with the interactive or multiple effects of the support variables. Therefore, to determine the "best" support predictors, stepwise multiple regressions were computed for the five dependent measures of Well-Being (Problems, Happiness, Loneliness, Isolation, and Total Well-Being). The results of the stepwise analyses are shown in Table 4-19.

In the first analysis of Total Well-Being, Conversations was the first variable to enter the model ($p = < .0000$), accounting for 20 percent ($R^2 = .20$) of the variance. In the second step, Relatives entered the model ($p = .0044$), accounting for an additional 9 percent ($R^2 = .29$), and Friends entered third ($p = .0280$), accounting for an additional 5 percent of the variance in Total Well-Being ($R^2 = .34$). Altogether, 34 percent of the variance in Total Well-Being can be explained by the combination, in order of contribution, of Conversations, Relatives, and Friends.

The next stepwise analyses focused on the Problems, Loneliness, and Isolation subscales. In each case, only one support variable entered the model: Friends accounted for 17 percent ($R^2 = .17$) of the Problems variance, 8 percent ($R^2 = .08$) of the Loneliness variance, and one support measure, Relatives ($R^2 = .14$), significantly influenced Isolation. However, the total variance that could be explained by the additive effects of the support variables was 22 percent ($R^2 = .22$). Happiness was significantly affected by two variables: Personal Conversations ($R^2 = .17$) and Relatives, which added .06 to total .23. Altogether, the proportion of variance in Happiness attributable to support variables amounted to 28 percent ($R^2 = .28$).

Table 4-19. Stepwise Multiple Regression of Social Support Variables on Well-Being Variables.

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	R ²	p-Value
Total Well-Being	1-Conversations	.20	.0000*
	2-Relatives	.29	.0044*
	3-Friends	.34	.0280*
	4-Romantic	.36	.1311
	5-Neighbors	.37	.2860
Problems	1-Friends	.17	.0003*
	2-Romantic	.18	.2268
	3-Conversations	.20	.2581
	4-Neighbors	.20	.6887
	5-Relatives	.20	.9262
Loneliness	1-Friends	.08	.0149*
	2-Conversations	.11	.1021
	3-Relatives	.13	.2236
	4-Neighbors	.14	.3700
	5-Romantic	.14	.7214
Isolation	1-Relatives	.14	.0009*
	2-Romantic	.18	.0718
	3-Friends	.20	.1421
	4-Neighbors	.21	.3342
	5-Conversations	.22	.3598
Happiness	1-Conversations	.17	.0002*
	2-Relatives	.23	.0291*
	3-Friends	.26	.0704
	4-Romantic	.28	.1805
	5-Neighbors	.28	.7270

* indicates significance at the $p = < .05$ confidence level.

Analysis of Regression Results

Overall, the well-being of the single-mothers in this sample was significantly affected by the combined measures of social support, as well as by individual support measures. The one exception was Romantic Involvement, which failed to yield significant values in either type of regression

analyses. These results suggest that various types of informal support systems affect different facets of well-being.

The support from friends, relatives, and personal conversations created the strongest influence on overall well-being, problems, loneliness and the happiness of the single-mothers in this study. These findings are consistent with those of Gladow & Ray (1986) on low-income single-mothers and those of Austrom (1984) on single lifestyles. Both of these studies found that the social support of friends, rather than the support derived from a romantic partner, was instrumental in the sense of the psychological well-being of singles. The findings in this study were also in agreement with those of Lowenthal and Haven (1969), who documented the importance of confidant, close relationships for psychological well-being. The findings also are in agreement with the perspective of Rook and Peplau (1982) that the capacity to develop and maintain a close relationship is one index of psychological health.

Earlier studies on single-mothers and the single lifestyle generally assumed that the lack of a romantic partner contributed to a reduced sense of well-being (McLanahan et al., 1981), yet the results of this study do not indicate that involvement with a romantic partner contributes to any measure of well-being in single-mothers, whether they choose to live alone, give birth and raise a child alone, or to divorce. This suggests that happiness and life satisfaction may be gained from the supportive and affectional bonds of friends, including the personal conversations that one enjoys with close friends. The results of this study advance the conjecture that the support of friends and personal conversations may prove to be an effective alternative to the normative model of the romantic couple as it relates to total well-being.

