

**Single Mother Families:
A Participant Observation Study and Survey of Human Service Agencies/Organizations**

by

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*A thesis submitted
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Masters of Social Work*

**School of Social Work
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Abstract

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to better understand single mother families by integrating both qualitative data describing the lived experiences and needs of single mother families, with quantitative data detailing the formal services/programs currently available to meet these needs of single mother families living in Thunder Bay, Ontario Canada. Qualitative analysis consisted of continual reflection and interpretation of day-to-day life experiences of 8 young single mother families through participant observations for a total of 180 hours of participant observation. In the quantitative approach, statistical analysis using SPSS 15.0 was completed on survey data from 30 human service agencies and organizations to learn about their extent of involvement with services/programs for single mother families in Thunder Bay. Analysis of the participant observation data revealed that the single mothers demonstrated resourcefulness, dignity, caution, astuteness, maturity, adaptability, coping, and tenacity in maintaining daily family living, along with hopefulness towards their futures. Additionally, the single mothers often relied on support from family and friends to maintain and provide for their families. The results of the statistical analysis revealed that only 33 percent of the agencies/organizations provided special services/programs for single mother families and 70 percent of these agencies/organization provided regular programs in which single mother families are eligible to participate. From the perspective of the experiences of the single mother families it was revealed that the needs of single mother families living in Thunder Bay are not sufficiently met by the services/programs available.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Rationale for the Study

Single-parent families make up a record, 1 in 4 Canadian families with children, according to the 2006 census. Single-parent families made up less than 10 percent of the Canadian family structure in the 1950's and 1960's, but numbers have increased over the last 40 years, to the point that there are more single-parent families than ever before (Meadows, 2007). Statistics Canada defines a lone mother as "a mother... with no spouse or common-law partner present, living in a dwelling with one or more never-married sons and/or daughters" (Statistics Canada, 2001, p. 171). About 80 percent of single-parent families are headed by female parents (Statistics Canada, 2007), making understanding the everyday lived experiences and needs of single mothers essential in today's society. Thunder Bay, Ontario, specifically, has seen an increase in the number of female lone-parent families since 2001. The number of female lone-parent families in Thunder Bay has increased by 6.8 percent, with 4,540 female-lone parents in 2001, and 4,850 in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2001; Statistics Canada, 2007). Family professionals, therapists, human service workers, education professionals, and policymakers in business and government have recognized single mother families as a distinctive and special family unit and sometimes vulnerable population. Single mothers are at an increased risk for poverty and low economic status (Curtis, 2001; Lipman & Boyle, 2005), and are more likely to receive social assistance than two-parent families (LeRoy, 2004). A great deal of attention has been put on the employability of single mothers, yet research has identified the difficulty for low-income single mothers to overcome poverty through employment (Rind, 1991; Mayson, 1999), as they are often less well off than when they received

assistance (Avison, 1997; Powell, 1998; Stier & Tienda, 2000). Furthermore, the consequences of young single motherhood to the educational futures of young mothers are well documented (Harris, 1993; Davies, McMullin, & Avison, 2001; Bruns, 2004). Child care (Olson & Banyard, 1993; Stephenson & Emery, 2003) and adequate housing (Hudson & Gallaway, 1993; Lessa, 2002; Brotchie, 2006) are also sources of concern in the daily lives of single mother families. The single mother family as an “understaffed family” (Weiss, 1979), often means less time for home responsibility, personal time, and family time (Sanik & Mauldin, 1986; Olson & Manyard, 1993; Heath, 1999; Cook, 2000). The mental and physical health of single mothers compared to married mothers has also been identified as an area of concern (Lipman, 1997; Avison, 1997, Quickfall, 1999; Curtis, 2001). Moreover, social isolation, including loneliness is a problem faced by many single parent families (Yusim, 1997; Keating-Lefler, Hudson, and Campbell-Grossman, Fleck, & Westfall, 2004). In response, providing social support that minimizes any vulnerabilities or special risks associated with a single parent family structure has gained attention (Lipman & Boyle, 2005; Harknett, 2006).

Formal social support, “provided by professional helping relationships such as those with counsellors or agency workers,” (p. 114) are believed to play an important role in the support systems of single mother families (Jauch, 1977; Gladow & Ray, 1986; Lipman & Boyle, 2005). The provincial government has invested in non-financial programs (Peters, 1994; Swazey, 1998; Health Canada, 2005), particularly community-based initiatives directed at low-income families, which attempt to address the developmental needs of families by strengthening parenting skills, as well as linking families to existing services (Lipman & Boyle, 2005). These programs are not directed

specifically at single mother families, but because they are proportionately more likely to be low-income (McLanahan & Booth, 1989; Avison, 1997; Quickfall, 1997; Curtis, 2001) they may use these programs. Although these programs objectives may be directed towards the needs of single mother families, little evidence exists of their effectiveness (Henninger & Nelson, 1984; Lipman & Boyle, 2005). Lipman and Boyle (2005) conducted an experiment on the effect of a community-based program of social support and education groups for single mothers of young children on maternal well-being and parenting. They found no significant differences between single mothers participating in the program providing social support and education and the mothers who only received a standard list of community resources.

As illustrated above, a number of studies have addressed the wide-ranging effects of single parenthood, such as poverty, Ontario Works, employment, child care, education, housing, relationships, home responsibilities, personal time, and family time, health, loneliness and isolation, and social support on single mother families, however few have examined the lives of single mother families as a whole (Quinn & Allen, 1989; Olson & Banyard, 1993; Keating-Lefler, Hudson, Campbell-Grossman, Fleck & Westfall, 2004). Quinn and Allen (1989), although not recent, represents an important piece of literature in understanding the challenges faced by single mother families. Not only, does it provide research on the lives of single mother families as a whole, but also used qualitative methods to describe single mother's experiences from their perspectives, as this study does. The study addressed single mothers' constant concerns about money and their challenges with the health of their family, romantic relationships, employment, finding affordable, quality child care, and shortages of time for household and family

responsibilities. Their research also revealed single mothers use of their friends, family and church for social support. The single mothers identified that someone to listen and understand was essential to her coping strategy. Similarly, Olson and Banyard (1993) addressed the life experience of single mother families as a whole, through examining daily stressors in the lives of 52 low-income single mothers of preschool-age children. This research also used qualitative methods of data collection. The single mothers recorded daily events that they perceived as stressful for a period of two-weeks, and described how they attempted to cope with each episode. They identified stress involving day-to-day management of their household, childcare, employment and family responsibilities, interaction with family members, and illness. Finally, Keating-Lefler, Hudson, and Campbell-Grossman, Fleck and Westfall (2004), using qualitative focus groups, described the needs and concerns of single, low-income mothers and evaluated social support mechanisms they valued during the transition to parenthood. They identified that single mothers felt isolated because of their new responsibilities, lack of financial resources, lack of transportation and limited social support. Furthermore, they indicated the challenges single mother families experience as a result of lack of information support, such as information about their infant's development stage, what type of diapers to buy, and what agencies will help with their infants.

Although there is an abundance of literature on single mother families, it has neglected asking the single mothers to describe their lives and give them a chance to add ideas from their own perspectives, as well as confirm or deny information presented by "experts" in the area. Furthermore, the methodologies of most studies on single mother families are quantitative in nature (Hanson, 1986; Curtis, 2000; McIntyre, Glanville,

Raine, Dayle, & Anderson, 2003), prescribing clearly in advance what they are looking for, and potentially missing single mothers descriptions and interpretations of their lives and experiences. Even of the qualitative studies on single mother families (Kunzel, 1993; Pauluik, Little, & Sieswerda, 2001; Collins, 2006) none used participant observations as a data collection method, missing out on exposure to and involvement in the day-to-day activities of single mother families (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). Both of these practices are problematic because they miss out on interaction with single mothers in their natural setting and the opportunity to learn from the single mothers as 'experts' in their own lives (Neuman & Kreuger, 2003). Keating-Lefler, Hudson, Campbell-Grossman, Fleck, & Westfall (2004) recommended the use of observations to increase the validity of findings on the needs, concerns and social support of single, low-income mothers. Furthermore, research has focused on the primarily negative wide-ranging effects of single parenting (Hanson, 1986; Rind, 1991; Hao & Brinton, 1997; Curtis, 2001), but has virtually ignored the single mothers strengths and resiliency in dealing with them (Hanson, 1986; Ford-Gilboe, 2000; McDermott & Graham, 2005). This study, in observing the daily living patterns of single mother families, seeks to understand the strengths and challenges in their daily living environment and to understand what are the supports that fulfill or impede the lives of single mother families.

Although the importance of social support for single mother families has been identified, what remain to be explored more fully are formal agencies/organizations role in this support, and their effectiveness in helping single mother families. Much of the research has addressed social support in terms of quantity of support available; however, single mothers' perception's of the quality of the support is also an important

consideration (Brown & Moran, 1997). This research seeks to understand the quantity, quality, and impact of formal social support on the lives of the single mother families in this study.

Given the increasing number of single mother families in Thunder Bay, the multitude of challenges they face, and the importance of social support in limiting the vulnerabilities or special risks associated with single parent families, it is imperative that we understand the life experiences of single mother families and the effectiveness of formal services/programs in meeting their needs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this concurrent mixed methods study is to better understand single mother families by coupling both qualitative data describing the lived experiences and needs of single mother families, with quantitative data detailing the formal services/programs currently available to meet these needs of single mother families living in Thunder Bay. Participant observations will be used to explore the everyday experiences and needs of single mothers between 18-25, with children under 5, living in Thunder Bay. At the same time, a survey will be used to explore the formal services/programs currently available in Thunder Bay for single mother families. A mixed methods approach was chosen because it provides a more holistic view of single mother families and provides the opportunity for presenting a greater diversity of views (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Comparing the results of the quantitative and qualitative components in the discussion will reveal whether the formal services/programs meet the needs of single mother families in Thunder Bay and discover the human service

agency/organization's views on the needs of single mother families, therefore providing more comprehensive insights into what life is like for single mother families.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter two provides an overview of single mother families as a specialized family unit, the emergence of single mother families into social research inquiry, and the literature that describes what life is like for single mother families. Next, the literature on programs and services that support single mothers in Thunder Bay, Ontario is presented. And finally, social capital theory, the theoretical perspective that supports this study is discussed. In chapter three the methodology for the qualitative and quantitative approaches are presented, including a case for the application of mixed methods to this study. Chapter four presents the findings of the qualitative and quantitative approaches and chapter five discusses the implications of the qualitative approach, followed by integration with the quantitative findings. Conclusions and recommendations are also discussed.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The chapter is divided into three sections. Section One provides a framework for establishing the importance of this study by introducing the topic of single mother families as a specialized family unit, the history and emergence of single mother families into social research inquiry, and the literature that describes what life is like for single mother families. Moreover, the literature reviewing what life is like for single mother families has been divided further into themes identifying needs, concerns, and strengths. Section Two outlines the literature on programs and services that support single mother families in Thunder Bay, Ontario, at the federal, provincial and local levels. In Section Three, social capital theory, the theoretical perspective that supports this study is discussed.

Single Mother Families

Introduction

Single mother families have been recognized as a distinctive and special family unit and sometimes vulnerable population since the early 20th century. Moreover, the topic of single mothers has received considerable public attention and social research inquiry since the 1970's as the number of single mother families has dramatically increased. For example, single-parent families made up less than ten percent of the Canadian family structure in the 1950's and 1960's. However, numbers have increased over the last forty years, to the point that there are more single-parent families than ever before (Meadows, 2007). According to the 2006 census, single-parent families make up 14.3 percent of Canadian families, with 11.5 percent headed by a female parent (Statistics

Canada, 2007). This dramatic increase in single mothers has been linked to the large increase in the rates of separation and divorce, and more women having babies before marriage (Norton & Glick, 1986; Zhan & Pandey, 2004). In addition, a distinct shift occurred in the 1970's, as a majority of mothers raised their children themselves rather than placing them for adoption (Hudson & Galaway, 1993). In the past, single parenthood had been viewed as a transitional stage, a stage between the breakdown of one marriage or relationship and the building of another. However, there is growing recognition that it constitutes a continuing lifestyle for many (Barry, 1979; Smith, 1980; Gladow & Ray, 1986). Consequently, increased attention on understanding the lives and experiences of single mother families is essential to providing societal support that minimizes any vulnerabilities or special risks associated with a single parent family structure.

In most research prior to the 1960's, single mothers were most often referred to as unwed (Younger, 1947; Vincent, 1954) or unmarried mothers (Mattingly, 1928; Edlin, 1954) and children of single mothers were labelled as out-of-wedlock (Mangold, 1921; Donahue, 1930) or illegitimate (Lundberg & Lenroot, 1918; Watson, 1923; Davis, 1939). A socially deviant view of single mother families emerged out of this literature and terminology. According to Davis (1939), illegitimacy was seen as violating the central principle of family structure. Malinowski called this the 'principle of legitimacy,' whereby the universal social rule was that "no child should be brought into the world without a man—and one man at that – assuming the role of sociological father, that is, guardian and protector, the male link between the child and the rest of the community" (Malinowski, 1930, p. 137). More recently, the term single mother and lone mother are often used interchangeably (Nelson, 2000; Cleveland & Hyatt, 2003; Harknett, 2006).

Statistics Canada defines a lone mother as “a mother... with no spouse or common-law partner present, living in a dwelling with one or more never-married sons and/or daughters.” (Statistics Canada, 2001, p. 171) Most Canadian research references this Statistics Canada definition of single/lone mothers (Lipman, Offord, & Boyle, 1997; Ambert, 2006; Brotchie, 2006).

In 1981, in recognition of the growing number of single parent families, the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) established a focus group called “Single Parent Families.” This group met on a yearly basis with a goal to network and coordinate the family theorists, researchers, and practitioners within the NCFR who are interested in this topic (Hanson & Sporkowski, 1986). In addition, a special issue on single parent families in the *Family Relations* journal in 1986 arose from this focus group. The purpose of the special issue was to bring together articles that address current research, theoretical understandings, and clinical observations concerning single parents and their children. During this time, although there were trade books written for single parents, relatively little had been published for professional consumption (Hanson & Sporkowski, 1986). This journal contributed significantly to the knowledge base on single parent families. The NCFR’s interest and research on single parent families has continued and was a central topic in the National Council on Family Relations 69th Annual Conference (2007).

The recognition of single mothers as a social problem in society is not a new phenomenon. There are numerous studies in the literature that identify single mother families as a growing concern and social problem in society (Grow, 1979; Blankenhorn, 1995; Wallbank, 2001; McDermott & Graham, 2005). A social problem is defined as “a complex of behaviour and/or circumstances which by its consequences threatens or

adversely affects the institutions, mores, standards, and beliefs that are valued—that is to say, emotionally invested—by most members of a society” (Perlman, 1964, p. 270). It is argued that single motherhood is constructed as a social problem through a connection to a range of social norms associated with motherhood, sexuality, and family (Perlman, 1964; Abrahamse, Morrison, & Waite, 1988; Wallbank, 2001; McDermott & Graham, 2005). Societal constructions exist of the ‘good’ mother, and the young single mother falls outside the normative boundaries of good motherhood in a number of ways. First, they are perceived to be rejecting fathers, and hence the two-parent heterosexual family, which is seen as a better environment for proper socialization of children (McLanahan & Booth, 1989; Amato, 1995; Silva, 1996). Theoretical arguments claim that children in single parent households have limited access to social relationships with non-marital adults, and thus experience deficiencies in interpersonal resources compared to children living in two-parent homes (Amato, 1995). Secondly, their more frequent dependency on social assistance than two-parent families and at times deliberate decision to remain a single parent family is seen as the cause of social decay and construction of a new underclass (Edwards & Duncan, 1997; McDermott & Graham, 2005). Single mother families more often enter into economic disadvantage and require financial support for both mother and child, which can be viewed as an economic drain and a threat to the well-being of the taxpayers (Perlman, 1964; Dafoe-Whitehead, 2007). Also shaken, are long held western attitudes about self-responsibility, self-control, and self-dependence in providing for your family financially (Perlman, 1964). Finally, non-marital childbearing by young mothers reflects an erosion of traditional social controls on sexuality and reproduction (Abrahamse, Morrison, & Waite, 1988). These authors in their analysis of

the 1980 *High School and Beyond* baseline survey, found that contemporary social norms pertaining to non-marital childbearing are in a “state of flux,” (p. 15) as individuals vary in their willingness to consider having a child before they marry. Further, data from this study and a 1982 follow-up indicated that of 13,061 female high school sophomores, 41 percent of black respondents, 29 percent of Hispanic respondents, and 23 percent of non-Hispanic whites, said they either would or might consider having a child outside of marriage.

The view of single mother families as a social problem also arose out of concern for the children. Historically, until the 1940’s, concerns were almost solely about the welfare of the baby of the unmarried mother. The conviction that the baby should be given up by the unmarried mother for adoption by capable parents developed. The unmarried mother who gave up her baby would therefore, no longer be a social problem (Perlman, 1964). Much of the research until the 1990’s on single parent families often looked for negative effects on children in relation to child abuse, juvenile delinquency, emotional/psychological problems, effects of poverty, welfare dependency, inadequate sex role identification, drug abuse, and other forms of pathology (Bane, 1976; Blechman, 1982; Kelly, 1980; Macdonnell, 1982; Burden, 1986; Hanson, 1986; Mueller & Cooper, 1986). Much of this material was acquired in clinical case studies of children of single parents. However, there were methodological problems, such as studies without comparison groups and an examination of confounding variables, which limit generalizations from these studies (Loveland-Cherry, 1986). This primarily negative approach to the study of single mother families has been criticized for focusing on problems, while neglecting strengths (Hanson, 1986; Ford-Gilboe, 2000). Bernard (2006)

spoke of this controversy by closely examining the adverse outcomes of a study comparing children in single and two-parent households in Sweden (Weitoft, Hjern, Haglund, & Rosen, 2003). For example, Weitoft, Hjern, Haglund, and Rosen (2003) found single parent children at roughly twice the risk for developing a psychiatric illness, killing themselves or attempting suicide, and developing an alcohol-related disorder. However, what were not addressed were the actual percentages of youth with adverse outcomes. In examining the tables, Bernard (2006) found only two percent of the girls and 1.5% of the boys from single-parent families developed psychiatric problems as children and adolescents and only 0.9% and 0.7% as young adults. She agreed this was twice the adversity than that experienced by children growing up in two-parent households. However, she pointed out that the untold story was that 98 percent of children and adolescents in single-parent families did *not* have psychiatric disorders (Weitoft Hjern, Haglund, & Rosen, 2003).

History and Emergence of Single Mothers as a Social Family Unit

Evangelical reform women who founded maternity homes to ‘redeem’ and ‘reclaim’ unmarried mothers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were among the first to draw attention to single mothers. During these times, few single mothers wrote willingly of their experiences of having children before marriage, rather, most tried to cover their tracks. However, those who went to social agencies or maternity homes were interviewed, and notes on their ‘cases’ were recorded in maternity home logbooks and social case files. Significant however, is that these case records were written by maternity home matrons and social workers and were created for their own use (Kunzel, 1993). One sociologist, in 1928, wrote, “the characters in case records do not

speak for themselves. They obtain a hearing only in the translation provided by the language of the social worker” (Burgess, 1928, p. 527). The experiences of single mothers, therefore, were shaped by the kinds of questions asked, by who was asking them, by the moms’ relationship with the workers, and by what the workers saw as important to record, rather than a representation of the lived experiences of the single mothers (Kunzel, 1993).

Similar to the workers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, family professionals, therapists, human service workers, education professionals, and policymakers in business and government have continued to focus attention on single mother families in an attempt to understand the concerns and needs of this population (Quinn & Allen, 1989). However, the focus on single parent families has continued to neglect asking the single mothers to describe their lives and give them a chance to add ideas from their own perspectives, as well as confirm or deny information presented by “experts” in the area. Thus, what is underrepresented in the literature is the single mother as the expert. Furthermore, the focus on the ‘professional as the expert’ characterizes the methodologies used in most literature on single mother families. Most studies are quantitative¹ in nature, utilizing questionnaires or surveys, highly structured interviews, experiments, existing statistics, and secondary analysis to collect data and analyze single parent families (Smith, 1980; Hanson, 1986; Remez, 1998; Curtis, 2001; McIntyre, Glanville, Raine, Dayle, Anderson, & Battaglia, 2003; Lipman & Boyle, 2005). These studies have prescribed clearly in advance what they are looking for, with tightly

¹ In this literature review, interviews on single mother families have been interpreted as quantitative or qualitative depending on who structures the knowledge. An interview is quantitative when they are highly structured and the researcher frames the knowledge, and qualitative, when they are open-ended and the topics flow in meandering directions guided by the perspectives of the research participants.

controlled variables and questions, potentially missing important descriptions and interpretations the single mothers have of their lives and experiences. Of the qualitative studies found on single mother families most have used open-ended interviewing (Quinn & Allen, 1989; Collins, 2006), some used focus groups (Pauluik, Little, & Sieswerda, 2001; Keating-Lefler, Hudson, Campbell-Grossman, Fleck, & Westfall, 2004), and others utilized agency case records (Gladow & Ray, 1986; Kunzel, 1993), and journaling (Olson & Banyard, 1993). No studies on single mother families were found that used observation as a data collection method, however; Keating-Lefler, Hudson, Campbell-Grossman, Fleck, and Westfall (2004) recommended the use of observations to increase the validity of findings on the needs, concerns and social support of single, low-income mothers. This current research, in hopes of filling in this gap in the literature on single mother families, has used participant-observation in examining what life is like for single mother families living in Thunder Bay.