In the stepwise regression analyses, Relatives was the only component to significantly influence Isolation. This may indicate that the support of relatives diminishes the sense of isolation that single-mothers experience. In this study, isolation was a measure of how alone the mothers felt in their role as parents, as opposed to their loneliness as individuals. This finding is contrary to that of Gladow & Ray (1986), who found that total support and romantic involvement significantly affected isolation. Relatives may provide a type of support to the single-mother that ameliorates her sense of being alone in her concern for her children. The support of Personal Conversations also significantly affected Isolation on the simple linear regression analyses, yet it did not enter the stepwise regression model. It may be possible that personal conversations may be a part of the emotional support from relatives that reduces a single-mother's sense of isolation.

In the simple regression analyses, the support of Neighbors accounted for nine percent of the Total Well-Being variance, suggesting that the number of neighbors a single-mother is acquainted with and the frequency of contact can be a factor in her well-being, a finding which supports Brandewein's (1977) research on divorced women. However, on the stepwise analyses, Neighbors did not enter the model of Total Well-Being, which indicates that in searching for the best predictors of total well-being, neighbors do not significantly contribute to the sense of well-being of single-mothers beyond the support offered by personal conversations, relatives, and friends.

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the effect of social support on the well-being of single-mothers enrolled at a rural community college. A secondary purpose was to examine the relationship of a number of demographic variables on the state of well-being of these single-mother students. Single mothers were selected as the population for this study because of the minimal amount of research data available on this group, particularly in the area of postsecondary education.

The independent Social Support variables were comprised of six subscales: support from (1) Friends, (2) Relatives, (3) Neighbors, (4) Personal Conversations, (5) Romantic Involvement, and (6) Total Support (a composite measure of the preceding five indices). The dependent Well-Being variables were comprised of 5 subscales: (1) Problems, (2) Happiness, (3) Loneliness, (4) Isolation, and (5) Total Well-Being (a composite measure of the preceding four indices). The structure of these measures was summarized in Chapter III.

Procedures

A survey was mailed to a random sample of 1,000 female registrants at Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC) enrolled for classes offered in Linn and Benton counties, Oregon. An over-sampling blind methodology was

utilized to gather an adequate sample size of single-mothers, as well as an adequate response rate. The survey was comprised of 32 measures pertaining to social support and well-being previously determined to be reliable and valid scales. An 82 percent return rate yielded 781 usable responses, approximately 10 percent ($n = 76$) from single-mothers. The survey included questions eliciting descriptive demographic information from the respondent group (see Appendix B). This information was analyzed in Chapter IV, along with the results of subsequent ANOVA and regression analyses employed to determine the possible effects of the demographic status and social support indices on the state of well-being of the single-mothers (see Appendix A for tabular summaries).

Findings

The modal demographic values of the survey indicated that the typical single-mother enrolled at LBCC was Caucasian, between 35 and 39 years of age, and maintaining her own household on a gross monthly income of \$1,000 or less earned through part-time employment. The typical mother was divorced for more than two years, had one child, and was enrolled for six or fewer credits per term at LBCC.

Results of the ANOVAs indicated that those single-mothers who were employed full-time enjoyed a greater sense of well-being, felt they had fewer problems and were less socially isolated than those mothers who were employed part-time. Significant differences were also noted in three demographic subscales of (1) Financial Aid, (2) Degree Status, and (3) Number of Credits on the Problems subscale. In summary, those single-mothers who received financial aid and were enrolled in a degree program

of seven or more credits per term had significantly greater number of problems than the other mothers.

The results of simple linear and stepwise multiple regressions were depicted. Total Support affected all measures of Well-Being, with the exception of Isolation. Friendship support had a significant relationship to Total Well-Being, Problems, Happiness and Loneliness, while the support of relatives had a distinct effect upon Total Well-Being, Happiness, Loneliness, and Isolation.

The simple regression analyses also revealed that support of neighbors influenced the Total Well-Being of the single-mothers, yet did not effect the individual dependent measures. Personal Conversations affected all Well-Being components, whereas the support from a romantic involvement failed to affect any of the Well-Being measures. In the stepwise analyses the support of Personal Conversations, Relatives, and Friends were significant predictors of Total Well-Being and Friendship was the primary predictor for both Problems and Loneliness. Relatives appeared to have the only significant effect in reducing the sense of isolation in the sample, although Personal Conversations was a significant influence in the simple linear regression step. Happiness seemed to be influenced primarily by Personal Conversations and Relatives.