The Life of Single Mother Families

A number of themes emerged in the literature on single mother families that give an indication of what life is like for this family unit. The themes that will be reviewed include: poverty and economic well-being; Ontario Works; employment; child care; education; housing; relationships; home responsibilities, personal time, and family time; health; loneliness and isolation; and social support. Specific literature concerning single mother families in Thunder Bay will be used wherever possible to further frame the study.

Poverty and Economic Well-being

A high poverty rate and low economic status among single parent families compared to two-parent families has been well documented in the literature (McLanahan & Booth, 1989; Avison, 1997; Quickfall, 1999; Curtis, 2001; Lipman & Boyle, 2005). There is no official measure of poverty in Canada, but the Statistics Canada measure is probably the best known (Ross, Shillington, & Lochhead, 1994). Statistics Canada identifies poverty by defining a set of income cut-offs below which people are said to live in straitened circumstances. The low-income cut off (LICO) is based on the percentage of a family's income that is spent on food, clothing and shelter. A family is considered to be in a low-income situation if they spend more than 55% of their income on these expenditures. According to the 2003 Report Card on Child Poverty in Ontario, low-income female lone parents, on average, are \$8,600 below the poverty line. In the most recent data on poverty from Thunder Bay, the LICO for two individuals in 2000 was \$22,276 and \$27,386 for three individuals (Brotchie, 2006). Of the 3,200 lone parent families in Thunder Bay with children under 18 years of age, 1,900 of them were poor according to the LICO (Lee, 2000). Eighty-two percent of these lone parent families were female-headed (Brotchie, 2006).

According to Statistics Canada, the economic status of single mothers improved distinctly between 1980 and 2000 because single mothers tended to be older, better educated, and more employable in 2000 than they were twenty years ago. However, in contrast, young single mothers often fared worse in 2000 than they did in 1980 (CBC News, 2006). Moreover, the complexity of the issue is revealed by the fact that younger single mothers employment level rose by eight percent over the twenty-year period, but

their earnings actually fell (CBC News, 2006). Furthermore, an analysis of women's income, welfare receipt, and employment the year before and after birth (Foster, Jones, & Hoffman, 1998) indicated similar trends. Remez (1998) commented on Foster, Jones, and Hoffman's (1998) analysis of 2,571 births to women participating in the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, from 1985-1990. It revealed that the economic situation of women who give birth outside marriage at ages 20 and older more closely resembled that of teenage mothers, than that of married adult mothers.

Many studies have indicated statistically the rates of poverty or low-income status for single mother families (Kawachi, Kennedy, Lochner, & Prothrow-Stith, 1997; Lochhead & Scott, 2000; CBC News 2006) and much has been written on the determinants and wide-ranging effects of poverty on the well-being of single mother families (Olsen & Banyard, 1993; Avison, 1997; McIntyre, Glanville, Raine, Dayle, Anderson, & Battaglia, 2003; Zhan & Pandey, 2004), but few studies have examined the experiences of single mothers living in poverty or with low economic status (Quinn & Allen, 1989; McIntyre, Officer, & Robinson, 2003). McIntyre, Officer, & Robinson's (2003) study described what it means to feel poor from the perspectives of poor women. He discussed the ways in which these women reported resisting or coping with the stress of poverty and how they contributed meaning to their control over their experiences. The data for the research was collected as part of the Hungry Mothers of Barely Fed Children study, (McIntyre, Glanville, Officer, Anderson, Raine & Dayle, 2002; McIntyre, Glanville, Raine, Dayle, Anderson, & Battaglia, 2003) which documented the occurrence of food insecurity among low-income lone mothers in relation to their children. The data provided three data sets: a 24-hour food recall (their recollection of all foods consumed in

the previous 24-hour period) on behalf of themselves and their children and responses to the Cornell-Radimer Food Insecurity Measure; ethnographic face-to-face interviews that explored food-provisioning strategies; and comments made by participants who attended “returning results” meetings where the study’s findings were presented to them. From this data, the authors identified 10 feeling domains for the mothers in the study. These domains included feeling deprived, righteous, the need for occupational choice, relatively better positioned than others, the need to manage the appearance of poverty, judged/degraded, guilty, isolated, dependent, and despondent. This study is limited to the collection of data in the context of questions about food. Therefore, the participant’s description of what it means to feel poor and their coping strategies are confined to this context, limiting the ability to generalize to other areas in single mothers’ lives. The study recognizes the usefulness for future researchers to collect qualitative data from impoverished women specifically about their experiences of poverty and how they cope with poverty.

A number of wide-ranging effects of poverty on the well-being of single mother families have been identified in the literature. Single mothers who are poor are identified as being at an extremely high risk for emotional distress, anxiety, depression, stress, and health problems (Quinn & Allen, 1989; Belle, 1990; Olsen & Banyard, 1993; Avison, 1997; Brown & Moran, 1997). In a study in Ontario, Lipman, Offord, and Boyle (1997) reported that in their sample of over 1,500 women, “single mothers were more likely than the mothers in two-parent families to be poor, to be 25 years of age or less, to have mental health problems, and to use mental health services” (p.639). Food security and nutrition in the households of low-income single parent families has also been recognized

as a challenge to the well-being of the family (Tarasuck & Maclean, 1990; McIntyre, Glanville, Officer, Anderson, Raine & Dayle, 2002; McIntyre, Glanville, Raine, Dayle, & Anderson & Battaglia, 2003). Low-income families often have been recognized as having limited choices in many aspects of their lives; including, schooling, clothing, food, transportation, recreation, and social events (Callahan & Lumb, 1995). Many of these effects of poverty have emerged as themes in the experiences of single mother families in the literature, and therefore will be examined more fully in the following sections.

Ontario Works

Throughout the western world, single women raising children alone have been among the central figures of the discourse of social welfare (Lewis & Hobson, 1997; Lessa, 2006). Government support is important to a substantial number of single mother families, (Hao & Brinton, 1997; Garfinkel & McLanahan, 2002) and therefore represents a central theme in their lives. Statistics specifically about Ontario Works in Thunder Bay will help to frame this study. The population of Thunder Bay, according to the 2001 Census, was 121,986 (Statistics Canada, 2007). According to the Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board, the number of Ontario Works caseloads in Thunder Bay, as of June 2006, was 2,506 (Brotchie, 2006). The Ontario Works Caseload Composition statistics identified that 42 percent were sole support parents, 41 percent were single, and 17 percent were couples (Brotchie, 2006). Based on Brotchie's ratio of the breakdown in caseload composition, 33 percent of single parent families living in Thunder Bay receive Ontario Works.² Statistics were unavailable regarding the number of young single mothers receiving Ontario Works, and therefore this data includes all single parent

² $2506 \times 41\% = 1053$ single parent families on Ontario Works; $1053 \times 100/3200$ (number of single parents in Thunder Bay) = 33%

families. The 2004 Estimated Annual Welfare Income at the household level for a single parent with one child in Thunder Bay was \$14,251, which was \$8,025 below the low-income cut off in Thunder Bay (Brotchie, 2006).

Investing in poor single mothers was one of the founding programs of the emerging social welfare system (Strong-Boag, 1979; Kunzel, 1993; Little, 1994). In the early 1920's the Ontario Mother's Allowance (OMA) was introduced, which was the first government program to provide direct transfer payments to mothers in financial need for their work as child care providers (Mayson, 1999). Significant changes for single mother families occurred in the mid-1990's when the federal government reduced its commitment to social welfare spending. In April 1996, the federal government eliminated Established Program Funding (EPF) and the Canadian Assistance Plan (CAP), the federal/provincial agreements that sustained health care, post secondary education, and social assistance programs. Instead they introduced the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) to each province in 1996, which gave discretionary power to provinces to determine how this federal transfer money would be allocated among social welfare programs, education and health (Mayson, 1999). Furthermore, the Social Assistance Reform Act (SARA), which came into effect in 1998 led to significant changes for single mother families across the provinces (Mayson, 1998; McMullin, Davies; & Cassidy, 2002). Under this new legislation the Ontario Works Act (OWA) replaced the General Welfare Assistance Act (GWA) and the Family Benefits Act (FBA) (Davies, McMullin & Avison, 2001). For the first time since the Mother's Allowance Program in 1920, single mothers faced mandatory employment requirements as a condition of receiving assistance (Mayson, 1998). The shift from welfare to workfare, alongside the idea of

'deservedness,' under the Ontario Works Act, significantly impacted single mothers in Ontario. Prior to the enactment of the Social Assistance Reform Act, social assistance programs recognized single mothers work as child care providers, encouraged mothers to do some paid work, and prepared them for the day when they must stand on their own economically (Mayson, 1999). Since then, there has been a shift from social assistance to be successful caregivers to social assistance focused "on getting people ready for the next job" (Matthews, 2004, p. 4). Davies, McMullin, and Avison (2001) believe by not formally recognizing the work and efforts of childrearing, single mothers are stigmatized as the 'undeserving poor' and must struggle to prove their worthiness as good mothers. Other authors support this viewpoint through their research, which recognizes that people on social assistance are often not considered people in need of assistance, but rather as burdens on society who need to be penalized for their misfortunes (Kunzel, 1993; Evans, 1997; Haggart, 1997; Matthews, 2004). With the new OWA came reduction in benefits for social welfare recipients by 21.6 percent. Prior to October 1995, a family consisting of a mother and her young child would have received around \$1,221 per month, including benefits for prescription drugs and emergency dental care. After the introduction of the OWA, the family's income was reduced to \$957 and in addition, they are now required to pay two dollars for every prescription (McMullin, Davies, & Cassidy, 2002).

This section outlines the basic elements of the Ontario Works Act in order to understand the implications for the lives of single mother families. The intent of the Ontario Works Act, as described by Janet Ecker, the Community and Social Services Minister at the time of enactment, was "to ensure that the welfare system is what it is designed to be: a transitional program of last resort. The second objective is to ensure that

we are being fair, not only to the people who need assistance, but also to the people who are working very hard to pay the taxes to support that program” (Haggart, 1997, p. 1). Eligibility for assistance, under the Ontario Works Act, is based on financial need, assets and income, and participation requirements (Government of Ontario, 2006a). The eligibility rules are designed to ensure that working is the first resort for people in financial need, and that people turn to Ontario Works only when other opportunities have been used and exhausted (Government of Ontario, 2001). The Ontario Works Act requires recipients to negotiate and come into agreement to participate in employment related activities. The act specifies five possible participation requirements that must be fulfilled in order to receive assistance. Recipients must engage in early employment measures, which include job search activities and participation in basic education if not already completed (Government of Canada, 2006a). If employed while on Ontario Works, every dollar earned is deducted from the social assistance check for the first three months of employment. After the initial three-month period, recipients may earn a certain amount of money, called a basic exemption, depending on their family size, without triggering a deduction from their social assistance check. Once earnings exceed that level, seventy-five percent of earnings are deducted for the first year of employment, eighty-five percent in the second year, and one hundred percent in the third and following years. Single parents may receive a deferral of participation in the employment requirements until their youngest child attends school (Government of Canada, 2006a). Specifically, the government directive states, “Where a mother’s youngest child has reached six years of age and is attending school, she must engage in employment activities on a full-time basis” (Mayson, 1998, p. 4). If a child goes to school for only part of the day, the mother

is expected to engage in part time employment activities. Failure to meet these participation requirements results in sanctions and the loss of benefits (Mayson, 1998).

Young parents receiving Ontario Works, under the age of 18, must participate in the Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) program. However, it is available on a voluntary basis to young parents between the ages 18–21. The purpose of LEAP is to help young parents aged 16-21 years old complete their education and to help them and their children become self-reliant. There are three elements to LEAP: learning; earning; and parenting and child development. The ‘learning’ element refers to regular attendance by participants in an education program leading to a high school diploma, as well as additional supports such as help with a second language, literacy or numeracy problems, and learning or other disabilities. ‘Earning’ is met by assisting in the development of employment skills through participation in co-op programs, youth apprenticeship and job shadowing, as well as part-time and summer employment. The ‘parenting and child development’ element is achieved through group sessions, participation in the Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program, home visits, one-on-one coaching, mutual support networks, mentoring programs, and drop in centres (Government of Ontario, 2006b). Young mothers who participate in the LEAP program receive participant supports that may include, but are not limited to child care, transportation, school clothing, educational trips, graduation fees, tutoring, counselling, fees for recreational activities, and other measures that provide for positive reinforcement and recognition of achievement. According to this Act, child care must be provided both during school hours and outside school hours to support the parent to prepare for exams, complete homework, participate in parenting and earning activities and for emergency parent relief (Government of

Ontario, 2006b). LEAP provides a five hundred-dollar incentive when all prescribed parenting requirements are complete and participants have completed high school. The participant can use the five hundred dollar bursary for her post-secondary education or training, or it can be held in trust for the education of the participant's children. (Government of Ontario, 2006b).

Although there is an abundance of literature on single mothers on welfare, few studies were found that described and interpreted the lived experiences of single mothers in Ontario who received Ontario Works (Davies, McMullin, & Avison, 2001; McMullin, Davies, & Cassidy, 2002; Tanis, 2003; Matthews, 2004). Most studies are quantitative and relate to social policy reform (Scott, 1996; Bashevkin, 2001; Brzozowski, 2005). However, the limited qualitative literature has recognized the impact of Ontario Works on the lives of single mothers and has identified a number of challenges that single mother families receiving Ontario Works may experience. For example, in interviews with 60 single mothers on social assistance in London, Ontario, McMullin, Davies, & Cassidy (2002) confirmed an increase in difficulties in daily living associated with cuts to their monthly benefits. As a consequence of these significant reductions, many women in their study reported moving to less adequate housing, using food banks more, and acquiring more personal debt. They also found single mothers, required to look for work under the OWA, had difficulty in finding affordable or subsidized child care. Other studies found similar results. A study of rural women speaking about their experiences with Ontario Works identified that it does not provide enough money to meet the basic needs of women and their children. Instead women had to rely on family support and food banks to feed themselves and their children and make ends meet (Purdon, 2003).

Furthermore, the women spoke of not being able to afford proper housing, medication, clothes and child care. Similarly, in Little (1994), single mothers voiced difficulty in meeting employment requirements because “they could not find subsidized child care and those who had daycare considered themselves exceptionally lucky” (p. 240). In addition, single mothers spoke of difficulty getting off Ontario Works because of the inability to save enough money to move ahead. A review of “Employment [CHNI] Assistance Programs in Ontario Works & Disability Support Programs (Matthews, 2004), which was based on a series of discussions across Ontario with hundreds of people who have an interest in social assistance, corroborated a number of these challenges and revealed a number of others. The discussions occurred with over 70 community based organizations, more than 200 Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program workers and related municipal staff, over 100 people receiving social assistance, approximately 20 employees, constituents at 14 MPP-initiated meetings, members of the Ontario Association of Social Workers (OASW), and members of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO). This study included sole support parents of school age children, as well as young single parents receiving Ontario Works. They shared their challenges with employment, drug benefits, affordable child care, and inability to gain assets. In addition, they also identified difficulties with transportation and the rules and administration of Ontario Works. This study is valuable, not only because it describes the lived experiences of single mothers receiving Ontario Works, but also because it brings together a number of other individuals with an interest in social assistance, who observe and experience similar challenges. A number of these challenges and experiences of single mother families receiving Ontario Works will be examined further in other areas of

this literature review, as they have been identified as significant themes in the lives of single mother families.

Employment

A great deal of attention and focus has been put on the employability of single mothers, especially with the shift from welfare to workfare in Ontario in the last ten years. Baker (1996) questions the implications of labelling low-income single mothers as 'employable.' He asks, "Will this reduce the poverty rates of families with dependent children? Will it assist these women to improve their future prospects?" (p. 485). He examines programs and their outcomes in other jurisdictions to answer these questions. His cross-national research of the Netherlands, Australia, The United States, and Sweden, indicates that focusing on employability of low-income single mothers only makes sense in an economy with full employment, low unemployment rates, public child care services, preventative social services, and minimal inequality between the wages of men and women. In Canada, with its high unemployment, a stagnant economy, vast discrepancies between the wages of men and women, and a severe shortage of affordable and regulated child care, focusing on employability of single mothers has negative consequence for many single mother families, as well as social policies. In addition, Rind (1991) and Mayson (1999) identified the difficulty for low-income single mothers to overcome poverty through employment. Many analysts worry that those who leave assistance for employment can actually find work or that the jobs they attain pay a family wage (Rangarajan, 1996; Lictor, 1997; Jackson, Tienda, & Huang, 2000).

However, in recent years the proportion of employed single mothers has increased substantially, jumping 20 percent points between 1995 and 2006 (Almey, 2007). These

increases paralleled the shift from welfare to workfare in Ontario's social assistance policies with the enactment of the Ontario Works Act in 1998.

The voices of young single mothers on the issue of employment are largely missing in the literature. In particular, little is known about single mothers' experiences and the decisions they make about employment and family responsibility. There has been very little research into the experiences of single mothers with young children as they try to negotiate and consider the relationship among employment, family life, home responsibilities, and child care (Norton & Glick, 1986; Sanik & Mauldin, 1986; McMullin, Davies, & Cassidy, 2002; Mason, 2003). For example, Mason (2003) analysed 24 interviews with an almost equal distribution of employed and unemployed single mothers across Canada about the relationship between employment, family life, and child care. For the majority of single mothers, the decision to participate in employment involved weighing their ideals about motherhood, potential earning power, and the cost of child care. He also identified factors such as emergency child care, supportive mothers, sisters, and friends, and family friendly workplaces as critical to single mothers' ability to maintain employment. Additionally, in a comparison of use of time by mothers in single versus two parent families who are employed and unemployed, Sanik and Mauldin (1986) found employed single mothers have the least time to spend on household tasks, child care, personal care and volunteer work. Weiss (1979) supports these findings and believes in a sense the single parent is committed to two full-time jobs. Tasks in the home may be dropped or skimmed on, and little time will be available for new demands. In addition, many have pointed out that the workplace continues to be inflexible to family responsibilities (Burden, 1986; Olson & Banyard, 1993; McMullin,

Davies, & Cassidy, 2002). Single mothers attempt to deal with numerous family situations, such as sick children, in ways that do not disrupt daily routine at work, (McMullin, Davies, & Cassidy, 2002) but in reality she may have to stay home with a sick child and risk losing pay or use her own sick time, and thus be considered unreliable (Kamerman & Kahn, 1987).

The notion that child care cost and availability problems are barriers to employment for single mothers is well supported (Quinn & Allen, 1989; Cleveland & Hyatt, 1996; Kimmel, 1998; Meyers, Heintze, & Wolf, 2002), but is still being debated by some researchers and policy makers. Mead (1992) discusses this issue in his chapter "Barriers to Employment," claiming that the culture of poverty and personal choices are the primary factors in lack of employment and encouraging welfare dependency, and child care problems are not significant. Kimmel (1998) attempts to challenge this discrepancy by using an improved Survey of Income and Program Participation survey design to present new evidence regarding the degree to which child care impede mothers' employment behaviours. He found that child care prices significantly impede married mothers' labour force participation behaviour and that the findings for single mothers are much stronger. Simulations in his study showed that a subsidy of fifty percent of the cost of child care for lone parents is expected to raise employment by about twenty percent.

Young single mothers continue to be at a disadvantage in finding employment and when they move into the labour force they are often less well off than when they received assistance (Avison, 1997; Powell, 1998; Stier & Tienda, 2000). One woman recalls, "When I took a part-time job my rent and child care costs went up, so it ended up costing me more to work than to stay home" (Matthews, 2003, p. 14). Women, and mothers in

particular, are more likely to work at minimum wage jobs with no benefits (Mason, 2003). Instead of moving them out of poverty, employment typically moves single mothers from the “unemployed poor” to the “working poor” (Little, 1994). As a result, low-income single mothers would need either substantially higher wages or significantly more supplementary income to bring themselves and their families out of poverty (Rind, 1991). Young single mothers with preschool children, then, represent a population to which further research on employment experiences is needed.

Child Care

Child care issues have been cited as one of the most salient sources of concern in the daily lives of single mother families (Kamerman & Kahn, 1988; Quinn & Allen, 1989; Olson & Banyard, 1993; Stephenson & Emery, 2003). Quinn & Allen (1989), in a qualitative study of 30 employed single mothers, found that sixty-seven percent of the women had concerns about finding affordable, quality child care. The 10 women who did not identify child care as a concern had adequate child care arrangements. Hudson and Galaway (1993), in their research on single mother families, see affordable and reliable child care that meet the parents and children’s needs as essential. They recognize the importance of regular care arrangements; back-up arrangements when children, mother, or regular caregivers are ill; other options when care arrangements break down; and care when extra time is needed for work, school, or personal reasons. These arrangements are often not reflective of the experiences of low-income single mothers. In reality, she may create extremely complex arrangements in order to be confident that her child will be cared for (Kamerman, 1980). However, all this careful planning can be instantly negated, requiring the mother to stay home and miss school, work, or private time.

Many single mothers struggle between wanting to be with their children to provide them with quality time, but at the same time needing a break from their children, or wanting to advance through work or schooling (Quinn & Allen, 1989; Cook, 2000; McMullin, Davies, & Cassidy, 2002). Although these studies identify this conflict, little research has examined single mothers experiences in depth. It is hoped that this current research, in examining the lives of single mother families, will explore this conflict more fully.