Conclusions

Subject to the limitations listed in Chapter I, the following conclusions were drawn from the findings of this study:

- 1) Single-mother students who are employed full time enjoy a greater sense of well-being, experience fewer problems, and

feel less isolated than those single-mothers students who are employed part-time.

- 2) Single mothers who are enrolled in a degree program for seven or more credits experience a greater number of problems than their counterparts who do not meet these conditions.
- 3) Single mothers who receive financial aid experience a greater number of problems than their counterparts who do not meet these conditions.
- 4) The overall sense of well-being of single-mother students may be predicted primarily by the degree of total social support experienced, and by the frequency and satisfaction of personal conversations. The informal support of relatives and friends also significantly contributes to total well-being of single-mother students.
- 5) The close and frequent support of friends has a strong effect on the alleviation of problems and the sense of loneliness in the lives of single-mother students.
- 6) The feelings of isolation experienced by single-mother students may be alleviated by support from their relatives.
- 7) Support from relatives and personal conversations significantly contribute to the state of happiness manifested by single-mother students.
- 8) As a form of informal social support, being romantically involved with a partner does not improve the sense of overall well-being in single-mothers, nor does it serve to alleviate

their problems, their loneliness or isolation, or to increase their feelings of happiness.

- 9) The single-mother student enrolled at a rural community college tends to be Caucasian, between 35 and 39 years of age, maintains her own household on a gross monthly income of \$1,000 or less, is employed part-time, has been a single-mother for more than two years, has one child, and is registered for six or fewer credits per term.
- 10) With respect to the total female enrollment at LBCC, including those registered for non-credit classes, single-mothers constitute 10 percent of these students.

Recommendations

The question has been asked, "How is the single-mother and her family doing?" Clearly, this study indicates that the single-mother who is involved with a rural community college, either for pleasure or for a degree goal, does better in terms of psychological well-being if she has the support of an informal network of friends and relatives and participates in personally satisfying conversations. Overall, the more extensive the support system, the less lonely and isolated this mother will be; she will be happier and will experience fewer problems than those single-mothers without an extensive network of social support.

Family professionals and educational institutions can make a real contribution to the well-being of single-mothers by assuring them that it is both human and helpful to need and rely on sources of support outside the nuclear family and by assisting them in developing a strong support system.

Specifically, single-mothers who enroll for a degree program at community colleges could benefit from increased institutional support, although these women are typically overloaded with commitments which prohibit them from participating in such non-academic activities as the single-parent support groups. The comments offered by the single-mothers in this study, as well as the findings of previous literature, strongly mandate increased efforts by educational institutions to improve child care in terms of its affordability, quality of care, and accessibility to the institution.

Family demographers, using life-course probability predictions, forecast an increase in the numbers of single-parent family types and in the numbers of children residing in these types of households. As earlier studies have shown a relationship between the health of single-parents and the health of their children, it is incumbent upon professionals and institutions to develop policies which promote the psychological and physical well-being of the single-parent family.

The following recommendations for further research are derived from the findings and conclusions of this study:

- 1) This study should be replicated for samples of single-mother students enrolled for seven or more credits in a degree program at a community college and a university.
- 2) Studies should be conducted to investigate the relationship between social support, well-being, and academic success with single-mothers.
- 3) Further studies should be conducted on the relationship between the single-mother and her children with regard to the state of well-being of single-mother students.

- 4) Further studies should be conducted on the influence of personality variables, such as locus of control and role orientation, on the well-being of single-mother students.
- 5) The data from this study should be subjected to further analysis to determine demographic interactions.
- 6) This research should be conducted on other ethnic populations of single-mothers, for example, with Black or Hispanic populations.
- 7) The survey should be used with a similar population to further establish the reliability and validity of the instrument.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Data Tables

Table A-1. Analyses of Variance, Well-Being and Demographic Variables.

Demographic Variables	TWB	Well-Being Variables ^a			
		P	L	I	H
Live w/Other Adults	.72	.73	.98	.82	.29
Live w/Which Adults	.79	.76	.71	.52	.72
Length Time/Single Mother	.96	.70	.71	.88	.61
How Became/Single Mother	.45	.52	.29	.55	.91
Age/Single Mother	.72	.45	.61	.80	.38
Gross Monthly Income	.28	.16	.91	.40	.07
Receive Financial Aid	.50	.00*	.42	.79	.70
Part Income/Financial Aid	.52	.51	.52	.34	.50
Employed: Full/Part/Not	.02*	.05*	.10	.01*	.69
Degree Status: Full/Part Time	.96	.04*	.63	.82	.16
Number of Credits	.12	.00*	.96	.45	.49
Total Number Children	.87	.80	.74	.87	.38

^a TWB = Total Well-Being; P = Problems; L = Loneliness; I = Isolation;
H = Happiness.

* indicates significance at the $F = < .05$ confidence level.

Table A-2. Simple Linear Regressions of Total Social Support on Well-Being.

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	r	R ²	F	p-Value
Problems	Total Support	-.41	.17	14.72	.0003*
Loneliness	Total Support	-.26	.07	5.16	.0260*
Isolation	Total Support	-.13	.02	1.25	.2666
Happiness	Total Support	-.30	.09	7.43	.0080*
Total Well-Being	Total Support	-.35	.12	10.08	.0022*

* indicates significance at the $p = < .05$ confidence level.

Table A-3. Simple Linear Regressions of Independent Social Support Variables and Dependent Well-Being Variables.

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	r	R ²	F	p-Value
Problems	Friends	-.41	.17	14.50	.0003*
Problems	Conversations	-.27	.07	5.63	.0202*
Problems	Romance	-.21	.05	3.51	.0650
Problems	Neighbors	-.19	.04	2.86	.0950
Problems	Relatives	.14	.02	1.47	.2289
Happiness	Conversations	-.42	.17	15.20	.0002*
Happiness	Friends	-.36	.13	11.14	.0013*
Happiness	Relatives	-.36	.13	10.59	.0017*
Happiness	Neighbors	-.20	.04	3.18	.0788
Happiness	Romance	.08	.01	0.43	.5167
Loneliness	Friends	-.28	.08	6.21	.0149*
Loneliness	Conversations	-.28	.08	6.10	.0158*
Loneliness	Relatives	-.25	.06	4.71	.0333*
Loneliness	Neighbors	-.22	.05	3.79	.0556
Loneliness	Romance	-.01	.00	.01	.9243
Isolation	Relatives	-.38	.14	11.98	.0009*
Isolation	Conversations	-.25	.06	4.77	.0322*
Isolation	Neighbors	-.21	.04	3.23	.0767
Isolation	Romance	-.21	.04	3.21	.0772
Isolation	Friends	-.20	.04	3.13	.0811
Total Well-Being	Conversations	-.45	.20	18.72	.0001*
Total Well-Being	Relatives	-.43	.18	16.16	.0001*
Total Well-Being	Friends	-.46	.17	15.06	.0002*
Total Well-Being	Neighbors	-.29	.09	6.80	.0111*
Total Well-Being	Romance	.08	.01	.46	.4990

* indicates significance at the $p = < .05$ confidence level.

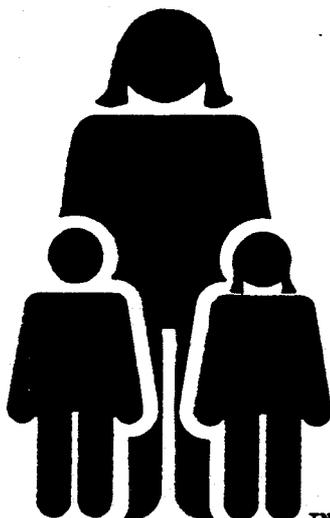
Table A-4. Stepwise Multiple Regression of Social Support Variables on Well-Being Variables.