Child care has been considered a significant part of welfare reform, as the employment requirement or decision is simultaneously a decision to use child care (Cleveland & Hyatt, 2003). The difficulty for single mothers receiving Ontario Works in finding subsidized child care has been cited by many (Little, 1994; McMullin, Davies, & Cassidy, 2002; Cleveland & Hyatt, 2003; Matthew, 2004). According to Matthews (2004), there are two major issues related to child care for single mothers receiving social assistance. Firstly, there is a lack of subsidized spaces in many communities, and secondly, even if child care is available, it is rarely flexible enough to accommodate the hours of education or employment for many entry level jobs. Therefore, many single mothers pursuing education or employment are compelled to rely on 'informal care' arrangements with neighbours or relatives (Hao & Brinton, 1997; Mayson, 1999; Cleveland & Hyatt, 2003). Often single mothers do not know a reliable neighbour or their relatives are too elderly or incapacitated to take on the responsibilities of young children (Mayson, 1998).

In recognizing the challenges of child care faced by single mothers, Campbell, Breitmayer, and Ramey (1986) investigated the benefits of providing free educational

daycare to children of never married teenage mothers. They conducted a four and a half year longitudinal study with 29 teenage mothers investigating the benefits of providing free educational daycare to children of disadvantaged mothers. The researchers found that relative to the control group, teenage mothers who had free access to high quality child care for their children at an early age had an increased likelihood of completing high school, obtaining post-secondary education, and becoming self-supporting. More recently, in recognition of these benefits there has been an increase in the research on child care subsidies (Matthews, 2006; Tekin, 2007) and the child care decisions of single parent families (Cleveland & Hyatt, 1998; Cleveland & Hyatt, 2003). Unfortunately, despite the evidence and increased research, child care continues to be among the largest concerns for single mother families and requires further examination in single mothers experiences.

Education

The consequences of young single motherhood to the educational futures of young mothers are well documented (Harris, 1993; Davies, McMullin, & Avison, 2001; Bruns, 2004). As a group, young mothers are less likely to finish high school, attend college or do graduate studies than their classmates, even after controls for socio-economic background, academic ability, and motivational factors have been considered (Davies, McMullin & Avison, 2001).

Zhan and Pandey (2004), unlike past researchers that compared single mother and two-parent families, examined the relationship between mother's education and the economic well-being in female headed households. They believed that examining similar types of households is helpful in locating strengths some female-headed households have

to buffer the risk of poverty and other vulnerabilities. Their analysis of 1,097 single mothers from a 1993 Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) clearly identified that education strongly correlated positively with single mothers' labour income, child support income, and welfare income. Post-secondary attainment also had a positive impact on their house values and support income, that is, help from family and friends. They recognized that further research is needed to understand how education influences single mother's income.

Although completion of post-secondary education has been identified as critical for the economic well-being and self-sufficiency of single mother families, the economic support available remains problematic. For example, in Ontario, sole-support parents who want to attend full-time post secondary education must access student loans from the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) to cover direct school costs and personal living costs for themselves and their families (Government of Ontario, 2006b). Mothers frequently expressed reservations about applying for student loans from OSAP (McMullin, Davies, & Cassidy, 2002). "They were aware of how quickly they would accumulate large debts and were afraid that, if it did lead to a job, the income would not be sufficient to support their family and make loan payments" (p. 309). Among those who manage to continue schooling, the high debt incurred may prolong poverty rather than breaking it.

A number of researchers have identified that the responsibility of single mothers being both a provider and a nurturer often interrupt her education, which in turn lowers her worth in both labour and marriage markets and increases her likelihood of experiencing poverty or welfare dependence (Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, & Morgan,

1987; Bumpass & McLanahan, 1989; Hao, 1994; Zhan & Pandey, 2004). Supervision, support, and encouragement from parents and kin have been identified as important in helping young single mothers complete high school or higher education (Stone, Nelson, & Niemann, 1994; Hao & Brinton, 1997; Bruns, 2004). Recently, education about parenting and child development has also been included in research on the positive effects of education on single parent families (Cunningham, Bremner, & Boyle, 1995; Benasich & Brooks-Gunn, 1996; Limpan & Boyle, 2005).

Empirical studies have indicated, consistently, that educational attainment, especially post-secondary, positively affects the economic well being of single mother families (Dixen & Rettig, 1994, Rocha, 1997; Zhan & Pandey, 2004). However, what are lacking in the literature are the experiences of single mother families as they attempt to push towards this attainment. Bruns (2004) is a noteworthy exception that will provide a useful comparison with my findings. In recognition of the obstacles single mothers face in achieving higher education, a support group was organized at a large university in the United States so that students who were single mothers could “meet in a supportive atmosphere, build a social network, share experiences and child care, and express fears, challenges, and the hurdles of being a single parent in college” (p. 102). Seven unmarried female college students and their children met through this group and four central themes emerged through the interview and observational data analysis. The mothers had strong feelings of guilt about going to school and attending classes, about disciplining their children too harshly because of too many tasks to accomplish with children underfoot, and about time spent away from their children. At times, the mothers also expressed feelings that they were inadequate mothers. Another theme that emerged was deep

feelings of aloneness, resulting in deficiencies in emotional and financial support. Most women in the study were not receiving child support from the fathers of their children, and lived in fear of living in poverty. Each mother experienced financial difficulties and was reliant on her family for support. However, some mothers had family that lived far away and felt emotionally alone as well. A third theme that emerged was that these women had many challenges with finding, keeping and paying for adequate child care. Child care was an especially large problem for evening classes, and two women frequently brought their children to class with them. Lastly, the by-product of single parenting while attending college was sleep deprivation and frustration. The mothers identified their frustration for they lacked the ability to rest and sleep because they had to work, study, take care of the kids, go to class, and face fears of not being able to survive. The mothers identified that they were tired, very intensely tired. This lack of sleep led to lack of confidence in their academic abilities and their ability to write papers and to take exams. Bruns (2004) concluded that the challenges faced by single mothers attending school and balancing parenting are overwhelming. The mothers in his study admitted that the group was a good idea, and that these groups should be formed on other college and university campuses.

Similarly, to determine the needs of single parent students at a large Idaho university, Huff and Thorpe (1997) surveyed 759 single-parent students (ninety-five percent female) receiving financial aid. They identified barriers among single parent students: time management; household finances; tuition and expenses; child support; dental care; child care, academics; employment; children's access to health care, food and clothing; healthcare access for health and transportation.

With a few exceptions, most of the current studies have examined the impact of education on the economic status of divorced or separated women, but left out never married single mothers. Therefore, the experiences of education for never married single mother families needs to be examined.

Housing

Housing has had a long association with single motherhood, yet we know little about the living arrangements of single mothers raising children alone (Winkler, 1993; Lessa, 2002). In Canada, as well as other parts of the western world, in the 19th and early 20th century, the home and its suitability defined how mothers were judged. In addition, the cost of housing was an influential factor in low-income mothers' capacity to keep their families together (Lessa, 2002). Housing choices may have important economic and social consequences for single mother families. It may effect single mother's welfare participation, their utilization of public housing, and rent subsidies (London, 2000).

The right to adequate housing is regarded as a fundamental human right. However, Brotchie (2006) points out that adequate housing is not available to all in Thunder Bay. According to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, in 2005, the average rental cost for a one bedroom apartment in Thunder Bay was \$550, a two bedroom \$696, and a three bedroom was \$798. The cost of adequate shelter should not exceed thirty percent of one's pre-tax income. Housing which costs less than thirty percent is considered to be adequate. For a female single parent family, the mean income in Thunder Bay in 2006 was \$26,646 (Brotchie, 2006). Assuming the need for a three-bedroom home, housing costs would be \$9,576 ($\$798 \times 12 \text{ months} = \$9,576$). Housing

costs would be about thirty-six percent of her income; therefore the average female single parent family in Thunder Bay does not have affordable housing.

Housing remained surprisingly marginal in the historical development of supports for single mothers and they were never intended as a specific target for public housing. It was not until the 1980's that feminist literature started to document a distinct and difficult connection between single mothers and public housing (Lessa, 2002). Rental charges for public (social) housing are based on 30% of the household's gross monthly income, starting at \$85.00 per month. In the case of tenants in receipt of Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program benefits, the rent is charged based on provincial assistance scales. In Thunder Bay, Ontario there are approximately 4,300 social housing units, 2,541 of which are available to single mother families (District of Thunder Bay Social Services Department, 2005).

Single mothers are more likely to be renters, (Hardey & Crow, 1991) to live in older apartments, and have inferior housing facilities than their married counterparts (Hudson & Galaway, 1993). Single mothers were designated as "unsatisfactory tenants" (Rose, 1958, p. 247) in the 1950's, and the local housing authority recently labels single parents as 'problem tenants' or 'difficult tenants' (Hardey & Crow, 1991). Single mothers are more likely to be sharing accommodations with relatives and friends (Hudson & Galaway, 1993). Additionally, single parents are less likely to own air conditioners, smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, microwave ovens, freezers, dishwashers, washing machines, dryers, and home entertainment systems, than dual parents (Hudson & Galaway, 1993).

A number of articles make a distinct connection between single mothers' housing and living arrangements with welfare participation (Edin & Lein, 1997; London, 2000; Meyer & Rosenbaum, 2001; Meyer & Sullivan, 2004). However, little is known about the housing and living arrangements of these single mothers. Winkler (1993), Bumpass and Raley (1995), Folk (1996), and Sigle-Rushton and McLanahan (2002) are significant exceptions. For example, Sigle-Rushton and McLanahan (2002) carried out a longitudinal study that researched a diversity of living arrangements of never married mothers, what factors are associated with these mothers' choices of living arrangements, and whether their living arrangements vary across different cities. Their data came from the Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study, which followed the birth cohort of 3, 712 never married parents and their children between 1998 and 2000 in 20 large U.S cities. Just under half of the unmarried mothers were cohabitating with their babies' fathers at the time of birth, and about one-third were living in nuclear family relationships. Nearly thirty percent of the cohabitating couples were with some other adults. Only 17 percent of mothers were living alone at time of birth, and just over one-third were living outside cohabitation, but with other adults. Independent living increases, either alone or as a nuclear family, as the mother's age increases. A high level of education appears to increase the mother's propensity to cohabitate independently as a nuclear family, but not to live as a lone parent. Substance abuse problems increase the probability of living with other adults or relatives, and decrease the probability of cohabitating. The quality of the partner relationship was a significant determinant of cohabitation. The living arrangements across cities were an important determinant of living arrangements, most often relating to cost of housing and the amount of cash assistance. Mothers who are

living in cities with high housing costs are more likely to live with their partners, other adults or relatives. Similarly, mothers in cities with generous welfare benefits are more likely to live alone. Similarly, Winkler (1993), Bumpass and Raley (1995), and Folk (1996) identify that a substantial proportion of single mothers live with relatives and non-relatives. Bumpass and Raley (1995), recognize the importance of studying this trend, as the marked upturn in unmarried childbearing is affected because many of these births may occur to young women who have not yet left home. Winkler (1993) and Bumpass and Raley (1995), went further, and examined the differences in economic well being in different living arrangements. They found that single mother families living with subfamilies, whether cohabitating or living with relatives, had higher levels of housing income adequacy than female-headed households. Folk (1996), in recognizing the economic differences for single mothers between living arrangements, also sought to compare the time resources in differing living arrangements. He recognized that single parents living in sub-families may be able to rely on additional adults to perform household work and child care, which could reduce time strains. However, the only consistent finding was that living in a parent's home significantly reduced housework hours.

An important oversight has been recognized in the literature on single mother families and living arrangements in recent years. Although the terms single mother and female household head are used interchangeably, there is an important distinction between these two groups. Not all single mothers live in their own households (Bumpass & Raley, 1995; London, 1998). Single mothers may live in a household headed by another individual—a parent, other relative, friend, or partner (Norton & Glick, 1986;

Winkler, 1993; Bumpass & Raley, 1995; London, 1998). London (1998) points out that in examining only the increase in female-headed households over the past 25 years, researchers may have obscured trends in single motherhood which therefore, possibly misrepresented the living arrangements of single mother families. Bumpass and Raley (1995) have argued that living arrangements have become more important than marital status for demographic analysis. My current research can assist in filling in the gap in understanding the living arrangement and housing experiences of single mother families.

Relationships

Research in the past has glorified a romantic partner as an important relationship in a single mother's life (Brown & Harris, 1978; Gladow & Ray, 1986). McLanahan, Wedemeyer, and Adelberg, (1981) comment on the fact that some studies have defined intimacy exclusively in terms of a close relationship with a spouse or boyfriend (Brown & Harris, 1978; Gladow & Ray, 1986). Implicit in this idea is that remarriage is the best route for single mothers (Gladow & Ray, 1986). Conversely, Edin (2000) in a study on single mothers and marriage learned that poor mothers held strong reasons for avoiding marriage. The women Edin interviewed held marriage in high esteem and wanted to be sure that they found a partner who treated them fairly. He also reported that the women were unwilling to enter into relationships in which they perceived they would have a passive role in bargaining and decision-making. In addition, these women believed that by forgoing marriage until they could make regular and substantial contributions to the household income they could purchase the right to more financial and household decision-making. Also, an income of their own insured them against hardship should the marriage fail. Furthermore, in Quinn and Allen (1989), almost all the single mothers

mentioned that they hoped to marry, or remarry, but they had reservations about trying to develop a relationship with a man while their children were still at home. This dilemma was a real challenge in terms of establishing a “normal” family for themselves and their children. The question of the effects and experiences of romantic involvement or marriage for single mother families is an important one.

Kin relationships have also been identified in the literature as important in understanding the lives of single mother families. Often young pregnancy and motherhood presents a disruption to kin ties, and a resulting re-negotiation of relationships between young mothers and their families (Smart & Neale, 1999; McDermott & Graham, 2005). McDermott and Graham (2005), in a systematic review of the resilient mothering practices that young, British working-class mothers employ to care for their children, identified that families responses to the pregnancy were often shock and disappointment. However, the synthesis suggested that in the majority of cases, over time, the young women and their family members were able to re-negotiate their relationships and that new mother and baby were welcomed and supported. Mitchell and Green’s (2002) study identified that the transition to motherhood drew a number of single mothers closer to kin. Over half of the women highlighted that becoming a mother cemented their relationships with their mothers. McDermott & Graham’s (2005) synthesis also indicated that important to the re-negotiation of relations between the young mother and the family members were the knowledge that both parties had limited resources. Walkerdine (1996) supports this by suggesting that kin ties were maintained and worked out on an implicit understanding that family relations are ‘practices of survival’. Family relationships are protective factors against the material and

psychological hardships of single motherhood (Phoenix, 1991; Mitchell & Green, 2002; McDermott & Graham, 2005). In opposition, some researchers have recognized that interactions with kin may be problematic for some single mothers (Belle, 1982; McLanahan & Booth, 1989; Olson & Banyard, 1993; Chase-Landsdale, Brooks-Gunn, & Zamsky, 1994). Kin relationships appear to be helpful in providing support, but they are also more likely to interfere with mother's parenting styles (McLanahan & Booth, 1989). Chase-Landsdale, Brooks-Gunn, & Zamsky (1994) identified that grandparents could increase stress within single families when co-residing with children. Such situations may lead to diffusion in responsibility between the parent and grandparent when each thinks that the other is in charge of parenting.

Research has indicated that the most important relationship for single mothers was with her child (Mitchell & Green, 2002; McDermott & Graham, 2005). Often the child provides a permanent unconditional love, which is less risky and transient than love associated with partners (McDermott & Graham, 2005). McDermott and Graham's (2005) synthesis indicated that the mother-child dyad provided a source of intimacy, fulfilment, self-identity, and self-worth for the single mothers. Golombok, Tasker, and Murray (1997) examined the quality of parent-child relationships and the socio-emotional development of children raised in a female-headed family from the first year of life. Studying these families, unlike the other studies identified, allowed for an understanding of the mother-child relationship without the influence of parental separation or divorce. Children's relationships with their mother differed in a number of ways in father-absent families, than those with a father at home. Mothers who were raising their child without a father showed greater warmth, and interacted more, with their child, but also reported

more serious, although no more frequent, disputes. With respect to the children, those raised without a father were more securely attached to their mother, as assessed by the Separation Anxiety Test, but perceived themselves to be less cognitively and physically competent than their peers from father-present families. They were no more likely to develop emotional or behavioural problems, and felt just as accepted by their mothers.

McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) also recognized that there were different levels of warmth and support towards children in single mother families. They believed it was because mothers are trying to fulfill two parental roles. This situation can set the stage for inconsistent parenting and conflictual parent-child relationships that compromise healthy relationships. Sigel-Rushton and McLanahan (2002) further support this notion in later research through the socialization deficit perspective, which maintains that children are deprived of important parental resources when they do not have two residential parents. It believes that relationships with fathers and mothers play different, but important, roles in socialization and development, a loss which cannot be compensated by greater (or better quality) time from the custodial parents.

A number of researchers, in examining the parent-child relationship of single mother families, have identified a common problem: the loss of intergenerational boundaries in single mother families (Glenwick & Mowrey, 1986; Arditti, 1999; Larson & Gillman, 1999). Glenwick and Mowrey (1986) describe the scenario in which a child lives with his/her single mother and whom the mother chooses to confide in. The parent feels free to transmit and share her feeling on a wide range of personal issues, such as bitterness towards the child's father, anger at males in general, and frustration with the number or burdens thrust upon her, especially financial concerns and social isolation. The

resulting message conveyed from mother to child is that “we’re in this together, kid” (Glenwick & Mowrey, 1986, p. 58). Similarly, Arditti (1999) identifies one of the central concerns about parenting after divorce involving the implications of the shifting of boundaries between parents and children. Particularly, he emphasizes the problems that can be associated with boundary ‘violations’ that might occur when the intergenerational boundaries between parent and children may be weak or distressed. The critical feature of such alliances, according to many system theorists, is that parents turn to their children for emotional support and intimacy (Arditti, 1999; Larson & Gillman, 1999). It is assumed that in doing this, negative emotions are transmitted to the child (Larson & Gillman, 1999) and parents are unable to provide their children with needed parental guidance and support (Jacobvitz & Bush, 1996).

Most research on the mother-child relationship in single mother families focuses on the differences between one and two-parent families and whether these differences affect outcomes and child development (Peterson & Zill, 1986; Demo, 1992; Guttman, 1993; Arditti, 1999; Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2002) As a result, the research on positive mother-child relationships in single mother families is limited. Additionally, most studies focus on the relationship after divorce (Weiss, 1979; Furstenberg, Morgan, & Allison, 1986; Arditti, 1999; Larson & Gillman, 1999), neglecting analysis of the relationship of never-married single mothers and their children. Golombok, Tasker, and Murray (1997) identify the inability to generalize these findings to children raised without a father from infancy, and therefore the mother-child relationship that results. The relationships that have been examined in this section have also been identified as

major forms of social support in single mother families, and therefore will be examined further in later sections.

Home Responsibilities, Personal Time, and Family Time

Home responsibilities and patterns of time use in single parent families differ from those of two parent families (Burden, 1986; Norton & Glick, 1986; Sanik & Mauldin, 1986; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Weitzman (1985) stated that there are severe limits on the time and energy the single parent has available. Weiss (1979) terms the single parent family "the understaffed family" in recognition of the single mother being forced to perform a variety of roles with both depleted resources and personnel.

According to Kazak and Linney (1983) there are at least 3 different roles for the single parent: the parent role; the social participant; and the self-supporter. Each of these roles contributes to the home responsibilities, family time, and personal time in single mother families. Parenting responsibilities shift during divorce and differ in never-married single mother families, necessitating that the single mother assume the dual role of mother and father. The role and degree of involvement are variable, but it is inevitable that there is an increase in her parenting responsibility. The second role, the social participant, involves the mothers' time and personal involvement with friends, kin, romantic partners, and community activities. And finally, the role of self-supporter is one that demands much time and energy from the single mother. Their study revealed that as more energy is funnelled into performing adequately in one role, concern for other roles may diminish. For example, as more time is needed to support the family, whether financially or through home responsibilities, mothers may have less time to allocate towards social participation or personal time.

Housekeeping may have a lower priority than other activities among single parents (Brandwein, Brown, & Fox, 1974). Some households can cope with housekeeping demands by reducing them, hiring help, or relocating tasks, but in the single parent family the possibilities for relocation of time are reduced (Masnick & Bane (1980). Olson and Banyard's (1993) study of fifty-two low-income single mothers with young children identified stressors involving day-to-day management of their household. Mothers recorded daily events that they perceived as stressful for a period of two-weeks, and described how they attempted to cope with each episode. Common examples included having a messy house, or having household appliances break down.

Sanik and Mauldin (1986) found that single parent families, compared to other family populations, have the least amount of time to devote to the total spectrum of non-work tasks, including child care, household chores, recreation, personal time, and community involvement activities. Furthermore, employment status has been recognized as having an effect on the amount of time for non-market work (Cleveland & Hyatt, 2003). Interestingly, Sanik and Mauldin (1986) found that employed single parents did not devote significantly different amounts of time interacting with and providing emotional support to their children. However, in contrast, the single mothers in Cook (2000) reflected on how being in programs had an impact on the amount of quality time they got to spend with their kids. Most said that school, work, or training programs reduced the amount of quality time they had, but that weekends were family time. Heath (1999) found that single parents may be less available to their children, but they appear to be influencing their behaviours in ways similar to two-parent families. As mentioned earlier, there is little research that examines the relationship between single mothers'

employment and the relationship to home responsibility, personal time, and family time. In recent years there has been an increase in research on the work/family conflict for single parent families, (Clark, 2000; Williams, 2000; Ciabattari, 2005) but little has examined the experiences of young single mothers with young children in depth.