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	r	R ²	F	p-Value
Total Well-Being	1-Conversations	-.45	.20	18.72	.0000*
	2-Relatives	-.54	.29	8.64	.0044*
	3-Friends	-.58	.34	5.03	.0280*
	4-Romantic	-.60	.36	2.33	.1311
	5-Neighbors	-.61	.37	1.16	.2860
Problems	1-Friends	-.41	.17	14.50	.0003*
	2-Romantic	-.43	.18	1.49	.2268
	3-Conversations	-.44	.20	1.30	.2581
	4-Neighbors	-.45	.20	0.16	.6887
	5-Relative	-.45	.20	0.01	.9262
Loneliness	1-Friends	-.28	.08	5.21	.0149*
	2-Conversations	-.34	.11	2.74	.1021
	3-Relatives	-.36	.13	1.51	.2236
	4-Neighbors	-.38	.14	0.81	.3700
	5-Romantic	-.38	.14	0.13	.7214
Isolation	1-Relatives	-.38	.14	11.98	.0009*
	2-Romantic	-.42	.18	3.34	.0718
	3-Friends	-.45	.20	2.20	.1421
	4-Neighbors	-.46	.21	0.95	.3342
	5-Conversations	-.47	.22	0.85	.3598
Happiness	1-Conversations	-.42	.17	15.20	.0002*
	2-Relatives	-.48	.23	4.96	.0291*
	3-Friends	-.51	.26	3.38	.0704
	4-Romantic	-.53	.28	1.83	.1805
	5-Neighbors	-.53	.28	0.12	.7270

* indicates significance at the $p = < .05$ confidence level.

Appendix B

Survey



COMMUNITY COLLEGE SURVEY

LINN-BENTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ALBANY, OREGON 97321
JUNE 1988

INSTRUCTIONS

We would like to know more about you women students at LBCC. Your participation is voluntary and confidential.

Most of the questions can be answered by simply circling the number to the left of the responses. When you have completed the questionnaire, please mail as soon as possible in the enclosed postage-paid reply envelope.

Thank you very much for your help !

START

1. Are you a single mother with one or more children - age 18 or younger - living with you ? (Circle one)

1 YES (TURN THE PAGE AND BEGIN THE SURVEY)

2 NO

↳ Since our purpose is to learn more about the life of the single mother student, we do not need your answers to the remainder of the questions. However, we would appreciate any comments you might like to make that would help us learn how the college should, if at all, be more responsive to your student needs. Above all, please return the questionnaire to us with or without your comments.

COMMENTS: _____

PLEASE 1 SINGLE MOTHERS ANSWER THE REST OF THE QUESTIONS

2. In the table below are some problems a single mother may or may not experience. Please read each one and indicate how often it's a problem for you. (Circle one number for each statement)

	NEVER	ONCE IN A WHILE	SOMETIME	A LOT OF TIME	ALWAYS
a. Transportation.....	1	2	3	4	5
b. Stress from college.....	1	2	3	4	5
c. Decisions about keeping your present job or trying to find a different one..	1	2	3	4	5
d. Decisions about whether or not to try to get a job...	1	2	3	4	5
<hr/>					
e. Performing household tasks, such as cooking, cleaning washing.....	1	2	3	4	5
f. Tasks and chores that don't get done.....	1	2	3	4	5
g. Combining tasks for college work, child care and house..	1	2	3	4	5
h. Handling family finances....	1	2	3	4	5
<hr/>					
i. Meeting emotional needs of the children-giving them attention and helping with problems....	1	2	3	4	5
j. Handling children or arguments between the children.....	1	2	3	4	5
k. Dealing with the children's schools.....	1	2	3	4	5
l. Making decisions alone.....	1	2	3	4	5
<hr/>					
m. Finding affordable housing....	1	2	3	4	5
n. Medical/dental care for you and children.....	1	2	3	4	5
o. Friends and relatives that make too many demands on you..	1	2	3	4	5
p. Lack of emotional support - having people to talk to that listen and care about you.....	1	2	3	4	5
<hr/>					
q. Forming close friendships.....	1	2	3	4	5
r. Dating.....	1	2	3	4	5
s. Recreation or free time activities.....	1	2	3	4	5
t. Never having time away from responsibilities.....	1	2	3	4	5

> The next questions are about your friends and relatives.

3. Do you have any relatives within 200 miles from here?
(Circle one number)

- 1 NO
- 2 YES

→ 3a Which relatives are these?