Single mothers in Cook (2000), a study on single mother's experiences and health, identified that their children's schedule dictated her home responsibilities and personal time. Naps and meals consume much of the day for single mothers with young children. While some children may not nap, they have other requirements that are just as rigid. Children in the study needed to either be picked up or met after school. Lack of time creates difficulties for the single parent of preschool children, but persists even when they are older because the timing of school and other activities may conflict with parent's schedules (Voydanoff & Kelley, 1984).

The single mothers in Cook's (2000) study described how having to constantly attend to their child's needs gave them little time to do anything of interest for themselves. For many of these mothers this experience translated into being bored by being at home with their children. Similarly Hudson and Galaway (1993), identified that there is considerable pressure on single mothers' free time and time for personal care, including sleep. In his study, single mothers, employed, with at least one child under five, reported an average of only 1.3 hours per day of free time, with the figure rising to two hours when the children are all over five. If the mother does not work for pay, this figure rose to 2.9 hours and 3.2 hours. Those working for pay also tended to spend a much larger portion of the average day in their homes. A single mother with two children at home commented on how she felt selfish when she was unable to give anything more to

anyone at the end of the day and looked forward to putting her children to bed (Daly, 2001). Another single mother expressed guilt for "taking time away from [her] children" and only considered personal activities when it was "not taking away from my kids" (Daly, 2001, p. 292).

Health

There is a vast amount of literature comparing single and married mothers physical and mental health (Loveland-Cherry, 1986; Avison, 1997; Lipman, 1997; Curtis, 2001). With regard to health, many studies have focused on the impact of single parenting and poverty on the mental health of women, especially depression and anxiety (McLanahan, Wedemeyer, & Adelberg, 1981; Lipman, 1997; Avison, 1997; Quickfall, 1999, Cairney, Boyle, Offord, & Racine, 2003). Lipman (1997) reported that in a sample of over 1500 women "single mothers were more likely than the mothers in two-parent families to be poor, to be 25 years of age or less, to have mental health problems, and to use mental health services" (p. 639). Similarly, Davies, Avison, and McAlpine (1997) revealed similar findings and reported that single mothers identified higher rates of depression than married mothers. Women's physical health is another area that has been linked to single parenting and poverty (Hanson, 1986; Quickfall, 1999; Curtis, 2001). Curtis (2001) revealed that compared to married mothers, single mothers are more likely to rate their health status as poor or very poor and less likely to claim it as excellent. Poor nutrition and stress are related to a number of physical health problems experienced by single mothers (Perales & Young, 1988; Belle, 1982). Contrary to these findings, some investigators have focused on understanding the relationship between family strengths, health behaviours and health status (Pratt, 1976; Hanson, 1986; Ford-Gilboe, 2000). In

single parent families, a more non-traditional sex role orientation in mothers has been positively associated with involvement in health promotion activities, including greater use and self-reliance in solving health problems (Ford-Gilboe, 2000). Furthermore, Hanson (1986) in a study of health in single parent families identified that the variables that indicated the most potential for predicting single parents' physical and mental health were social support and communication. Given that a number of studies have focused solely on the health of single mothers, it is not an in-depth focus of this study, but is significant in the lives of single mother families.

Loneliness and Isolation

Single mothers are often characterized as lonely and alone. The very definition of one-parent family suggests loneliness or social isolation (Smith, 1980). Researchers have found that one of the major problems faced by single parent families is social isolation, including loneliness (Schlesinger, 1977; Smith, 1980; Yusim, 1997; Keating-Lefler, Hudson, and Campbell-Grossman, Fleck, & Westfall, 2004). Smith (1980) acknowledges that it has been suggested that social isolation is always greater in single parent households, but that the isolation varies slightly by type of family. He comments on Schlesinger's (1969) review, which indicates that social isolation is related to the social stigma that exists against single parents. Widows are thought to experience the least isolation due to fewer stigmas, while never-married parents may experience the most isolation. Single parents in Richards and Schmiede (1993) reported feelings of loneliness and feeling out of place in many social situations.

Single mothers identified feelings of isolation because of new responsibilities, lack of financial resources, lack of transportation, and limited social support (Keating-

Lefler, Hudson, Campbell-Grossman, Fleck, & Westfall, 2004). Due to financial insecurity, many single mothers have minimal opportunity for socialization, and therefore spend most of their time with their children (Thompson, 1986). Hao and Brinton (1997) identified that unemployed single mothers living alone experience more extreme social isolation. He believes living with parents and kin ends this isolation and may offer exposure to the work routine of other household members, creating indirect social ties. However, Mitchell and Green (2002) recognized that one could not presume that close geographical proximity to one's family eradicates loneliness. In their interviews of 14 young mothers in England, half of the mothers, both lone parents and those living with partners, experienced loneliness. Similarly, Gladow and Ray (1986) found that family support was not related to loneliness in single parent families. Rather, support from friends appeared to have the greatest impact on reducing loneliness for single parents. Single mothers in May-Stewart (1998) identified that the loneliness and isolation they felt led to increased experiences of stress. In times of need, these mothers often did not have the social support needed to deal with the issue in question. Furthermore, Smith (1980) believed continued isolation may produce negative effects on the single parents personality and interpersonal relationships, which have already been affected by the new role as an unmarried parent. Similarly, Quickfall (1999) reported further problems related to isolation. Many single mothers in her study felt as if they had no one to really talk to because besides not wanting people to know their business, many have experienced being gossiped about and stigmatized because they are poor.

Weiss, has written on the general topic of isolation in the United States, and has also recognized the role of the single parent status in isolation (Weiss, 1973; Weiss, 1976;

Weiss, 1979). Weiss (1973) identified that more limited human resources in single parent families may also mean that the parent has less time available for social activities and participation in community life. In addition, single parents may be isolated from relatives, friends, neighbours, and may not participate in social activities geared toward nuclear families. Gladow and Ray (1986), in a study on the impact on formal support services on low income single parents found that feelings of isolation experienced by single parents was impacted by a number of support sources. These supports included romantic involvement, friendship support, relative support, and community support. Another study, (Yusim, 1997) revealed the importance of meeting with other single mothers, as it seemed to reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation when parenting and created new friendships between single mothers. However, according to Quickfall (1999), despite living in areas with a large number of groups and programs to attend, single mothers reported finding it difficult to get out of the house, and therefore still felt isolated.

Overall, social support has been seen to buffer feelings of loneliness and isolation in single mother families (Gladow & Ray, 1986; Yusim, 1997; Quickfall, 1999). This study hopes to further understand single mothers' experiences of social isolation and loneliness, as well as the relationship to social support.

Social Support

Existing research identifies the importance of social support for single mother families (Weiss, 1979; Gladow & Ray, 1986; Hao & Brinton, 1997; Lipman & Boyle, 2005; Harknett, 2006). Social support exerts a broad positive influence on personal health, (Hanson, 1986; Lipman & Boyle, 2005) stress, (Quinn & Allen, 1989; Cairney, Boyle, Offord, and Racine, 2003) mother-child relations, (Simons, Beanen, Conger, &

Chao, 1993; Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2002), education (Van Stone, Nelson, & Niemann, 1994) and family functioning (Parish, Hao, & Hogan, 1991).

Social support has been defined in a variety of ways. For purposes of this literature review, social support is defined as “a set of personal contacts through which the individual maintains [her] social identity and receives emotional supports, material aid and services, information and new social contacts” (Walker, MacBride, Vachon, 1977, p. 35). Gladow and Ray (1986) identify types of support systems as formal, structured informal, and informal supports. They identify formal social support³ as “provided by professional helping relationships such as those with counsellors or agency workers”, structured informal social support as “provided by a by-product of involvement in structured group activities such as P.T.A., churches, lodges, unions, clubs, etc.,” and informal support as “provided by relationships with kin, neighbours, friends, etc.” (p.114). Single mothers in Quinn and Allen (1989) reported structured informal social support through their church. They used their church as a safe place for socialization and friendship. They turned to the church for contact with people who had similar values and interests; some hoped these contacts would lead to dating relationships or even to marriage.

The two most commonly mentioned sources of informal support for single parents are relatives and friends (Barry, 1979; McLanahan, Wedemeyer, & Adelberg, 1981; Quinn & Allen, 1989; Harknett, 2006; Livermore & Powers, 2006). Researchers have studied the extent to which single mothers receive social support in the form of financial aid, child care, educational support, and emotional support from family and friends

³ Formal social support will be examined later in the section of this literature review on services, as it pertains to the quantitative survey in this study, which examines *how formal agency services support single mothers living in Thunder Bay*.

(Livermore & Powers, 2006). Edin and Lein's (1997) qualitative study of 379 low-income single mothers living in urban cities described that single mothers draw on various sources of support because their wages from work or social assistance fail to provide sufficient resources for their families.

Mitchell and Green (2002) and Monroe and Tiller (2001) identify that kinship networks, especially female, often provide an important source of informal support—practically, emotionally and financially. According to Monroe and Tiller's (2001) discussions with welfare reliant, rural women, the assistance offered most often was the opportunity to live with another adult(s), usually the woman's mother, to help with housing, and providing general care and material support for the woman and her children, or both. Using a nationally represented sample of youth, Hogan, Hao, and Parish (1990) found that, in the mid-1980's thirty-one percent of white single mothers resided with adult kin, one-third received financial aid from kin that covered at least half of their living expenses, and two-thirds of working single mothers received child care assistance from kin. Similarly, McLanahan, Wedemeyer, Adelberg's (1981) semi-structured interviews with approximately twenty single mothers identified that their family assisted with several kinds of support, including emotional support, child care, finances, job problems, and household chores. Quinn and Allen (1989) reported that single mothers found friends a vital part of their resource network. Single mothers identified that someone to listen and understand was essential to her coping strategy. Also, in some cases they exchanged babysitting with friends to free up time for social activities or just for rest. Although research identifies family and friend support as an important form of social support for single mother families, few studies examine, in depth, single mothers

experiences with this support. Furthermore, of the few studies that examine family and friend support for single mother families in some detail, (McLanahan, Wedemeyer, Alderberg, 1981; Quinn & Allen, 1989; Parish, Hao, and Hogan, 1991) the studies were done fifteen or more years ago. Neighbours and community may also play an important role in the support systems of single parent families (Brandewein, 1977; McLanahan, Wedemeyer, & Adelberg, 1981). Single mothers in McLanahan, Wedemeyer, and Adelber (1981) reported receiving direct services through neighbourhood and community involvement. Most of the women in the study were in babysitting cooperatives, and many belonged to car pools and food cooperatives. This network also provided emotional support. However, Alwin, Converse, and Martin (1985) found that never-married and divorced mothers have less contact with neighbours than married mothers, which they believe may be related to their higher rates of residential mobility. Single parents groups have also been mentioned in the literature as a support for single mother families (Jauch, 1977; Gladow & Ray, 1986; Lipman & Boyle, 2005). Lipman and Boyle (2005) conducted an experiment on the effect of a community-based program of social support and education groups for single mothers of young children on maternal well-being and parenting. Eligible mothers were randomly assigned to either participate in a 10-week program of group sessions (1.5 hours per week) offering social support and education, with a parallel children's activity group, or to receive a standard list of community resources and the option to participate at group sessions at the end of a follow-up period. Over the short term, they found that the program significantly improved mood and increased self-esteem among the single mothers, but had no reliable effect on levels of social support and parenting. There were no significant differences between the

intervention and control groups at 18 months follow-up. In general, the findings indicated improved outcomes among all of the participants, irrespective of their group allocation. The researchers believe that more intensive programs and increased financial support should be rigorously evaluated.

Regardless of the positive affect of social support on improving the lives of single mothers, a number of studies have identified that social support for single parent families is still lacking. Keller and McDade (2000) reported that low-income mothers rarely seek and subsequently receive less social support than married mothers and mothers who are from higher socio-economic backgrounds. Similarly, single mothers in Cairney, Boyle, Offord, and Racine's (2003) study also report less perceived social support, fewer contacts with friends and family, and lower levels of social involvement than married mothers. Often, single mothers must combine wages from work and public assistance with monetary and other various sources of support to try and meet their family's needs (Livermore & Powers, 2006). Not all single mothers receive adequate support from their parents or families (Henninger & Nelson, 1984), and instead must rely on structured informal and formal services for assistance. As mentioned earlier, formal services will be examined in the following section on services available to single mother families and through the quantitative questionnaire in this study.

A recurrent and persistent theme throughout Keating-Lefler, Hudson, Campbell-Grossman, Fleck, & Westfall's (2004) qualitative, focus group study, on the concerns and needs of single, low-income mothers was lack of informational support. Information support is "the provision of content that the person can use to cope with personal and environmental problems and includes advice, suggestions, directives, and information"

(Keating-Lefler, Hudson, Campbell-Grossman, Fleck, & Westfall, 2004, p. 394). Some examples of information support that the mothers reported as inadequate included: information about the infant's development stage, what type of diapers to buy, and what agencies will help with their infants. Moreover, Sara Cummings, a single mother of two, interviewed in Gordon (2007) identifies that more social supports are needed for single mother families: affordable quality child care, after-school programs, opportunities for adult education and support for single mothers who want to stay home with their young children.

Most of this researcher has addressed social support in terms of quantity of support available; however, single mothers' perception's of the quality of the social support is also an important consideration (House & Kahn, 1985, Brown & Moran, 1997). This current research seeks to understand the quantity, quality and impact of social support on the lives of the single mother families in this study.

Programs and Services

The literature reviewed in this section examines how formal agency services support single mother families on a federal, provincial, and local level. Federal and provincial programs and services directed at supporting single mother families will be examined first, followed by a look at the local level, specific to Thunder Bay. In addition, Internet support for single mothers will be examined. This section will also serve to identify the gaps in services, which may have a direct impact on the lives of single mother families in Thunder Bay.

Federal and Provincial

This literature review turned up no specific federal or provincial government services for single mother families. However, because of decreased income of single mother families they are proportionately more likely to use the federal and provincial programs that provide special services for families and for people in lower income brackets (refer to Table 2.1: Federal Services and Table 2.2: Provincial Services). Despite the lack of programming for single mother families on the federal level, Human Resources and Social Development Canada (2007) announced on November 13, 2007 that it is providing a federal homelessness funding for new supportive housing for single mothers who are undertaking further education.

Lipman and Boyle (2005) commented on the efforts of the provincial government in supporting single mother families. They report that they have not made increased financial support for single mothers and their children a high priority, rather they have invested in non-financial programs, (Peters, 1994; Swazey, 1998; Health Canada, 2005) particularly community based initiatives directed at low-income families. The programs attempt to address the developmental needs of families by strengthening parenting skills and the adaptive capacities of children, as well as linking mothers and their children to existing services.

Local

No literature was found on special programs for single mother families in Thunder Bay that arises from local funding. A number of local publications have listed services available to families living in Thunder Bay, Ontario; (Healthy Babies, Healthy Children, 1999; Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse, 2005; Thunder Bay

District Health Unit, 2007) however, they do not identify services specifically for single mother families. Furthermore, little is known about the needs these services meet. A noteworthy exception, however, is Nelson (1988), which this study is developed from. Her study identified that thirteen or 39% of the human services agencies/organizations that responded to the questionnaire do provide special services/programs for single mother families. These thirteen agencies provided a broad range of assistance, with a split in emphasis between tangible needs such as housing, transportation, food and clothing; and skill development such as financial counselling, parenting skills, and emotional/social supports. This current study will identify any local programs currently in Thunder Bay for single mother families, and identify what programs are administered locally from funds from federal and provincial programs.

Table 2.1: Federal Services

Service	Description
Canada Child and Tax Benefit (CCTB)	This benefit is a tax-free monthly payment made to eligible families with children under 18. It may include the National Child Benefit Supplement (NCBS), a benefit for low-income families with children, and/or the Child Disability Benefit (CDB), a benefit for families caring for children with severe and prolonged disabilities.
Universal Child Care Benefit	This benefit is paid to parents in monthly instalments of \$100 per month per child under the age of six.
Maternity, Parental, or Sickness Benefits	Employment Insurance (EI) provides maternity/parental benefits to individuals who are pregnant, have recently given birth, are adopting a child, or are caring for a newborn. Sickness benefits are paid to those who are unable to work because of sickness, injury, or quarantine.
Canada Education Savings Grant (CESG)	This program provides grants paid by the Government of Canada into tax-sheltered savings plans that help finance children's post-secondary education.
Canada Learning Bond	The Canada Learning Bond provides a learning bond for children born to families who receive the National Child Benefit Supplement.
Child Disability Benefit (CDB)	This program provides a non-taxable supplement to low- and moderate-income families to help them with the costs of raising children under 18 who have a severe and prolonged mental or physical impairment.
Benefits for Children	The Canada Pension Plan (CPP) provides a monthly benefit to the dependent children of disabled or deceased contributors.
Elementary/Secondary Education Program	This program provides access for First Nations students to elementary or secondary schools, or services.

Source: (Services Canada, 2007)

Table 2.2: Provincial Services

Service	Description
Ontario Works Program	As previously mentioned, the Ontario Works Program provides income and employment assistance for people who are in temporary financial need.
Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP)	As previously mentioned, LEAP is a special program that focuses on young parents between the ages of 16 and 21 and their children. It provides young parents who are receiving assistance through Ontario Works with the supports they need to finish high school, improve parenting skills, and achieve economic self-sufficiency.
Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)	The Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) is designed to meet the unique needs of people with disabilities who are in financial need, or who want and are able to work and need support.
Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities	This program helps parents with some of the extra costs of caring for a child who has a severe disability to help the child live as normal a life as possible at home and in the community.
Behaviour Management	This program provides assessment and/or treatment for children with developmental disabilities and their families.
Child Care Programs for Children with Special Needs	This program provides financial assistance toward the cost of licensed child care or approved recreation programs for eligible parents of children with special needs up to the age of 18 years.
Children's Mental Health	This program provides mental health services to children (under age 18) with social, emotional, behavioural, or psychiatric problems.
Children's Rehabilitation Services	This program provides physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech and language therapy for children who have physical disabilities or communication disorders.
Enhanced Respite Funding	This program provides assistance to families caring for a medically fragile and/or technologically dependent child living at home whose care requires ongoing, frequent and time-consuming intervention.
Family Mediation Services	This program provides voluntary mediation as a way of resolving disputes about family issues.
Healthy Babies, Healthy Children Program	This program provides services for families to promote healthy child development and help their children achieve their full potential.
Infant Development	This program provides early intervention services to children up to five years of age who have a developmental disability or who are at risk of developmental delay.
Infant Hearing Program	This program provides parents of deaf or hard of hearing infants with the services their children need in order to develop communication and language skills.
Integrated Services for Northern Children	This program provides health, mental health and education services to children and youth living in rural and remote areas across northern Ontario.
Intensive Behavioural Intervention	This program provides intensive behavioural intervention to eligible autistic children ages two to five. Training for parents is also provided to help them support their children at home.
Ontario Child Care Supplement for Working Families	This supplement awards benefits to eligible low- and moderate- income families with dependent children under age seven.
Ontario Early Years Centres	These centres are a network of early learning and parenting centres that provide early years programs and services accessible to all children, parents and caregivers.
Out of Home Respite	This program provides planned out-of-home respite to families with a child with a developmental and/or physical disability living at home.

Source: (Services Canada, 2007)

Internet Supports

With the lack of special services available to single mother families and the growing use of the World Wide Web, a number of Internet supports and services have been developed for single mother families.

Moms On a Mission Single, Inc (M.O.M.S.) (www.singlemoms.org/) is a non-profit resource, educational, and support organization devoted exclusively to the welfare and interest of single custodial parents and their children. It offers resources on family law, child support, visitation, custody, dating resources, support, critical information, articles, and a free online magazine. M.O.M.S creates events and social interaction for single parents and their families. They have shipped business clothes to those in need and provided Christmas gifts to families. The organization has a VIP Card, which is not only a membership ID card, but as they grow the VIP Card is hoped to gain value by generating huge discounts on purchases and services around the world. The organization has been running for the past six years and has included membership to more than 65 countries.

The National Organization of Single Mothers, Inc. (www.singlemothers.org/) is a non-profit group founded in 1991 that is dedicated to helping single mothers by choice or chance face the daily challenges of life with wisdom, wit, dignity, confidence, and courage. The organization's website conducts research, provides parenting information, educates and updates the media, identifies support groups, and publishes studies. They published a national award-winning quarterly, "Single Mother: A Support Group in Your Hands." The organization also provides the opportunity to network with other single mothers online.

The Singleparent.ca (www.singleparent.ca) is a Canadian site that helps single mothers and fathers find resources to raise their child. It provides resources on finances and insurances, child care, homework, transportation, travelling, and associations for single parents in Canada.