4. In the past three months, have any relatives helped out with services such as babysitting or transportation?
(Circle one number)

- 1 NO (SKIP TO QUESTION 5)
- 2 YES

→ 4a How many times in the last three months have your relatives helped you out with babysitting or transportation? (Circle one number)

- 1 UP TO ONCE A MONTH
- 2 TWO OR THREE TIMES A MONTH
- 3 ABOUT ONCE A WEEK
- 4 TWO OR THREE TIMES A WEEK
- 5 MORE THAN THREE TIMES A WEEK

5. In the past three months, have any relatives helped out with services such as repairs, cleaning, painting, or moving?
(Circle one number)

- 1 NO (SKIP TO QUESTION 6)
- 2 YES

→ 5a How many times in the last three months have any relatives helped you out with repairs, cleaning, painting, or moving? (Circle one number)

- 1 UP TO ONCE A MONTH
- 2 TWO OR THREE TIMES A MONTH
- 3 ABOUT ONCE A WEEK
- 4 TWO OR THREE TIMES A WEEK
- 5 MORE THAN THREE TIMES A WEEK

6. Within the past three months have any relatives helped out with direct financial support? (Circle one number)

- 1 NO
- 2 YES

7. Please indicate how often you have spent time with your friends in the past 30 days. (Circle one number for each)

	ONCE OR NEVER	ONCE A WEEK OR SO	MANY TIMES A WEEK	ALMOST EVERY DAY
--	---------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------	------------------------

In the past 30 days how often:

- a. Have your friends visited you in your home?..... 1 2 3 4 5
- b. Have you visited your friends in their home?.... 1 2 3 4 5

8. How long has it been since you went out with friends to a restaurant, movie, sports event, or other social occasion? (Circle one number)

- 1 SIX MONTHS OR MORE
- 2 TWO TO FIVE MONTHS
- 3 THREE WEEKS TO A MONTH
- 4 ONE TO TWO WEEKS
- 5 WITHIN THE PAST WEEK

9. Please think of one person -not a relative- that you consider to be your best friend. How often do see or visit with this friend? (Circle one number)

- 1 LESS THAN ONCE A MONTH
- 2 ONCE OR TWICE A MONTH
- 3 ONCE A WEEK OR SO
- 4 SEVERAL TIMES A WEEK
- 5 ALMOST EVERY DAY

10. The next few questions are about your neighbors. (Circle one number for each)

	NONE	A FEW	SOME	MOST	ALL
a. How many of your neighbors would you recognize if you saw them on the street? (Circle one number).....	1	2	3	4	5
b. How many neighbors do you know well enough to invite into your home for a visit?..	1	2	3	4	5

11. Please indicate how often you chat, visit or exchange favors or services with your neighbors. (Circle one number for each)

	NEVER	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	VERY OFTEN
a. How often do you chat or visit with neighbors? (Circle one number).....	1	2	3	4	5
b. How often do you exchange favors or services with your neighbors?.....	1	2	3	4	5

12. The next two questions are about personal conversations. When you are concerned with a personal matter, please indicate: (Circle one number for each)

	NEVER	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	VERY OFTEN	ALWAYS
a. How often do you talk about a personal matter with someone else?	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. How often are these talks about personal matters satisfying to you?.....	1	2	3	4	5	6

13. How many really close friends do you have, both in the area and in other places? (Circle one number)

1 NONE
 2 ONE OR TWO
 3 THREE TO FIVE
 4 SIX TO NINE
 5 TEN OR MORE

14. Overall, how much emotional support - encouragement, listening, feeling that a person is behind you - do you receive from each of the following? (Circle one number for each)

	NONE	VERY LITTLE	SOME	QUITE A BIT	A LOT
a. Emotional support from <u>friends</u> ?.....	1	2	3	4	5
b. Emotional support from <u>relatives</u> ?...	1	2	3	4	5

15. Do you have a person that you are involved with romantically and see fairly often? (Circle one number)

1 NO
 2 YES

- > The next questions ask some basic information about you that will help us in understanding your answers more clearly.