The Singlemom.com organization (www.singlemom.com) is a private, non-government website focused on collecting as much information and resources as possible for single mothers. It seeks to help single mothers educate themselves about what it takes as a single mother to navigate through daily life, and assist them with their basic and more challenging needs. They listen to the single mothers and provide them with information by way of guidance, resources (i.e., self-help, education, financial, grants, career, and health), research, and direct feedback from their dedicated volunteer staff. The website also offers a blog/forum for single mothers to meet online, leverage each other's experiences, gain practical advice and build friendships and contacts. In addition, they offer a number of programs, which are designed to provide information on subsidized child care, medical, dental and mental health care, advice on money management, parenting and nutrition, affordable transportation and health insurance, as well as referrals to legal aid for those who might need it. The organization offers support groups in all major metropolitan areas, and offers a free classified service on their website so readers can donate merchandise online such as clothes, toys etc. Single mothers can sign up on the website to receive it. There are a number of other websites devoted to single mothers, but the ones previously mentioned seemed to be the most commonly accessed resources of internet support for single mothers.

Social Capital Theory

Over the past two decades, social capital in its various forms and contexts has emerged as one of the most significant concepts in social science across the Anglo American world, (Lin, 1999; Healy & Hampshire, 2002) and has gained a prominent place in recent research on the well-being of populations (Kawachi & Berkman, 2000; Caughy, O'Campo, & Muntaner, 2003). The key people involved in the development of social capital and those that have contributed to its current popularity in everyday language today, include Pierre Bourdieu (1983; 1985; 1992), James S. Coleman (1988; 1990), and Robert Putnam (1993; 2000; 2001). The major concepts of these authors that are relevant to my research questions will be discussed. Moreover, a number of authors have applied social capital theory to their research on a number of life issues experienced by single mother families, (Portes, 1998; Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2002; Ciabattari, 2005) which will be examined later in this section. Social capital theory broadens the social workers perspective to look at experiences at the individual, family, community, and organizational level, including the relationships among them. This perspective of viewing a diversity of levels of experience as well as their integration is applied in understanding the experiences of single mother families in Thunder Bay. As such, it is the theoretical framework for this current study that examines what life is like for single mother families living in Thunder Bay and how formal agency services support single mothers living in Thunder Bay.

Social capital, as defined by its principal theorists (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993) consists of those features of social organization, such as networks of secondary associations, high levels of interpersonal trust and norms of mutual reciprocity, which act

as resources for individuals and facilitate collective action. It is the total actual or potential resources individuals can gather together through membership in organizations and social networks (Bourdieu, 1983). Therefore, there are two elements of social capital that are significant. Firstly, the social relationship itself allows individuals to claim access to resources possessed by their associates; and secondly, the amount and quality of these resources (Portes, 1998). Bourdieu (1983) sees this happening in an arena where individuals struggle over resources, which he calls social fields. This struggle over resources creates a hierarchal system within the field, a structure which Bourdieu refers to as a network (Bourdieu, & Wacquant, 1992).

Social capital, in this study, refers to single mothers' access to resources through membership in social networks (Portes, 1998). These resources provide two distinct kinds of capital: social support and social leverage (Briggs, 1998; Dominguez & Watkins, 2003). As cited in Ciabattari (2005), Dominguez & Watkins (2003) explain that "ties that offer *social support* help individuals to...cope with the demands of everyday life and other stresses...These ties...generally provide emotional and expressive support as well as certain forms of instrumental help like rides, small loans, or a place to stay in case of emergency" (p. 113, emphasis in original). On the other hand, social leverage, refers to social capital that helps one "get ahead" or change one's opportunity, say through access to job information or a recommendation for a scholarship or loan (Boissevain, 1974). A key function of social capital is the capacity to leverage resources, ideas, and information from formal institutions beyond the community (World Bank, 2000).

Forms of Capital

Bourdieu (1983) believes that one must recognize all forms of capital to recognize the structure and functioning of society. Bourdieu (1983) sees capital in 3 guises:

Economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the forms of property rights as *cultural capital*, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of educational qualifications, and as *social capital*, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of nobility" (p.243).

Bourdieu believes the distribution of capital, in all forms, determines success for practices (ie. successful individual, or group functioning), which is why one must attempt to acquire as much capital as possible, in the form of credits. He believes the non-economic forms of capital to be important because the other forms of capital, social and cultural, change into one another, what he refers to as conversion. No literature was found that distinguishes among these three forms of social capital in their application to understanding single mother families. Thus, this current study may be unique in its application of social capital to the life situation of single mothers.

Norms of Reciprocity

Norms of reciprocity, according to Putnam (1993) are extremely important in social capital. He refers to two types of reciprocity, balanced or generalized. Balanced reciprocity refers to simultaneous exchange of items of equivalent value, like when coworkers exchange holiday gifts. Generalized reciprocity refers to a continuing

relationship of exchange that is, at any given time, unrequited or imbalanced, but that involves mutual expectations that a benefit granted should be paid in the future. Putnam gives friendship as an example of a relationship that almost always involves generalized reciprocity. In communities or networks where people can be confident that trusting will be mutual, not exploited, exchange is more likely to develop. Stack (1974) has shaped ideas about how survival strategies of poor, single mothers are based on relationships of exchange. "A central theme in that analysis is that the give and take in these relationships can be understood within the anthropological perspective of the gift: giving carries with it the obligation to reciprocate..." (Nelson, 2000). Stack's (1974) research also suggests that reciprocity is the norm among communities or networks of shared poverty. Nelson (2000), drawing on interviews with thirty-nine single mothers, examined the relationship of support between single mothers and those who they rely on for assistance in daily living, and explored the extent to which these relationships were based on expectations of reciprocity. The single mothers in the study expressed a strong verbal commitment to reciprocity in their relationships. One single mother reported, "I try really hard to...reciprocate [to my friends]; same with my family. I always feel obligated to give back" (p. 297). Another single mother said that when people did something for her, she would "try to do something for them. Even if they don't ask me for anything, or they don't need anything, I'll try to do something else for them" (p. 297). The women shared a variety of resources including transportation, child care, small sums of money, and emotional support.

Networks of Civic Engagement

Putnam (1993) believes that networks of personal communication and exchange characterize any society. He describes some networks as 'horizontal,' bringing together agents of equivalent status and power, and others as 'vertical,' linking unequal agents in asymmetric relations of hierarchy and dependence. Networks of civic engagement, like neighbourhood associations, co-operatives, and womens' groups, represent horizontal interaction. He uses the term 'civic engagement' to refer to people's connections with the life of their communities (Putnam, 1995). Putnam sees networks of civic engagement as an essential part of social capital because the denser such networks in a community the more likely that its citizens will be able to cooperate for mutual benefit. A network of civic engagement could include a single mothers' support group. One may infer from this that the denser the support network, the more likely the single mothers will be able to work together for mutual benefits. Furthermore, Putnam (1993) identifies that individuals who interact in many social contexts are apt to develop strong norms of acceptable behaviour and to convey their mutual expectations to one another in many reinforcing encounters, and therefore foster strong norms of reciprocity. Gold, Kennedy, Connel, and Kawachi (2002) assessed the role of social capital in the relationship between income inequality and the teenage birth rate. Their findings identified the effects of decreased social capital and civic engagement. Their study revealed, that in terms of adolescent sexual health, decreased social capital might weaken informal social support systems, thereby causing adolescents to feel socially disconnected; lead to social policies de-emphasizing pregnancy prevention services; or impact economic structures.

Therefore, meaning fewer education or occupational opportunities to serve as incentives against childbearing. These findings may be applicable to all single mother families.

Trust

Trust, according to Putnam (1993) arises from norms of reciprocity and networks of social engagement. Trust itself is an emergent property of the social system.

Individuals are able to be trusting because of the social norms and networks within which their actions are embedded. Social networks allow trust to become transitive and spread: I trust you, because I trust her, and she assures me that she trusts you. Members must trust in the trust of others to complete their obligations since they know little about them. Trust lubricates cooperation. The greater the level of trust within a community, or network, the greater the likelihood of cooperation. Moreover, cooperation itself breeds trust. According to Putnam, the connection between trust, civic engagement, and norms of reciprocity is clear: trust is not blind. Trust entails a prediction about the behaviour of an independent actor. You do not trust an individual or agency to do something merely because he or she says they will do it. You trust him or her because, knowing what you know through interaction with the network and through the norms that have developed, you expect that he or she will choose to do it. Nelson (2000) makes clear that the relationships the single mothers in her study are involved in, through which social capital is developed, are not automatic and that becoming a single mother does not ensure entry into a network of like-minded or similarly situated friends. Each individual who does participate in an intimate relationship of support has to both earn her place in that relationship and abide by its implicit rules. These rules include making equivalent returns, being sensitive to individual situations, and not taking advantage of monetary vulnerability. Trust lies at

the heart of all these interactions. Failure to abide by these rules and the trust within the relationships can result in being thrust out of a sustaining network.

Social Capital and the Family

Coleman sees social capital within a family as depending both on the physical presence of the parents and on the attention given by the parents to the children (Coleman, 1988). However, he recognized that it does not reside solely within the family. According to Coleman, "It can be found outside as well in the community consisting of the social relations, and in the parents relations with the institutions of the community" (1988, p. S113). Sigle-Rushton and McLanahan (2002) identify the loss of social capital that accompanies divorce, or results from single parent households. According to Coleman (1998), social capital can be used to promote the development of children's human capital, their individual ability. Sigle-Rushton and McLanahan (2002) further identify that in a well functioning two-parent family; parents cooperate and share information with each other about the child. These relationships, in turn, help them do a better job of supervising their child and of imparting the values and skills they believe are important to their child's development. They also identify, like Coleman, that strong ties between parents and other adults in the community, including teachers and extended family members, are also useful social capital in increasing children's human capital. In addition, the parenting deficit to social capital could be further exacerbated if high levels of stress, or because of economic hardship, interfere with the single parents' ability to provide emotional support and a moderate, consistent, degree of control.

The literature reviewed on social capital and single mothers appears to have great relevance to the research questions in this current study. The literature identified a

number of connections between the experiences of single mother families and social capital theory, many of which may parallel the experiences revealed through this study. Furthermore, Coleman (1990) saw the value of social capital in its usefulness for qualitative analysis of social systems and for those quantitative analyses that employ qualitative indicators. Therefore, social capital is useful in this study to analyze the life experiences of single mother families and in understanding the connection between the lives of single mother families and the social capital available, as revealed in participant observations and the questionnaire results. Social capital provides an alternative framework for responding to single mother families experiencing disadvantage and social marginalization. Single mothers have become the responsibility of 'welfare' organizations, which act for, but relatively separate from the community as a whole. Social capital theory provides a way of understanding and responding to the needs of single mother families that emphasizes community building and connections across society as a long term response (Healy & Hampshire, 2000).

A review of the literature on the life experiences of single mother families, programs and services that support single mothers, and social capital theory, as the theoretical perspective used in this study, framed the study and assist to demonstrate the importance of this research.

Chapter 3

Methods and Procedures

Introduction

For many years researchers have collected both qualitative and quantitative data; however, to put both forms of data together as a distinct research design or methodology has emerged in the last decade (Creswell, 2007). Philosophically, it is the third research movement, a movement that moves past the qualitative and quantitative paradigm wars by offering a logical and practical alternative (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Over the last 50 years writers have used different names for this method of research, making it difficult to locate articles that might relate to mixed methods research. It has been called “multitrait/multimethod research” (Campbell & Fiske, 1959), “integrated or combined” (Steckler, McLeroy, Goodman, Bird & McCormick, 1986), “quantitative and qualitative methods” (Fielding & Fielding, 1986), “hybrids” (Ragin, Nagel & White, 2004), “methodological triangulation” (Morse, 1991), “combined research” (Creswell, 1994), and “mixed methodology” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The most frequently used name today, is “mixed methods research”, associated with the recent *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioural Research* (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Mixed methods research focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies (Creswell, 2007). According to Creswell (2007), “It is not enough to simply collect and analyze the quantitative and qualitative data; they need to be “mixed” in some way so that together they form a more complete picture of the problem than they do when standing alone”(p. 7).

The history of mixed methods research is important for those designing a mixed methods study, as it helps defend the design to faculty and editors and provides a philosophical foundation for using the design (Creswell, 2007). A more detailed review of this history can be found in Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) and Creswell (2007), but here I will briefly review the background of mixed method research. Four overlapping time periods characterize the development of this method. The *formative period* (1950-1980's) saw the initial interest in using more than one method in a study and the question became whether it was possible to combine both forms of data when they arose from different perspectives. The *paradigm debate period* (1970-1980's) saw continued dialogue on whether or not qualitative and quantitative data could be combined. Although the issue of reconciling paradigms was and is still apparent, this period is characterized by strong support to embrace mixed methods as a way to address research problems. During the *procedural developments period* (1980-1990's) the debate over mixing qualitative and quantitative research continued. However, attention began to shift towards the method and procedures for designing a mixed methods study. During this period writers began discussing specific types of mixed methods designs. The *recent indicators of interest period* (2000-present) saw a growth in the interest in mixed methods research as well as authors advocating for mixed methods research as a separate research design. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003), wrote the 768-page *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research*, which was devoted to controversies, methodological issues, applications in different fields, and future directions of mixed methods. Meanwhile, Creswell (2003) aligned mixed methods as a third approach alongside quantitative and qualitative approaches, and Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) advocated

for considering mixed methods as a legitimate design in educational research. Great advances in this approach have been made with the introduction, in January 2007, of the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research (JMRR)*, which “is an innovative, quarterly, international publication that focuses on empirical, methodological, and theoretical articles about mixed methods research across the social, behavioral, health, and human sciences” (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007, p.1).

Application of Mixed Methods Approach

The present research replicated the methodology for a mixed method approach based on a study that was done 20 years ago (Nelson, 1988). This current research looks at two separate research questions: one on a micro level that focuses on the voices of the single mothers themselves; and the other on a macro/mezzo level that focuses on the formal receptor capacity of agencies to address specific needs of single mothers. From a qualitative approach, the research question was: *What is life like for single mother families living in Thunder Bay?*; and from a quantitative approach the research question was: *How do formal agency services support single mothers living in Thunder Bay?*

A mixed methods approach for this research enhances our holistic view of single mother families in Thunder Bay. By examining the experiences and needs of single mother families through participant observation, and connecting these findings with the results of a survey examining the current services available to single mother families in Thunder Bay, one can provide more comprehensive insights into what life is like for single mother families. This research integrates the power of numbers with the rich context of lived experiences, which will yield results that are quite distinct from single method designs (Sosulski & Lawrence, 2008). Moreover, the mixed methods approach

provides the opportunity for presenting a greater diversity of views on single mother families. In addition, mixed methods research provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches occurred simultaneously in this research on single mother families with the integration of the data in the analysis phase to provide a comprehensive understanding of single mother families in Thunder Bay. Thus, the survey provides a database to compare the formal services currently available to single mother families in Thunder Bay to the needs identified in the qualitative phase of this study.

Qualitative Approach

Purpose

This research aimed to explore what life is like for single mother families living in Thunder Bay. It intended to understand the experiences of single mother families from their perspectives. Data includes concrete examples of the lived experiences of single mother families as they interpret them, their views on support systems, and the stressors that may impede the daily living of single mother families. In addition, the research sought to observe daily living patterns, understand the strengths and stresses of their daily living environment, and understand what are the supports that fulfill or impede the lives of single mother families.

Research Methods

To understand the everyday lived experiences and needs of single mother families, a phenomenological method was used. Phenomenological research began as a movement in philosophy that dealt with the essence of objects, or phenomena as they present themselves in human consciousness. Husserl, the founding father of

phenomenology, believed that through rigorous examination of objects, as they are presented in one's consciousness, a person could come to intuitively know the essence of those objects, or realities (Gray, 1997). Other disciplines turned to phenomenology and employed it as a research method. In the research world it became a method of identifying the "essence" of human experience concerning a phenomenon, as described by the participants in a study. A phenomenological study seeks to understand the 'lived experience' of the participants through studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Creswell, 2003). Phenomenology is an approach that is particularly suited for this study because it seeks a fuller understanding of the single mothers experience through allowing them to inform the research, define how they see the situation, and describe what it means for them. Through this approach single mothers are given the opportunity to "add ideas from their own perspectives as well as to confirm or deny information presented by experts in the area" (Quinn & Allen, 1989, p. 390). Furthermore, I was able to 'bracket' my experiences or 'expert' opinions in order to understand the experiences of the single mothers participating in the study from their perspectives (Creswell, 2003). This approach creates a partnership between the participants and myself and remains mindful that these women are the experts in their own lives.

Sample

The sample for the participant observation study was drawn from the population of single mothers between the ages of 18 and 25 who have children under the age of 5 who live in the city of Thunder Bay between April and December 2007. The final sample

varied from the ideal sample. Two single mothers were age 27, with children ages 6 and 7.

Sampling Framework

Probability sampling was not possible in this study as there is no existing available list of all members of this particular population. There are subsamples such as all Thunder Bay-based single mothers between the ages of 18-25 who have children under the age of 5 who receive the child tax benefit. However, such subsamples are not accessible due to privacy laws. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who matched the selection criteria. To gain additional participants snowball sampling was also utilized.

Selection Criteria

The selection criteria included: 1) single mothers (defined as not married or cohabitating with a partner with one or more children for whom they were the primary caregiver); 2) were between the ages 18 and 25; 3) whose youngest child was under the age of 5; 4) lived in the city of Thunder Bay between April and December 2007. These criteria were selected because this study is the duplication of a study conducted 20 years ago by my supervisor Dr. Connie Nelson.

Access to Participants/Recruitment Procedures

Participants were selected from previous field entry into the Salvation Army Single Parents program as a placement student and employee, and through contact with social workers or agency staff at a variety of access points for single mothers around Thunder Bay, including housing, clinics, and agencies. Social workers and agency staff were approached and ask to invite individuals who met the selection criteria to participate

in this current study. Letters of introduction were given to these individuals to further explain the purpose of the study (Refer to Appendix A). This letter provided a method of contacting the researcher, through email, or through contacting my supervisor by phone or email, to identify their willingness to participate. In an attempt to increase the diversity of the sample by including single mothers attending university I put up posters at Lakehead University in the Gender Issues Centre, and on bulletin boards around the school seeking participants (Refer to Appendix B).

Snowball sampling was also used to recruit participants. Single mothers who participated in the study recruited future subjects from among their acquaintances. In recruiting acquaintances, the participants gave their acquaintances a copy of the introductory letter, gave my email address, or were given permission by the potential participant to give me their contact information.

If the single mothers showed interest in the study, and selection criteria were met, I provided the single mothers with the cover letter outlining the study in more detail (Refer to Appendix C). All participants were then contacted by phone or email to set up a mutually agreed upon time for the participant observations.

Previous field entry through the Salvation Army Single Parents program meant that rapport had previously been developed between the researcher and 5 of the participants. Interaction with other participants prior to and during recruitment allowed rapport to be developed before the first participant observation.

Sample Size

The total number of single mothers who participated in this study was eight. All participants were single mothers living in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Two participants

dropped out of the study after the first, three-hour observation. One single mother, a full-time university student, was too busy, and the other could not be contacted again.

However, their consent was obtained, and therefore the experiences they shared are included in this research

Previous studies focusing on the experiences of single mothers had 5-14 participants (see for example-Brown & Moran, 1997; Roos, 1997; May-Stewart, 1998; Quickfall, 1999; Cook, 2000; Sheppard-LeMoine, 2000). The number of participants in this study was deemed adequate to reflect the experiences of single mother families because of the amount of time spent in the field and the richness of the information obtained.

Participants

To protect the anonymity of the participants, care has been taken to ensure confidentiality. Selected demographic information is used to describe the general characteristics of the participants.

The age of the participants ranged from 20 to 27 years old. Five of the women were Caucasian and three of them were Aboriginal. All eight participants were biological mothers. Seven of the mothers were never married, and one was divorced. None of the mothers were currently in a romantic relationship with the biological fathers of their children. Their children's ages ranged from 3 weeks to seven years old. Five of the single mother families had only one child, and three of the families had two children. One of the mother's had joint custody with her ex-husband and the children resided with their father the majority of the time.

One mother worked full-time outside the home, one was on maternity leave, and one participant was a full time university student. The other five women did not work outside the home. The mother's primary source of income included Ontario Works (OW), Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), maternity leave, and full-time job. Four of the women received OW, one received ODSP, one received OSAP, one received maternity leave and OW, and one worked full time. All of the single mothers were renters, and three of them lived in low-income housing. Two of the single mothers lived together with their children, and one lived with her boyfriend. Table 3.1 provides the demographic information of the participants.

Table 3.1: Demographics of Participants

Participant #	Age	Number of Children	Age(s) of Children	Employed	Education	Primary Source of Income	Housing
200701	23	2	2 5	No	Completed high school College Diploma	Ontario Works	Low-income rental units
200702	20	1	2 ½	No	Not completed high school	Ontario Works	Rental units
200703	20	2	10 months 2 ½	No	Completed high school	Ontario Works	Low-income rental units
200704	27	2	7 7	Yes (full-time)	Completed high school College Diploma	Full-time employment	Rental units
200705	21	1	3 weeks	Yes (on maternity leave)	Completed high school	Ontario Works and Maternity Pay	Rental units
200706	27	1	6	No	Enrolled in University (full-time)	Ontario Student Assistant Program	Low-income rental units
200707	20	1	4	No	Not completed high school	Ontario Disability Support Program	Rental units
200708	20	1	15 months	No	Completed high school	Ontario Works	Rental units

Data Collection

Participant Observation

Data were collected through participant observations. Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (1991) define participant observation as “the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting” (p. 91). Observations allowed the researcher to describe existing situations using her five senses to create a written “photograph” of the situation under study (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). I used my five senses to observe what was going on, while “hanging out” with the single mothers in their daily activities. According to the participant observation data collection technique “hanging out” is the process through which the researcher gains trust and establishes rapport with the participants (Bernard, 1994). This process involved meeting and conversing with people to develop relationships over an extended period of time. I observed the single mothers, as a participant, during a three month time period in 3-hour weekly intervals. There were three stages of the “hanging out” process, moving from intruder, to acquaintance, and finally to intimate. DeMunck & Sobo (1998) describe the three stages to the “hanging out” process.