16. Do you and your children live in a household with other adults? (Circle one number)

1 NO (SKIP TO QUESTION 17)
 2 YES

- 16a Which adults do you and your children live with? (Circle one number)

1 Friends
 2 Relatives
 3 Romantic Partner

17. Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic identification? (Circle one number)

1 BLACK (NEGRO)
 2 CHICANO (MEXICAN-AMERICAN)
 3 NATIVE AMERICAN (AMERICAN INDIAN)
 4 WHITE (CAUCASIAN)
 5 ORIENTAL
 6 OTHER...SPECIFY _____

18. How long have you been a single mother? (Circle one number)

1 LESS THAN 12 MONTHS
 2 BETWEEN 1 YEAR AND 2 YEARS
 3 BETWEEN 2 YEARS AND 5 YEARS
 4 MORE THAN 5 YEARS

19. How did you become a single mother? Was it due to divorce, separation, death of a spouse, or have you never been married?

1 WIDOWED
2 DIVORCED
3 SEPARATED
4 NEVER MARRIED

20. Please indicate the number of children you have in each age group. (If none, write "0")

Number of children

_____	UNDER 3 YEARS OF AGE
_____	3 TO 5
_____	6 TO 9
_____	10 TO 14
_____	14 TO 18

21. In which of the following age categories are you?

1 18 - 24
2 25 - 29
3 30 - 34
4 35 - 39
5 40 - 44
6 45 - 49
7 50 and older

22. In which of the following categories does your gross monthly income fit? Include money from employment, child support, public assistance, and any other sources. (Circle one number)

1 UNDER \$500
2 \$501- 750
3 \$751 - 1,000
4 \$1,001 - 1,250
5 \$1,251 - 1,500
6 \$1,501 - 2,000
7 \$2,001 - 2,500
8 \$2,501 - 3,000
9 OVER \$3,000

23. Do you receive any type of financial aid? Please include aid from loans and grants. (Circle one number)

1 NO (SKIP TO QUESTION 24)
2 YES



- 23a. What part of your income is from financial aid?

1 ALL OF MY INCOME IS FROM STUDENT LOANS
2 MOST OF MY INCOME
3 ABOUT HALF OF MY INCOME
4 ABOUT A QUARTER OF MY INCOME

24. At this time, are you: (Circle one number)

1 EMPLOYED OR SELF-EMPLOYED FULL TIME FOR PAY
2 EMPLOYED OR SELF-EMPLOYED PART TIME FOR PAY
3 NOT EMPLOYED FOR PAY

25. Please indicate whether or not you have used any of these services at LBCC. Also indicate whether the service you used was helpful or not helpful. (Circle two numbers on each line)

College Service Used?			Level of Help:		
Service	NOT USED USED		NONE	NOT HELPFUL HELPFUL	
	a Women's Center	1		2	0
b Career Planning/Job Placement Center...	1	2	0	1	2
c Advising/Counseling Center.....	1	2	0	1	2
d Parent/Child Lab...	1	2	0	1	2
e Tutoring.....	1	2	0	1	2
f Others / Specify	1	2	0	1	2
	1	2	0	1	2

26. Are you enrolled in any degree program at LBCC? (Circle one number)

1 NO (SKIP TO QUESTION 27)
2 YES



26a In which degree program are you enrolled?

27. During your last term in college, how many credits did you take? (Circle one number)

1 SIX CREDITS OR LESS
2 SEVEN OR MORE CREDITS

28. When you are having a problem or crisis, where might you go at LBCC for support? (Please write in your response)
-

> These next questions are about feelings you have in your life at this time.

29. Which of the following statements best describes your feelings regarding loneliness at the present time? (Circle one number)

1 I NEVER FEEL LONELY
2 I FEEL LONELY NOW AND THEN
3 I OFTEN FEEL LONELY
4 I ALMOST ALWAYS FEEL LONELY
5 I ALWAYS FEEL LONELY

30. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement: " I feel isolated from other people - like I'm the only one who really cares about what's going on in my life and with my children." (Circle one number)
- 1 AGREE STRONGLY
 - 2 AGREE
 - 3 NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE
 - 4 DISAGREE
 - 5 DISAGREE STRONGLY
31. Thinking about your life as a whole, how happy would you say you are these days? (Circle one number)
- 1 EXTREMELY UNHAPPY
 - 2 FAIRLY UNHAPPY
 - 3 NEITHER HAPPY OR UNHAPPY
 - 4 FAIRLY HAPPY
 - 5 EXTREMELY HAPPY
32. Finally, is there anything about single mothering that we have overlooked? Please use this space for any additional comments you would like to make about being a single mother and a student.

Your unique contribution to this effort is very greatly appreciated.
THANK - YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

Appendix C

Survey Mailing Communications

LINN-BENTON
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE

June 7, 1988

Dear LBCC Student,

In increasingly greater numbers, women are entering or re-entering college to prepare for a career, to give new directions to their lives, or to begin where they left off years ago. Community colleges can help women to succeed in their educational goals if they know what students like yourself need or what is thought about being a student.

You are one of a small number of women who are being asked to give their opinion on these matters. Your name was drawn in a random sample of the entire spring term, female student body. In order that the results will truly represent the thinking of the students at LBCC, it is important that each questionnaire be completed and returned.

You may be assured of complete confidentiality. The questionnaire has an identification number for mailing purposes only. This is so that we may check your name off of the mailing list when your questionnaire is returned. Your name will never be placed on the questionnaire.

You may receive a summary of results by writing "copy of results requested" on the back of the return envelope, and printing your name and address below it. Please do not put this information on the questionnaire itself.

I would be most happy to answer any questions you might have. Please write or call. The telephone number is 752-0668.

Thank-you for your help.

Sincerely,

Julie A Stenson
Research Director

June 14, 1988

Last week a questionnaire seeking your opinion about being a woman student at LBCC was mailed to you. Your name was drawn in a random sample of women students at the college.

If you have already completed and returned it to us, please accept our sincere thanks. If not, please do so today. Because it has been sent to only a small, but representative, sample of students, it is extremely important that yours also be included in the study if the results are to accurately reflect the opinions of Linn-Benton women students.

If by some chance you did NOT receive the questionnaire, or it got misplaced, please call me right now (752-0668) and I will get another one in the mail to you. Thank-you very much!

Julie Stenson
Project Director



LINN-BENTON
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE

June 28, 1988

Dear LBCC Student,

About three weeks ago I wrote to you seeking your response on a LBCC student questionnaire. As of yesterday, we have not yet received your completed questionnaire.

Our research team has undertaken this study because of the belief that student opinions should be taken into account in the formation of policies for the planning and development of community college programs for the future.

I am writing to you again because of the significance each questionnaire has to the usefulness of this study. Your name was selected through a scientific sampling process in which every female student at Linn-Benton Community College had an equal chance of being selected. This means that one out of five female students at LBCC are being asked to complete this questionnaire. In order for the results of this study to be truly representative, it is essential that each person in the sample return their questionnaire.

In the event that your questionnaire has been misplaced, a replacement questionnaire and a convenient postage-paid reply envelope are enclosed. You may also telephone me at 752-0668 with questions or other information.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Signature redacted for privacy.

✓ Julie A. Stenson
Research Director

P.S. Several women have written or phoned to say that they are NOT LBCC students. Please give me a call or write if you have not enrolled in any classes at LBCC within the past year. Thanks...

6500 SW Pacific Blvd. Albany, Oregon 97321-3779 (503)928-2361



LINN-BENTON
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE

July 5, 1988

Dear LBCC Student,

I am writing to you about our study of LBCC women. We have not yet received your completed questionnaire.

The large number of questionnaires returned is very encouraging. But, whether we will be able to accurately describe the LBCC women student and how she feels on certain issues depends upon you and the others who have not yet responded. This is because our past experiences suggest that those of you who have not yet sent in your questionnaire may hold quite different information than those who have responded.

This is the first study of this type that has ever been done at LBCC. Therefore, the results are of particular importance to many students, college planners and administrators, and researchers. The usefulness of our results depends on how accurately we are able to describe the LBCC woman student.

In case our other correspondence did not reach the person in your household whose response is needed (female LBCC student); a replacement questionnaire is enclosed with a postage-paid return envelope for your convenience. May I urge you to complete and return it as quickly as possible?

I'll be pleased to send you a copy of the results if you want one. Simply put your name, address, and "copy of results requested" on the back of the return envelope. I expect to have them ready to send in early September.

Your contribution to the success of this study will be appreciated greatly.

Signature redacted for privacy.

✓ Julie Stenson
Research Director

P.S. We do make mistakes! If you have already returned your questionnaire or called with the information, please forgive the oversight. Please feel free to call with questions and comments...
752-0668

6500 SW Pacific Blvd. Albany, Oregon 97321-3779 (503)928-2361