The first stage is the stage at which the researcher is a stranger who is learning the social rules and language, making herself/himself known to the community, so they will begin to teach her/him how to behave appropriately in that culture. In the second stage, one begins to merge with the crowd and stand out less as an intruder...During this stage, the language becomes more familiar to the researcher, but he/she still may not be fluent in its use. The third stage they

mention is called the “intimate” stage, during which the researcher has established relationships with cultural participants to the extent that he/she no longer has to think about what he/she says, but is as comfortable with the interaction as the participants are with her/him being there. (p. 38)

The participants and I scheduled the observations on a week-by-week basis in order to meet the changing needs of the single mothers’ schedules. Each observation was at least 3 hours in length. Due to difficulty obtaining participants, observations took place between June 2007 and December 2007, in two separate 3-month groups. One participant participated for the full 6 months due to difficulty scheduling observations. Table 3.2 shows the length of time spent with each participant.

Table 3.2: Participant Observation Hours

Participant Number	Hours
200701	37 hrs 35 min
200702	28hrs 45min
200703	33 hrs 35 min
200704	4hrs 30 min
200705	18 hrs 30 min
200706	5 hrs 30 min
200707	33 hrs
200708	18 hrs 30 min
Total Hours	180 hrs 35 min

Most of the observations took place in the homes of the single mothers and their families, although the mothers and I engaged in a variety of other activities. Some of these other activities included, going to appointments, shopping, going out for lunch/dinner, picking the children up at school/daycare, going for a walk, spending time at a boyfriend’s house, and playing outside with the kids.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in qualitative research is interpretive, with the researcher typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with the participants

(Creswell, 2003). My role in this study was an observer as a participant. This role enabled me to participate in group activities, yet my main role was to collect data. The single mother participants were aware of my observations. In this role, I was not a member 'of the group', but was interested in participating as a means for conducting better observation, and hence generating a more complete understanding of the group's experiences (Kawulich, 2005). My role in this researcher is that of the research instrument. A researcher using qualitative methods supports the perspective that "another human being is the only instrument that is sufficiently complex to comprehend and learn about human existence" (Lave & Kvale, 1995, p. 220). As a qualitative researcher I used my 5 senses to observe what was going on around me while I "hung around" the single mothers. As the research instrument I had to be alert and sensitive to what happened in the field and be disciplined about recording data. My role as the researcher was not to control the research environment, but to observe ordinary events in a natural setting (Neuman & Krueger, 2003).

Since the role of the researcher is acknowledged in a qualitative approach it is important to articulate predispositions and biases through a process of self-reflection. This is known in phenomenological research as bracketing. The researchers purpose in bracketing is to "bring his/her implicit knowledge of the phenomenon to an explicit level of awareness...once aware of these pre-understandings, the researcher is more able to set aside and less likely to impose them upon the research findings (Becker, 1986, p. 114). My perceptions of single mother families have been shaped by my personal experiences. I volunteered, completed my placement, and was employed, for a total of 4 years at the Salvation Army Single Parents Program in Thunder Bay, Ontario. During this time I

worked with single mothers of all ages and their children both in a daycare and social work role. Thus, I bring the knowledge of being both a support person to single mothers and a caregiver for children of single mother families. I believe these varied experience may enhance my awareness, knowledge and sensitivity to many of the challenges and needs of single mothers between the ages 18-25 with children under 5 in Thunder Bay. On the other hand, my previous experiences bring certain biases to this study. Every effort will be made to constantly assess how my views may shape the way I view and understand the data I collect and the way I interpret the single mother family data. For example, I commenced this study with the perspective that single mothers had many unmet needs in Thunder Bay. Some needs that I perceived to be inadequate were transportation, housing, childcare, and financial resources, but during data collection a deliberate effort was made to “remain true to the facts” (Dreyer, 1981).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity in the findings of this research must be considered throughout data collection. According to Neuman & Kreuger (2003), in qualitative research reliability means that researchers want to be consistent in how, over time, they make observations. To ensure reliability a detailed account of the researchers role as the instrument, the participants’ position as the “expert,” and the context from which the data was gathered, are provided. Furthermore, data collection and analysis strategies are reported in detail to provide a clear and accurate picture of the methods used in this study. Triangulation or multiple methods of data collection, field notes and audio recordings, were also used, which strengthens reliability as well as internal validity.

More specifically the two types of reliability were considered. These types include internal consistency and external consistency. Internal consistency “refers to whether the data is plausible, given all that is known about a person or event, eliminating common forms of human deception” (p. 380). Essentially, it asks the question ‘Do the pieces fit together in a coherent picture?’ External consistency refers to the verification that observations can be crosschecked with other divergent sources and fit into the overall context. It asks the questions ‘Can others verify what the researcher observed about a person?’ and ‘Does other evidence confirm the researcher’s observations?’ Looking at their experiences from different angles and asking questions ensured reliability of the data on single mother families. The single mothers’ experiences were consistent over time, as well as within different contexts. Furthermore, the consistency between the experiences of different single mother families demonstrated the reliability.

Validity suggests truthfulness and refers to the match between a construct and a measure. It asks the question: ‘How well does an idea about reality “fit” with actual reality?’ (Neuman & Kreuger, 2003) Validation of findings occurs throughout the steps in the research process. A number of strategies of validation were used throughout this study to determine whether the findings were accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participants, and the readers of this study. To ensure the validity of the findings of this phenomenological study a section on bracketing my predispositions and biases was included. In addition, personal notes, such as speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices were recorded to ensure that personal views did not impact what I observed. A prolonged length of time was spent in the field (3-6 months) to ensure that a fair, honest, and balanced account of the single mothers

experiences was presented. To ensure validity in data collection and the use of measurement tools, research notes were recorded as soon as possible after each observation to ensure accuracy and to avoid the affect of experiences outside the field. Furthermore, member checking, where the themes and meaning were brought back to the single mothers to check for accuracy to their experiences, was used. Finally, my thesis advisor acted throughout the process of this research as an external auditor, being aware of the procedure and the challenges encountered.

Data Recording Procedures

According to DeWalt and DeWalt (2002), while researchers can audio-record more formal conversations and events in order to record words and behaviours for later analysis, the writing of field notes is virtually the only way for the researcher to record the observation of day to day events and behaviour, overheard conversations, and informal interviews, which are the primary materials of participant observation. I recorded field notes, on an observation-recording tool (refer to Appendix D), on the behaviour and activities of the single mothers each time we were together. It was rarely possible to record information on site; however, I elaborated extensively on my field notes upon leaving the field site. I recorded information in the format shown in Appendix D, which included: what's going on here (observations); inferences/analytic notes (thoughts/meaning of what's going on); and personal notes (such as speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices). In addition, demographic information about the time, place, and the field setting where the observation took place, as well as the participant number, were recorded. When appropriate, consent was obtained to audio record conversations or informal interview opportunities in order to

obtain direct quotations to depict the single mothers' needs and experiences from their perspectives. These audio recordings were later transcribed for data analysis. In addition to field notes and audio-recorded data, I drew a physical map of main floor of each of the participants' homes where most of the data collection occurred.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this research study was an ongoing process of continual reflection about the data, gathered through observation of each participant and audio recording of conversations and informal interviews. This analysis included reflections by posing analytic questions about the data that had already been collected. The data remained open-ended, in that it continually required developing and analysis from the information supplied by the participants.

The data was organized and prepared for analysis by typing up field notes from the observation-recording tool and transcribing the audio-recorded conversations and informal interviews. Next, the data was read through, in an attempt to gain a general sense of the information and to reflect on the overall meaning. At the same time, I began to record thoughts in preparation for the final analysis.

A detailed analysis began by analyzing specific statements, generating themes, and developing an essence of what's going on. More specifically, the data was colour coded according to themes and a chart was generated, according to theme, to compile the information for further analysis. Theme connections were identified and shaped into a general description. Some themes in the data were obvious, while others did not emerge until I immersed myself in the research by repeated reading, comparisons, and reflection.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical Approval

Ethical Approval was obtained from the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board on April 13, 2007.

Informed Consent

Each participant received an introductory letter inviting her to participate, as well as a cover letter describing the study (Refer to Appendices A and C). Once the participant agreed to participate and we met for the first participant observation, the researcher explained the study to each participant in more detail and confirmed that she had a copy of the introductory and cover letters. Each participant was asked if they had any questions or concerns, and was encouraged to approach the researcher at any time during the study if any further questions or concerns emerged. It was made clear to each participant that her participation was voluntary, that she may refuse to participate in any part of the study, and that she may withdraw from the study at any point in time. At this time the participants filled out and signed the consent form (Appendix E). Participants were assured that they would be asked prior to turning on any audio recording equipment. Participants were informed that their information would be used for a Master's Thesis and as a comparison to data collected 20 years ago with the same population.

Confidentiality

The participants were informed that all the information they share would remain confidential between the researcher and participant. They were also informed that my supervisor will have access to the research information and will follow the same confidentiality agreement. They were informed that an individual's name or identifying

information would not be released, unless requested by the individual participant. During the research process, the data, including all written notes and audio recordings, were locked in a secure place and were only accessible by the researcher. Once the study was completed, all research information was locked and secured at Lakehead University by my supervisor for 7 years. This procedure is consistent with the guidelines set out by the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board.

Anonymity

Participants' identities were protected, and they remained anonymous unless a participant chose to share the information herself. Participants were assigned identification numbers that were recorded on field notes and transcribed data to ensure anonymity. Some mothers were proud to be participating in the study and contributing to the knowledge about single mother families, and therefore shared their participation with others. Some mothers were verbal about their participation to friends, family, and other social workers that they work with.

Limitations and Delimitations

A delimitation of this study is that data is confined to observing single mothers between the ages of 18-25 who have children under the age of 5 who live in the city of Thunder Bay between April and December 2007. While this research aimed to determine the experiences of single mothers between the ages of 18-25 with children living in Thunder Bay, the small size of the sample limits its ability to generalize findings to the single mother population as a whole. A limitation of the study includes the potential bias that I could bring to the study because of my past experiences with single mothers or my personal feelings or opinions. In addition, the findings could be subject to other

interpretations or skewed based on personal circumstances at the time of the observation. Moreover, a limitation of this study may include difficulty in separating myself from my role as the observer and my role as a participant. For example, at times, while I am actively participating with the single mothers and their children, I may not mindfully observe a particular situation or event.

Quantitative Approach

Purpose

The purpose of the quantitative component of this research was to explore the formal agency services that are currently available to single mother families between the ages of 18-25 with children under the age of 5 in Thunder Bay.

Research Methods

The survey aimed to gather information from human service agencies/organizations on any special services/programs offered exclusively for single mother families; and regular services/programs in which single mother families are eligible to participate. In addition, the survey data collected information on the types of needs addressed through these services/programs and budget and staff allocations. Finally, the survey collected data on the types of services/programs the participating human service agencies/organizations would like to develop if they had the necessary resources, as well as what types of services/programs they think should be developed for single mothers in Thunder Bay.

A self-administered survey, which collected cross-sectional data, was used. The data was collected, at one time, between the months June 2007 to February 2008. A self-administered survey was selected to collect this data because of its ability to collect the

same information from a wide number of agencies and organizations that service single mother families in Thunder Bay. The method is relatively inexpensive and allows the respondents to fill it out at their own convenience. In addition, a survey as the method of data collection, allows the agency/organization to confer with colleagues and consult their records to provide specific participation rates/numbers

Population and Sample

The population for this study was all human service agencies in Thunder Bay, Ontario that might deliver services to single mothers with children under the age of 5. A service agency is a non-profit, government, or private organization that provides direct services to clients.

The population was operationalized by developing a specific list that closely approximates all the elements in the population. This list comprised the sampling frame (Neuman & Kreuger, 2003). The sampling frame for this research was developed from a list previously compiled by Shannon McFayden for her study, *The Role of Food Security Issues in Intake, Assessment and Treatment* (2006). Her list was developed from the Directory of Community Services (Lakehead Social Planning Council, 2004) and was reviewed for completeness by Jill Zachary, Lakehead University School of Social Work Field Placement Coordinator, Lakehead University's then Social Work Director Roger Delaney; and her supervisor Connie Nelson. McFayden's list was updated to create this study's sampling frame by excluding some agencies whose mandate would not include single mothers and adding others from the *Having a Baby in Thunder Bay pamphlet* (2007), created by the Thunder Bay District Health Unit, and the *Family Resource Guide* (1999), created by Health Babies Healthy Children. My supervisor, Dr. Connie Nelson,

reviewed the list for completeness of the sampling frame. The sampling frame included 71 agencies/organizations. Also at this time the researcher used the Thunder Bay Community Information Database (<http://www.lspc.ca/circ/>) on the World Wide Web to ensure that contact information for the agencies/organizations was accurate.

Sample Size

Table 4.2 shows the breakdown of the respondents by the type of agency/organization. The placement of agencies/organizations within these categories was at the discretion of those who filled out the surveys. Of the respondents, 20 percent were government funded social services agencies, 27 percent were non-profit organizations, 13 percent were government funded and non-profit organizations, 17 percent were health care agency/organization, and 13 percent were other types of organizations.

Table 3.3: Number of Responses by Type of Agency/Organization

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Government funded social service agency	6	20.0	22.2	22.2
	Non-profit organization	8	26.7	29.6	51.9
	Government funded and non-profit organization	4	13.3	14.8	81.5
	Health care agency/organization	5	16.7	18.5	100.0
	Other	4	13.3	14.8	66.7
	Total	27	90.0	100.0	
Missing	System	3	10.0		
Total		30	100.0		

Data Collection

A cover letter was sent to formal service providers (Refer to Appendix F). The cover letter provided an explanation of the research, who was conducting it, and stated that their participation was voluntary and confidential. The participants were informed that the completed surveys would be locked in a secure place only accessible by the researcher and the supervisor. Accompanying the cover letter was a consent form to be signed and the survey to be completed (Refer to Appendix G and Appendix H). The formal service providers were notified that they would receive a phone call two weeks following the distribution of the survey to set up a time, at their convenience, for the survey and consent form to be picked up. Follow-up with a phone call and picking up the surveys personally, rather than requesting them to be returned by mail ensured a higher response rate. Other ways that I increased response rate, as suggested by Neuman and Kreuger (2003), were to address the survey to a specific person, include a detailed and dated cover letter on Lakehead University letterhead, and ensure that the survey had a neat, attractive and professional looking layout.

Contacting the service providers began two weeks following the distribution of the survey, through both phone and email, and continued in the following months. Due to the high rate of holidays through the summer months, completion and pick-up of all surveys was delayed. A spreadsheet was created to organize contact information for each agency/organization and keep track of follow-up phone calls, surveys ready for pick-up and returned surveys. Upon contact, some service provider's communicated their preference to mail or fax the survey rather than have it picked up. Those who chose to mail or fax their survey sent it to Lakehead University's School of Social Work.

Of the original 68 surveys that were mailed, 8 responded that they do not offer services to the population being studied, and 2 identified that they were too busy to participate at this time. Therefore, of the existing 60 surveys, 30 were returned, for a 50 percent response rate. Two service providers declined to participate and 28 did not return the questionnaire even after repeated follow-up phone calls. The mail survey has often been criticized for response bias and therefore it is important to discuss the method by which response bias will be determined. The question is whether non-respondents hold significantly different attitudes and opinions from those held by respondents (Creswell, 2003). In this research the concern with response bias is whether non-respondents offer a substantial amount of services currently available to single mothers between 18-25 with children under 5, and therefore not getting a true representation of current services. Many agencies/organizations contacted the researcher to identify that they would not be responding. The researcher kept track of reasons for non-response in order to determine response bias. The most commonly recommended protection against response bias is the reduction of non-responses (Armstrong & Overton, 1977; Fowler, 1993). In this study to avoid non-responses I double-checked mailing address's to ensure agencies/organization would receive the survey, and I contacted each agency personally by phone or email to confirm receipt and inquire about completion and pickup of the survey.

Instrumentation

The study utilized an existing self-administered survey instrument to measure the current formal services available to single mothers in Thunder Bay between 18-25 with children under five. This study, as a follow-up to research completed 20 years ago by Dr. Connie H. Nelson for Lakehead Social Planning Council, used the survey developed for

the initial research. The researcher received permission to use this instrument from Dr. Connie H. Nelson, the original developer of the instrument. For its initial use, 20 years ago, the survey was extensively pretested by an advisory group of single mothers between 18-25 with children under five.

The design of the survey was both quantitative and qualitative in nature. The single mother survey accumulated data that was both statistical and descriptive. Using a combination of both qualitative and quantitative questions, this research explored the current services and needs met, as well as a description of the programs objectives and future areas of development and need. The survey included both closed and open questions. According to Neuman (2003), an open-ended question asks a question to which a respondent can give any answer, while a close-ended question both asks a question and gives a fixed response from which to choose. The closed-ended questions collected information primarily about what type of formal service provider the respondents are, whether or not the agency/organization offered special or regular programs for single mothers, and which needs they met, as well as reasons why they have not developed more programs for single mother families. The open-ended questions collected qualitative data that permitted the respondents freedom in identifying the programs they offer, along with their objectives, as well as programs they feel should be developed for single mother families in Thunder Bay. (Refer to Appendix H to see the full survey)

The survey contained 93 items. The items were measured using different levels of measurement. Some questions were ratio, asking for the number of single mothers within the criteria who have accessed services by the program since January 2006 or the

percentage of staff workload and budget that goes towards the programs for this population. Other questions asked for factual information, such as name of program and objectives. All remaining questions used the nominal level of measurement, identifying yes or no to programs offered, needs met, and reasons for not developing programs. At the end of the survey the respondents were given the opportunity to make additional comments. It read "Thank you for your time and participation. We have covered a number of issues in this survey, but there may be concerns we have missed that you feel should be addressed. We value your additional comments" (Nelson, 1988, p.6).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are central issues in all measurement, and therefore must be considered in this research study. As mentioned earlier, the survey in this study was extensively pretested prior to its original use. In quantitative research reliability means "the numerical results produced by an indicator do not vary because of characteristics of the measurement process or measurement instrument itself" (Neuman & Kreuger, 2003, p. 177). To increase the reliability in this research I maintained consistency in the data gathering method. All agencies received the same cover letter explaining the study and completed a standardized survey. The use of a standardized survey eliminates any unreliability of the researcher's observations.

Clearly conceptualizing each construct in the survey also increases both the reliability and validity of the research. In this survey addition, each item only indicates the measurement of one concept. For example, regular service program and special service programs are measured separately, therefore increasing each respondent's level of

understanding of the question and the researcher's ability to identify which construct is being measured.

Data Analysis

Once returned, each survey was examined for completeness and errors, recorded on the spreadsheet as returned, and assigned a number to keep track of the case and protect the agency/organization's identity.

Coding

Wherever possible the survey was pre-coded prior to distribution. However, in some questions the range of responses cannot be entirely predicted beforehand (ie. needs) and an 'Other (please explain)' category was included and coded when the surveys were returned. Also in some instances, such as the programs section of the survey, open-ended questions were asked, and it was impossible to pre-code unknown answers, so they were also coded when the surveys were returned. According to Neuman & Kreuger (2003), "When you code data, it is very important to create a well organized, detailed codebook and make multiple copies of it" (p. 326). A copy of the survey was printed out on coloured paper and used to record all codes, including both pre-coded variables and those that were coded after receiving responses. Pre-coding was not included on the distributed surveys, but instead were identified in the codebook

For close-ended questions the researcher assigned numeric values to represent values of the variables, such as "1" for yes to providing programs and "2" for no to providing programs. Open-ended answers were not categorized, but left in their original form, as the sample was small enough to do so. Open-ended questions were recorded in a word processing file according to survey number and item number (001.Q3.4).

Statistical Analysis

The survey data was entered into SPSS Version 15 (The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for statistical analysis. SPSS was launched in 1989 and has become the standard analytical tool for most survey researchers (Davies, 2007). Prior to data entry the variables were defined for each item on the survey, numbered 1 through 125, which created the cells in the data file. Every item from the completed surveys was entered into the specific cell, on a specific row, corresponding to each survey. Individual data entries were double checked for accuracy. Qualitative, open-ended data, was identified in the SPSS file with the values '1' for yes to refer to word processing file and '2' for no, and then recorded in a word processing file for each item. Data entry took place as surveys were returned, which took several months to complete. Data was saved in a system file until data from all surveys was entered.

The survey data was analyzed for frequencies. Graphs and charts were used to present this data. All data from the open-ended, qualitative survey questions was recorded in a word processing file. The analysis of open-ended questions captured 'rich' and insightful qualitative material about human service agencies/organizations that provide support to single mother families in Thunder Bay. In addition, the open-ended survey questions provide views on current programs and the new programs/services that the agencies believed should be developed.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was obtained from the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board on July 6, 2007.

Informed Consent

The respondents received an informed consent form with the cover letter and survey. In the cover letter the respondents were asked to fill out and return the consent form with the completed survey. The consent form asked participants to confirm they read and understood the cover letter outlining the study, recognized that they are volunteers in the study and can withdraw at any time, and assured them that information collected is confidential and that the organization will not be named or identified in any published materials. Refer to Appendix G to see informed consent form. Respondents were informed that their information would be used for a Master's Thesis and as a comparison to data collected 20 years ago with the same population.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Respondents were informed that all of the information the agency/organization shared would remain confidential, between the researcher and the agency/organization. The research supervisor would have access to the research information, and would follow the same confidentiality agreement. During the research process, the data, including all surveys, was locked in a secure place and was only accessible by the researcher and supervisor. No agency/organization's name or identifying information would be released, unless requested by the individual agency/organization.

The anonymity of the respondents was maintained throughout data collection and analysis. Agencies/organizations were only identified by type, such as government funded social service agency, non-profit organization, government funded and non-profit organization, health care agency/organization, and other. Each survey was assigned an identification number to protect anonymity.

Chapter 4

Findings

Qualitative Approach

Findings from Single Mother Families

The single mother families who took part in this participant observation study provided a perspective on their lives. The information that they shared with the researcher is presented from this perspective. The findings are presented as a “detailed descriptive portrait” of what life is like for single mother families living in Thunder Bay, Ontario (Creswell, 1998). Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) believe that participant observations create a written photograph of the situation under study. It “involves the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the research setting” (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1991, p. 91).

The observations of the single mother families have been organized into themes and sub-themes, as represented in the original study (Nelson, 1987). The themes include resourceful, dignity, bonding, cautious, family ties, friendships, astuteness, maturity, adaptable, coping, tenacity, and hopeful. Additional sub-themes have been added as they have been revealed in this research.

Resourceful

The single mothers relate that they often rely on their own resources to cope with their limited budgets. For example, they make things themselves, juggle priorities in face of changing demands, make substitutions, maximize the use of available items such as

maximize the use of their money and stretch their resources by buying in bulk and second-hand (Nelson, 1987).

Custom Made.

"I've tried to grow my own garden. I tried to grown vegetables this year, you know, maybe I can save myself some money. Did they grow? No."

Mom showed me how she makes a special treat for her kids. It's called magic pop. She takes 7up and lets the kids scoop flavoured drink crystals in and stir it up while it fizzes. They love it.

Mom is going to put patches on the holes in her couch and then make slipcovers for them. She believes it is worth the \$150 in material to have nice couches.

Mom is going to make homemade Christmas decorations to hang from the ceiling. It has always been a tradition in her family to make your own decorations. She makes snowflakes out of paper, irons them, and then hangs them.

Mom made homemade soup for lunch.

Mom wishes she had saved some of her breast milk for her son to continue drinking or put on his cereal. It is good for him and a way of saving money. Now she knows for the next child she has.

The moms who live together are making teddy bears for their friends and family for Christmas. It cost \$25 for all the material.

Mom bought her son a baby stroller for his doll and the material ripped in a few days. Mom bought extra material and made a new seat, blanket, and an attachable bag for the stroller.

Juggles Priorities.

Mom pays for a hot lunch for her son everyday at school. She is going to see if next year she can get separate money from welfare to pay for it because it is healthier. If not she will keep paying for it somehow, because it is good for her son.

On the way home mom wanted to "stop at the grocery store and buy like \$50 worth of cereal because that is like all she eats in the summer."

"I am not worried about the gas not being paid because when she gets back in town we will get that under control and worry about that later. Because they can't cut us off anyway. Like they will send us letters saying, you know, you owe us lots of money. Please pay us. But legally they can't cut us off."

Mom pawns her stuff, like cd's and her television, when she needs money for groceries. If she puts money on it every month it doesn't get sold.

Substitutes.

Mom has become resourceful because of budget constraints. She doesn't mind buying her kids second hand clothes because it allows her to buy more.

Mom takes her kids to McDonald's PlayPlace in the winter because it's great place for them to run around and play when it's really cold out.

Mom went to a second hand store that was having a \$3 per bag clothing sale. Mom bought a really elegant fur coat for \$3 dollars. She loves second hand shopping. She rarely buys anything new.

They don't have cable anymore, but they don't mind. They look out the window and watch the neighbours instead

Her son found a bucket of chalk that he wanted to play with. Mom didn't have a chalkboard so she let him colour on a wall in her apartment that she needed to patch and paint.

Mom made a bunch of canned ham sandwiches. She buys the small round cans because they are cheaper. She said "she is really into canned meat lately" [laughing.]

Mom has considered putting orange construction fencing up in her backyard so at least they have a fence.

Mom is throwing a Shrek birthday party for her son. Shrek plates, cups, and napkins are too expensive so mom is only going to buy the napkins and use plain coloured matching cups and plates.

Mom is supposed to bring training underwear into the daycare to help them with potty training her son. They asked her to bring ten pairs, but mom told them she only has six and they are really expensive. Instead she can bring in a lot of extra clothes.

Maximizes.

Mom got \$500 for child tax benefit so she went to the Salvation Army Thrift store to get the kids school clothes. She spent \$200. She wanted to get it now because she doesn't think she is going to get very much back-to-school allowance for the kids.

They went to a clothing store where they got a garbage bag of clothes for \$10 because of their situation.

Mom had a bus driver who was really good to single moms. He would punch the same spot on her 20-ride bus pass every morning when she took her son to school. It really saved her money.

Stretching.

Mom bought 20 boxes of school snacks for her kids because they were on sale 5 for \$10, which she says is a great price. She decided to buy them because she had the money and now she doesn't have to worry about it. Her boyfriend thought she was going overboard, but she has learned it is a great way to do it. Also, this way she can let the kids have a school snack at home if they really want one.

Mom's boyfriend came home with groceries. He bought about 12 loaves of bread. Mom says all that bread cost about 8-10 dollars at the Holsum bakery. You can buy bread cheap when it is nearing its expiry date and she just puts it in the freezer.

Mom only had two stamps left on her bus pass so she tried to use her transfer even though she knew it was already expired.

Mom buys store bought veggie and dip trays and adds her own vegetables. She cuts up extra carrots, celery and broccoli. She cuts them into small sticks to make them last longer and so they eat less.

"We buy the big packs [of meat] and freeze them. We buy the big pork loin and just cut it ourselves."

Moms went to the Salvation Army Thrift store for their two-hour madness sale. All clothes were 50% off.

In spite of this resourcefulness to utilize what there is available, the mothers at times state that there simply is not always enough to stretch (Nelson, 1987).

"When I go grocery shopping, whatever's left, yeah that's what stays in my bank account for milk, when that's gone, that's gone. And yeah, sometimes I go overboard and buy a little bit too much of certain things like fruits and vegetables. I'm a sucker for it. When you get a kid in a grocery store and they're standing at the strawberries crying, 'Mommy please can I just have some strawberries?' How do you say no? Even if you know you can't afford those strawberries."

Mom had to stop working in September when she was 8 months pregnant and she didn't receive any income until she got her maternity pay when the baby was born at the end of October. She didn't have any money, nor was she able to save. Mom had to rely on her roommates to lend her money and pay for groceries.

"I had collections agencies call me the other day too for \$30. I know it's not much, but I turned around and said, 'I know I owe you money, but I don't have any money. I am a single mother on assistance and it's Christmas time.' She was like 'But its only \$30.' But I was like 'Ya, \$30 I don't have. I am like, single mother/welfare/Christmas! I will pay you in the new year.' And I hung up on her. I was so angry."

The mothers attempt to use their ingenuity to find ways of making money "under the table" (Nelson, 1987).

Mom is working under the table. She is making some extra money cleaning and organizing someone's house.

Mom finds working under the table the only option. While she was pregnant she worked under the table landscaping to save money for when the baby was born.

Mom's cousin, who lives upstairs, always let his dishes pile up because he hates doing them, so he will often pay mom \$20 to do them.

Mom is looking into participating in a study that she read about in the newspaper that pays you to lose weight.

Mothers extend their self-resourcefulness by reaching out to friends. These friends are a readily used source of help. Assistance can be obtained with minimal risk of losing self-esteem or feelings of humiliation. Equally, there are many opportunities for returning the favour (Nelson, 1987).

Mom gives some of her oldest son's clothes that don't fit anymore to other single moms in the neighbourhood, and they do the same.

Mom offered to take another single mom's kids for a few days because she could tell that the mom was having a really difficult time, and that she needed some help.

Mom ran into the mom of a child in her son's class. They live a block away from each other and they discussed taking turns taking the kids to school. Mom told the other mom that she doesn't have a car, but has no problem taking the kids to school on the bus.

Two of the single moms live together. One mom just had her first baby and the other has a 1 year old. She is helping the 'new mom' out and teaching her 'the ropes of motherhood.' They share groceries, bills, clothes, and help take care of each other's children. Often one mom will go out to the store or to cash their checks, while the other stays home with the kids.

One mom is helping another single mom participant move into a new house. She is also helping out by taking her son to school in the morning. Mom wishes they lived close together again so they could do this type of thing all the time.

"It has been really good to have her [single mom roommate] help. For the first few nights I barely slept because I was watching my daughter sleep to make sure that everything was okay."

One mom helped another mom with the Ontario Works process, which was new to her. She helped her fill out her income statement form, photocopied it for her, and showed her where to put it.

Mom relied on her friends who were moms to teach her how to take care of her baby. She didn't know she was supposed to squeeze the air out of her daughter's bottle until a friend told her.

The single mothers are resourceful in taking initiative to use available formal sources of assistance to strengthen their ability to provide for their family (Nelson, 1987).

In the fall mom's oldest son will be starting the Head Start preschool program every other day. She is looking forward to a break.

A Resource Mom visits mom in her home.

"I am taking that Mommy and Me swimming class at the heritage."

Mom has a worker who visits from Thunder Bay Children's Centre and helps mom with her sons hitting and potty training.

Mom talked to her health nurse on the phone about how things are going lately.

Mom looked at her calendar and remembered that her Faye Peterson Worker is coming for a visit tomorrow.

Mom attends the community kitchen at the Norwest Community Health Centre.

Mom's church has been very good to her and it is an important source of support in her life.

Mom is involved with Children's Aid because she was in foster care, not because of abuse. Now she is involved voluntarily for extra support.

Mom says that the Norwest Community Health Centre has awesome programs for single moms. She goes to the Shake Rattle n' Roll and a mommy program. She no longer meets the criteria to go, but they still let her attend.

Mom's son sees a Speech Pathologist every week.

At times the formal system taxes the mom's resourcefulness as they find it difficult to receive appropriate help (Nelson, 1987).

"This is low-income housing. All of these houses should have clotheslines. All of these houses should have little gardens. Whether or not people choose to use them, they should have gardens."

Mom believes that if housing treated tenants better and fixed things in a reasonable fashion they wouldn't see graffiti and vandalism in their community. She says a friend had a leak in her ceiling for 3 years. They would come and fix it when it was leaking, but never fixed the whole or bulging wall. When the mom moved out they tried to get her to pay for the damage.

Mom is really mad at Ontario Works. She still doesn't have a new washer and dryer and her kids have no clean clothes. Ontario Works says that she doesn't qualify for a new washer and dryer, but instead needs to find out how much they would cost to get fixed. If they are not worth getting fixed mom needs to get a letter written by the repair place to Ontario Works, and then they will consider giving her the money to buy new ones.

Mom is moving out of low-income housing and into a house. She submitted to Ontario Works for a community start-up to help her. She asked for money for last month's rent, a bed for her son, money to transfer her phone, and money for a moving truck. She got denied and didn't get anything. She was told that they only help move into low income housing not out. Although, her friend got money to help move and she was moving out of low-income housing. Mom is trying to move everything herself and hasn't had much help. She doesn't have anyone with a car who will help.

Mom wishes Thunder Bay Housing would allow them to have clotheslines in their backyard so she could cut down on her hydro bill by not using the dryer.

Mom is still pursuing a request for a new place to live. Her place is just too big and she can't handle it. She has recently found out that she doesn't qualify for a transfer, so if she wants to move she has to pay \$250 to be put on the waiting list. She is very frustrated by this.

Mom called her Dilico worker last week to see if she can get some help before she gets to the point that she loses it on her kids. She wants to ask for help because she is going through a lot right now and is finding herself taking it out on her kids, screaming at them all the time. She doesn't want to be doing that. Her worker hasn't called her back yet.

“There are no services. We went to a food bank today. In Port Arthur you can only access it once every four months and they only give you an emergency two day supply of whatever they want to give you.”

Many moms who live in low-income housing find it difficult to spend time outside with their kids because they don't have fences.

Single moms show their initiative in maintaining those resources that are currently available to them (Nelson, 1987).

Mom speaks of the lengths she went to, to save the Salvation Army Single Parents Program. “I don't know how many letters me and [other mom] wrote to everybody we could think of to try and convince them not to close the program. We, I mean, we were downright ready to go and protest in front of city hall. We were, we were going to pack up our kids and as many people and their kids as we could find and go protest in front of city hall. And not ... and we could have pulled it off too because, I don't know how but ... we would have, you know we would have.”

Dignity

The single mothers display courage and determination even if it means “going outside the law”(Nelson, 1987).

Mom describes how she used to drive her boyfriend's car when he was out of town even though she didn't have a license. She had to if she needed to go to town to get something, or take the baby somewhere. “It's terrible, but I did it.”

Single mothers display dignity by their courage to leave abusive situations even when faced with a lack of resources for securing the future for themselves and their children (Nelson, 1987).

“I have been in some bad relationships, but I learned from them. I stayed with [first son's] father longer than I should have because I wanted to give him what I didn't have growing up, a father.” Finally she said “enough” and left him.

Mom's ex-boyfriend is the father of her youngest son. Mom, after going back to him a few times, has permanently ended their relationship because she was living in an abusive situation. When he drank too much he would become verbally and physically abusive towards mom.

The father of her daughter is not a good guy. He was physically abusive. She called the police and reported the abuse and pursued sole custody of her daughter. Mom, who had moved to southern Ontario with him, left and came back to Thunder Bay.

The single mothers are proud of what they can accomplish (Nelson, 1987).

Mom was told, by another mother, that the single mothers in the neighbourhood look up to her. She was very shocked and touched.

Mom says people don't understand how she has so much money. She is able to buy her kids things like swing sets and toys. She says she budgets her money really well and when she has the money she buys a lot of groceries. When she got her OSAP in January she spent \$600 on groceries and she still has lots left [in June].

"I GREW CUCUMBERS!"

Mom is going to get her college graduation photos done. She wants to ask her boyfriend to borrow some money because she wants to get some pictures taken of her in her gown with her kids as well. She would also like one of her and her sister for her mom.

Mom is proud of the things she has saved for and bought her son. Mom has been buying all the transformer toys for her son. People tell her that she buys him too many. She doesn't think so. She hasn't given them all to him yet, some are being saved for his birthday.

Mom is planning to order pizza tonight. She did really well on the groceries this month so it is in her budget.

Her son's teachers were impressed that her son recognized his letters, shapes, and colours. Her son was teaching the other kids some of the more complicated colours that he knows, like chartreuse.

The single mothers are very conscious of the public stigma of being a single mother (Nelson, 1987).

Mom was with her youngest son at a wedding and another guest thought it was cute and asked who the child was. When she said it was hers, the guest was shocked and said "You are too young to be a mother." Then her 5 year-old walked over calling her mommy and the guest was even more shocked.

Mom is really frustrated with single moms who give other single moms a bad name. She gets looked down upon on the bus and people make comments about "children having children." She gets frustrated because she is a good mom and she works very hard. She also gets frustrated with moms who keep having children. She is only having one because she can only afford one.

Mom was originally involved with the Children's Aid Society when her midwife called them when her first born was in hospital at 4 days old. He wouldn't eat and was really sick. The doctors didn't know what was wrong. Her midwife said that she was starving him. The Children's Aid Society called the doctors and they told them that it wasn't the problem. They stopped investigating. She has also been investigated for abusing her son for a long time. She had to strip her son naked every time the worker came so they could check for bruises. A worker once told her that she would probably be involved with the

Children's Aid Society for the rest of her life.

When mom was in labour the other mothers didn't like her because she was so young. They were all in their late twenties to early thirties.

Mom talked about when she found out that she was pregnant. She didn't want to tell anyone until she was 17. She found out two weeks before she turned 17. She thought it would be better if she were 17 instead of 16.

Mom's ex-husband has custody of her kids because she is considered "unstable" because is single and a nursing student. Her ex-husband is remarried and works from home.

When mom was pregnant and on the way to a doctor's appointment, a CAS worker told her in a very inappropriate way that she had three choices. She could sign a temporary care agreement for 6 months, she and the baby could go into foster care, or she would have the baby taken away immediately after giving birth. She chose to go into foster care because she wanted to show them that she could do it.

The single mothers that are presently receiving assistance from welfare are

especially sensitive to situations that jeopardize their sense of self-worth (Nelson,

1987).

"Really, I'd like to put them to the test. Let's take all of these, you know, rich congressmen and, you know, all the Prime Minister and everybody. Let's take them and give them a thousand dollars. A thousand, which is more than most of us get, and say now you live on – off that for a month. Pay your bills. Put them in a house like this, so yeah the bills are cheap, cause yeah, in their houses they'd never survive, their mortgage is three thousand dollars. But, put them in one of these houses for a month and say here now you live off this. You live off this thousand dollars, you don't get any more. See if they can do it? I'd like to see them do it."

The previous tenants' children broke the tree in mom's front yard, so it is now a small stump with weeds and leaves growing out of it. She called Thunder Bay Housing to ask for a new tree. They told her they would not give her a new tree. She doesn't understand why not. "Everyone else in her neighbourhood has a tree on their lawn."

"You handed in your income statement, you did everything they asked you to, and your still suspended. And you call to find out why and there like, 'well you didn't hand in your income statement.' And you're like, 'yes I did.' 'Well, no you didn't cause we don't have it.' But I did. And they're, 'Well, no you didn't cause ...' 'O.k. fine, it got lost, I'll bring in another one today, I'll go down there.' So you call around and you beg someone, you know, come drive me to go drop off this income statement cause I'm not taking the bus for an hour with two kids."

Mom hasn't been able to get her Ontario Works yet. She brought them her baby's birth registration and they told her that wasn't enough. She has to make an appointment and bring the baby in for them to see. "What they don't believe I had a baby?" She can't get an appointment for a week and a half

"It's just hard to deal with all the criticism. You know, you try your best and there are a lot of people who don't try at all. Ontario Works doesn't understand. Everybody is on our cases about feeding them properly. You know how hard it is to feed your kid properly on the amount of money they give you to live off of? It's darn near impossible."

Mom had to go to the Ontario Works office because she never received her check. She called them and they said that she never handed in her Income Statement so she was cut off. However, mom did hand it in, she did it two observations ago when I [researcher] was with her. She was really frustrated because now she wouldn't get money until next Friday and it wasn't her fault.

Mom describes how she felt when she wasn't able to pay her rent on time because her roommate didn't receive her welfare check. Her landlord told her not to worry about it and mom said, "But I have never been late before in my entire life. I have always had it paid. Same with my roommate. We have never not paid rent."

"I was 17 and my Children's Aid worker made me go to the one [mothers program] in Academy. And I got told off in front of one of the workers there by one of the other girls about being a stupid unwed mother who is ruining the world for other people. It was horrible. You try being 17, you don't know anybody in the room and everybody is snickering at you while this lady tells you off, that your ruining society. Why, because I was 16?"

Mom says Children's Aid workers are always telling her the kids need to have a routine, go to bed at the same time and get up at the same time. She says they don't get it. "If you are at the grocery store with your kids and they spill something on themselves, then you have to go get them cleaned up, then go back and finish your grocery shopping, then you catch the bus to get home and it breaks down, so you have to wait an hour for it to get fixed or to get another bus, then you get home and you still have to give the kids a bath. Sometimes it is impossible to get them into bed at the same time every night."

The single mothers are also aware of the situations that stigmatize their children

(Nelson, 1987).

Mom invited her son's entire class, 19 kids, to his birthday party. Only three are coming. Mom is aware that the mother of one of her son's classmates talks negatively about her being a young unwed mother with the other parents. Mom feels bad for her son.

Single mothers are sensitive to situations where they can't meet their children's basic needs or provide them with things other children have.

"My kids should be able to have cantaloupe and watermelon. I haven't, I have yet to have been able to get a watermelon for my kids this year. Because there is no money."

"[My sons] birthday party ... Right now I had to borrow money off my uncle because I don't even have enough ... and yeah, I went too far, I rented the bouncer, but you know what, why shouldn't I be able to? Why shouldn't I be able to give him that birthday party that he really wants? Is he ever going to turn six again? No."

"We are in Superstore one day and I am absolutely broke. I had enough money for milk and that was it. And [my son] is crying, 'Mommy, please, I just want some broccoli. I just really want some broccoli. Mommy, please, I really really want some broccoli. I promise I will eat it all and I won't let any of it go bad if you just buy me some broccoli. I'll even eat the stem.' You can't walk away from that and say, 'too bad I don't have the money.' I can walk away from, 'Mommy can I have some Smarties?' 'No, you can't have some Smarties, I don't have the money.' But when they're crying over broccoli? When their crying over basic needs, things that people should have. Children should have all the fruits and vegetables they can eat."

The single mothers that are on welfare speak of their future goals (Nelson, 1987).

Mom would like to go back to work when her maternity is up because she feels better able to care of her baby. Her income has decreased by half being on Ontario Works.

Bonding

The mothers demonstrate in a variety of ways their affection for their children

(Nelson, 1987).

Mom played in the McDonald's playroom with her children. She chased them around and helped them climb through the jungle gym.

Mom really enjoys playtime with her son. She went through a deck of cards with 52 different dinosaurs and their information with him. Mom read the information and the names of the dinosaurs to him and he repeated them.

Mom and her daughter cuddle up on the couch to watch a movie and eat popcorn.

At the park, mom helped her son climb trees, fly around the sky, and run up and down the hill. They also had tickle fights and did some play fighting. Her son loved it and laughed the whole time.

Mom has a hard time disciplining her son because of their close connection. Her boyfriend does most of the disciplining. Her worker and her have talked about this close bond, which is great, but mom must make sure that her son is getting the discipline from somewhere.

Mom really misses holding her baby, but mom is sick. "I wish I could hold my baby and cuddle with her. It helps me fall asleep so fast."

Mom has thousands of pictures of her kids on her computer. We look at pictures for about 45 minutes. We also watch videos she made. Some parts of the videos mom plays over and over. I can tell mom really loves her kids.

Mom takes her daughter to the library a lot and they read together all the time.

Mom and son play the tickle game. He loves to be tickled. He keeps asking for help, but every time his mom stops he says, "Tickle me mommy."

The single moms who live together also have incredible bonds with each other's children. One mom cuddles and plays with her roommate's baby all the time and the other mom has been around her roommate's daughter for a year. It is clear that both children know they can go to either mom for love and affection.

The single mothers also relate the tough choices they make in order to keep their children. Some issues centre around lack of support from the father; other issues focus on the lack of alternative supports other than a formal service like a

Children's Aid Society (Nelson, 1987).

Mom comments on only being able to get her kids in daycare, so she can have some time to herself, if she had a child welfare case, which she doesn't. She remembers when she was little the S.M.I.L.E program allowed single moms to get respite care for a weekend. Mom and her brother use to get dropped off at someone's house for the weekend. She wishes she had similar options.

Mom says she has been having a hard time dealing with the both of her kids lately and she has been thinking about giving her oldest son to his dad, for good. She doesn't know if she could do that, but she just can't handle it. She thinks that she wasn't meant for two kids.

Her daughter's father wanted his daughter to go live with him for a month. She thinks that is too long. "He hasn't even had her for a weekend by himself since she was a baby. I mean I want him to spend time with her, and I have never restricted him from her, but I think it is better if he comes here to visit her."

At times the tremendous responsibility of raising a child almost seems too much to bear (Nelson, 1987).

"You feel terrible to, to know that you are thinking to yourself, looking at your child and thinking to yourself, you know sometimes I just wish I could go back to before I had you cause it was so much easier then. And that's a terrible thing. And it's even more terrible to not have the support system to know, like I know a lot of people who think things, have caught themselves thinking things like that."

Mom is stressed and overwhelmed with taking care of her kids. She wants to ask her son's father to take him for while, but she can't get a hold of him. She has even thought about putting her children in care so she can have a break.

Mom doesn't recommend having children to people. She recommends that they think really hard about it because it is a lifelong commitment. You always have to be concerned about how your decisions will affect your child's lives. You must always be concerned with instilling good values and morals in them.

Mom went through a period where she was going out drinking all the time and just didn't care. She even couldn't care less if she died. She would get a sitter for her daughter and go out all the time. She realizes now that she was doing this to get some attention, to get some help, but she never got any.

Mom's baby is cranky again and crying a lot. Mom finds it challenging to have an infant. Sometimes the crying gets to be too much.

Mom has been drinking and going out more than she used to. She thinks she is using it to deal with stress. She wants to go out to the bar tonight.

The mothers comment on how the children have reoriented their lives (Nelson, 1987).

Mom was a very big partier when she was a teenager, doing lots of drugs and drinking. It was when she got pregnant that she turned her life around.

"I kind of wish I waited to have my kids, but kind of not. There are lots of things that I want to do, but there are also lots of things I get to do because I have kids. There are positives and negatives I guess."

While walking towards the coffee shop, mom started laughing. She was laughing because she had gone to grab my hand, thinking that I was her son. She said she did that to her friend too, earlier that day. She is so used to having her son with her.

*Mom pointed out the apartment building where all the drug dealers she used to hang out with lived. She doesn't know where she would be today if she didn't have her son.
"Sixteen until like I got pregnant was one big party."*

Mothers relate guilt in engaging in parent relief activities if it interferes with time spent with children (Nelson, 1987).

Mom says that she feels guilty for putting her son in daycare. She is not working or going to school so she feels like one of those 'lazy moms' who just wants her kid out of the house.

Mom said it was really strange to be out without any kids. She kept looking in the back seat expecting to see the kids back there.

The single mothers describe the importance of a male model for their children when they speak of the relationship between their children and their male companions (Nelson, 1987).

Mom's boyfriend is trying to help potty train her son because it is more of 'a guy thing.'

Her oldest son calls her boyfriend dad. He has been more of a dad to him than his real father.

Mom's good friend is going to be her baby's godfather.

One mom believes that her "children have so much love in their lives and so many who love them so much... anything a man could give to my sons... I can give them just as well."

The present options available for support for families who are having trouble maintaining self-sufficiency encourages fathers to be absent from the home setting (Nelson, 1987).

Mom is on disability, but the amount she gets varies depending on how much her boyfriend makes. It's very unpredictable. Sometimes she will get \$100 after rent or sometimes it is \$600. They have thought about claiming separately again, but then he would have to move out. You have three months living together, getting your own check, and then you have to claim together.

The single mothers consistently relate the degree of bonding to their children through their concerns about proper care (Nelson, 1987).

Mom showed me a video online about a baby who got Shaken Baby Syndrome while at his babysitters. The baby is really sick and may be in a permanent vegetative state for the rest of his life. It made mom really upset. Mom says this is the reason she doesn't want to put her kids in a home daycare; she only wants to use a professional facility.

Mom told her worker that she is still a little nervous about sending her son to daycare. She sent him to a preschool last year, but couldn't leave him and ended up volunteering there.

Cautious

The single mothers are aware of their limited ability to alter environmental conditions that threaten their security and safety (Nelson, 1987).

Mom did not feel safe in her apartment anymore. There were fights and a stabbing in the building. There was blood all over the wall and carpet in one of the hallways and it took 9 days for Housing to clean it up. They put up a notice saying to be careful because it was possible it was contaminated blood. She was concerned about babies falling it, picking up a toy that had fallen, or having a cut. Also, because of all the chaos her son began having nightmares and regressed from his potty training. She knew that she had to get her son out.

Single mothers recognize how delicately they must tread in maintaining daily life patterns that insure the preservation of the family unit (Nelson, 1987).

Mom asked her worker if they have food vouchers so she can get some of the food she needs. The worker asked her if she had tried the food bank. Mom hadn't, so she asked for details. However, mom said "the problem isn't soup and things, what I need is fridge stuff like milk, fruit and veggies, and stuff for dinner." The worker told her that they would talk at her meeting tomorrow about whether or not she can have a voucher.

Single mothers understand the fragile balance in maintaining the resources they presently have. They are sensitive to maintaining the protocol that sustains existence (Nelson, 1987).

Mom missed her Ontario Works appointment and is trying to make another one. Her check is on hold because she missed her appointment. Also, she hasn't handed her income statement in yet, which will keep her check on hold.

Mom is always honest with The Children's Aid Society because she doesn't think she does anything wrong as a parent. If she is going to have a birthday party with alcohol she tells them. "There is nothing wrong with having a few drinks. Families do it all the time. Think of Christmas or Thanksgiving, sometimes families will drink all day and that is what they do." She knows lots of people who lie to their workers and when the worker finds out what they really do, then it causes a big issue. Mom says she has nothing to hide.

Mothers remain very cautious about the safety of their children. This caution is exercised in relation to both a safe place for children to play and obtaining responsible and reliable babysitters (Nelson, 1987).

Mom disclosed that there is a child molester who lives in her neighbourhood. He has a girlfriend and a baby of his own. His girlfriend almost moved into the Single Parents Program building when she lived there and she was concerned for the safety of the children in the building. She told the workers and after looking into it the girlfriend was denied access to the building.

When discussing using daycare, mom said she doesn't want to put her son in daycare yet because she wants him to be old enough to tell her if something is wrong. For example, if someone was mean to him.

Mom had to move her son to a different school because she was concerned about his safety. An old friend of moms, whom she is no longer friendly with and has threatened her family, was able to pick her son up from school even after she asked his teacher and the office staff not to allow it. Mom moved her son to a school across town.

Mom chose a daycare across town to enrol her son. When picking a daycare, she has some criteria. They must have cameras in the play area, security, and she wants references for the workers. Her worker told her that she has never heard anyone ask for those things before. Mom has always been hesitant about daycare. She thinks it's because of her own childhood experiences.

Mom wishes that Thunder Bay Housing would put fences in their backyards. She would like to have her kids play in the backyard without worrying about her kids chasing a ball down the driveway onto the road.

Mom wants to go away for the weekend and has a friend who might baby-sit the kids. Her friend has a child of her own and would stay in mom's house for the weekend. She really trusts the friend; otherwise she would never leave her kids for that long.

"Well, my backyard isn't fenced off and stuff so...I can't just be like go play [daughter] because she could like run to the back lane."

Mom is aware that there is a sexual predator in her neighbourhood. He takes pictures of the neighbourhood children. She says, "The police can't do anything because the children are fully clothed." Mom covers her son's face whenever they walk by the man's house. She wishes there were more strict rules in Canada about this.

Mothers do worry about the health of their children and their proper developmental growth (Nelson, 1987).

Mom thinks that her youngest son may end up with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), but she is not sure. She doesn't want to label him and use it as an excuse for his behaviour. She sees him having trouble with impulse control and it concerns her a little.

Her son is having difficulty potty training. She has not been able to help him. He can't go to Junior Kindergarten in September because he is not potty trained. Mom is concerned with him being behind socially.

Mom sometimes worries that she gives the kids too much junk food, but they also eat a ton of healthy food, like fruits and vegetables. She thinks it balances out.

Her son drinks soymilk, it's more expensive, but better for him. They eat lots of fruit and vegetables.

Mom doesn't like her son to watch Treehouse on television. "It's a bunch of adults dressing up like kids and talking in a baby voice. She is not sure that is good for kids." She prefers TVO because she finds it educational.

Mom worries that her son has signs of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). He will do the same thing over and over until he gets it right, or until he gets noticed. Sometimes he will say the same thing 50 times, over and over.

She thinks her son will do well in school, but she wonders if she needs to get him socializing with more children now.

Mom normally asks her son's daycare what he ate and drank that day. Mom likes to know, especially if he gets sick, because if she needs to call Telehealth and they want to know how much he drank.

"She needs to learn how to play with other kids because she beats up other kids. I can't sit there in J.K. when she is beating up kids. They will send her home and yell at me, tell me she needs therapy."

Single mothers express their fears about the lack of physical safety (Nelson, 1987).

Mom is very happy in her new apartment. Her old place kept getting broken into. Someone broke beer bottles all over mom's driveway so her and I [researcher] picked up all the glass so that the kids wouldn't cut their feet.

Mom teaches her son to stay away from strangers. He asked her once "what if you don't know if they are a stranger or not." Mom told him "if you don't know, you stay away." She wants to take him to the police station so she can teach him about safe strangers. She wants him to recognize the uniforms.

While mom's cousin had the baby she ran into the baby's father, who just got out of jail. He circled the stroller a few times and without saying anything picked up the baby, saying "My boy, my boy." This terrified mom and she told her cousin never to let him take the baby. She would be 'screwed' if he took the baby because she doesn't have full custody yet. She wishes he were still in jail because her life was so much easier then.

Mom is beginning to think that there is something in her house that is making her sick, like mould or gas or something. She felt fine while she was away for the weekend, but as soon as she got back she felt sick again. She plans on calling housing to see if they will check it out. She is concerned about having her kids in the house if there is something wrong.

One of the dogs in mom's neighbourhood is really vicious and has bitten a few people. The dog runs loose all the time and even when it is tied up it can reach the sidewalk. Mom always crosses the road to avoid contact with the dog.

The single mothers have some very distinctive and personal issues that bring caution to their daily lives (Nelson, 1987).

Mom is a haemophiliac and must be very careful in daily life.

Mom's boyfriend is in jail. He has been in jail 4 times since they have been together. Mom is seeking custody of the son they share. She was trying to get it done fast so he would be served while in jail, but couldn't. Instead she thought about getting a restraining order, but decided that he wouldn't do anything to hurt her or the kids.

Her mom was a prostitute and a drug addict throughout her childhood. She was put up for adoption and age 10 and has been in and out of foster care and group homes. Mom was smoking at age 10, smoking marijuana at 12, and was addicted to pills and many other hard drugs. At 14 she decided to quit because she didn't want to be a 'low-life.' She got pregnant at age 16 and lived in foster care with her baby.

Mom is really nervous about putting her son in daycare. She hasn't really let him out of her site since she had him. She is concerned about her mother (who she has a restraining order against) finding out what daycare he is at and kidnapping him. She is scared what her mom will do to her son.

Mom is extra caution because of her childhood experiences. She teaches her son about bad secrets and happy secrets. She has read him a book about it and they play the happy secret, bad secret game, so he can know when to keep a secret and when not to. If it hurts him or someone else it is a bad secret and he needs to tell someone.

Mom called the cops on her daughter's father for physical abuse and he is on probation and was not allowed to contact her for a year. She has full custody of her daughter. She is afraid of him calling when the probation is up and yelling at her. She is starting to get a little nervous because his probation is up in a few months. "I think around February I am going to avoid my parents house because that's the one he knows. Ya, I am probably going to avoid my parents' house. Instead of hiding out there I am going to hide out here."

The mothers know of the challenges of daily living (Nelson, 1987).

She can't keep up with her laundry, especially since she seems to be doing everyone else's too. Some of her boyfriends, his kids, her daycare kids, and her sisters, all end up in her laundry basket.

Mom has a busy week coming up and she knows how hard it's going to be without a bus pass or child care. Mom has her Resource Mom and her Faye Peterson worker coming, she has to go see her lawyer, and take both her kids to the doctor.

Mom says it is hard to do all the stuff you need to do while taking care of a baby. Mom tries to get the cleaning done while her daughter is sleeping. She has to clean when her roommate's daughter isn't home or has gone to bed because as soon as she is around she rips the house apart. Her roommate agrees, "I don't bother cleaning during the day because it just gets messy 10 minutes later."

Family Ties

The single mom families speak very frequently of how important supportive family relationships are in handling life tasks. For the mothers who receive family support it is

plentiful and varied. These mothers convey that family supports focus on real needs, are readily available, and can be obtained without personal risks of degradation and humiliation. Families offer such material support as housing, transportation, care of children, discipline, household furnishings, food, and a little extra cash to obtain necessities like food and diapers. However, some mothers relate that there are strained family relations and a lack of support.

Housing

Mom moved away and got pregnant. She moved back home with the baby when she was 4 months and lived with her parents.

Her mom wants her to move back home because she is having a difficult time on her own. She is thinking of going for a visit first to see if she likes it there.

Mom lives in a basement apartment in her cousin's house.

Mom still has a room at her parents' house and her and her daughter stay over night frequently. They are always there for holidays.

Transportation

Mom talked about her uncle and how he is such great support for her. She calls him when she needs help and he will often drive her places.

Mom's grandparents will drive her places when it is really cold out and she has really far to go.

Mom inherited a car from her grandpa, which is great for getting around.

Child care.

Mom's younger sister baby-sits for her.

Mom stayed at her mother's house for a couple weeks. Her mom was looking after her son while she worked at the CLE.

Grandma usually takes her son once a week so mom can get things done.

Mom has a relative staying with her. It's been good for mom because Auntie can baby-sit at night when the baby is sleeping so she can get out of the house.

"My parents are coming to get her today. She is sleeping over at their house."

Mom's boyfriend's parents and sister baby-sit her son sometimes.

Discipline

Mom's brother often steps in and helps with disciplining her sons. A friend asked mom whether it bothered her that other people disciplined her. She said "No, after all friends and family are there to help and support her."

Mom has had her mom visiting quite a bit lately, which she likes because she helps her with her daughter.

Furniture

Mom got new couches for her living room from her aunt. They are only a few years old and really nice.

"We got all the furniture from them [her cousins]. These couches and a bunch of chairs and stuff. A bunch of stuff that wasn't worth shipping down to Toronto. And they just didn't want to throw it away. It's a perfectly good couch. So when they found out I was moving out my uncle stored it for me, until I got my own place. So they furnished my house for me."

Mom's house was decorated for Christmas. "I actually got all this stuff from my grandma. It was my grandma's tree, her lights. Lots of the balls were my moms too. She gave it to me because she wanted a real tree."

Laundry

Mom says that her aunt is very supportive when she can be. She called her aunt to see if she was coming to town and could take her to do laundry. Her aunt couldn't because she had to work, but she could help her tomorrow.

Her mom also helps her with laundry. She had about 10 loads from just one week.

Food

*Mom and son go to Grandma's for dinner all the time.
Her aunt buys half a cow every year and gives her a bunch of beef.*

"My grandma gave me a lot of food this month."

Mom's grandparents sent fruit and candy over for the kids.

Mom gets meal tickets to Boston Pizza from her dad, who gets them from work. Her dad gave her three last time "and they were twelve bucks each, so for the meal. Cause at

Boston Pizza there is nothing much that is more, so, like an actual plate. Cause last time we went there we got. What did we get? We got wings and a little appetizer plate. Something like that, for four of us”.

Extra-Cash

Her son’s father gave mom some money for food and diapers.

Mom’s uncle loans her money sometimes. She borrowed money for her son’s birthday party.

Equally important are the kinds of emotional support that the families can give. For most of the single mother families this support is evident in terms of accepting and respecting both the children and the mothers’ situation (Nelson, 1987).

Mom is thinking of going to Winnipeg for a month to visit her family. They really want to see her daughter.

She told her mom she was pregnant by saying, “Hi grandma.” It took her mom a few minutes and then she clued in. First she smacked the back of her head and then she crouched down to mom’s stomach and started saying hi to the baby. She was most nervous about telling her grandparents because she was living with them. She said to her grandpa, “Grandpa I have something to tell you.” He guessed “Your pregnant.” Her whole family has been supportive of her. She said that her family really couldn’t say much because the whole family has had babies before they were 20.

Mom has been staying at her parent’s house a lot recently to avoid the problems she is having with her roommate. “My parents don’t mind. They want to see their granddaughter anyway.”

Her mom came from out of town to stay with her for a week after she had her baby.

For a few of the single mothers there are conflicts with extended family and for some moms there is a lack of support (Nelson, 1987).

Mom doesn’t have a supportive family. Her mom has problems of her own and can’t help her financially.

“I wish I had family in town. She was crying that day that I was sick and I couldn’t hold her because I was sick.”

Sometimes her mom tells her that she will baby-sit her son and then changes her mind and says ‘no’. It puts mom in an awkward position, especially when she agreed to work

out of town and then had to back out because she didn't have child care. Mom got offered a job over Christmas, but she is hesitant to take it because she feels like she can't rely on her mom to baby-sit.

Mom wants to ask her mom to look after her kids, but she doubts that she will. Her mom is all the family she has, but finds that she needs more family support.

Mom wants to go spend some time with her mom tonight, but is not sure if her mom will want to.

Mom decided that she needed to ask someone to borrow money because she needs to get diapers and food. She called her mom to ask if she could borrow money, or even just detergent to do laundry. Her mom said 'no.'

For the single mothers, family members can be great chums for participating in social activities (Nelson, 1987).

Mom goes out with her cousin a lot. They both have kids so they share a babysitter.

Mom goes to church with her sister every week.

Other mothers are reluctant to share their lives with their extended family (Nelson, 1987).

Mom gets really frustrated with her mother. She tries to get her worked up about things that her ex-husband says, or that her kids say about life with their dad. Mom doesn't always tell her mom what is happening in her life because wants to keep things good for her kids and not start problems over small things.

Mom's dad was a drug addict. He used to come by her apartment drunk and high with his friends. She had to set rules for him. He wasn't allowed to come by with friends or if he was high or drunk. He still did. He died of a drug overdose a few years ago.

Sometimes family relationships are a drain on the mother (Nelson, 1987).

Her sister has been staying with her for a few days and is driving her nuts.

Mom is really frustrated with her sister. She is being a very irresponsible mother and relying on her family to raise her daughter. Mom is reluctant to help her because she is taking care of her own daughter and doesn't think it is right what her sister is doing. She doesn't think she should she take care away from her daughter to reinforce her sister's behaviour.

Her dad can be very supportive of her, but they don't get along sometimes because he will take her son without telling her.

Single mothers find ways to repay their families for their help (Nelson, 1987).

Mom called her sister to make sure that she would baby-sit. She said her sister seemed a little hesitant at first, but she knows her sister realizes that she is her only chance for a break. Although she never pays her, she buys her things like school supplies and takes her shopping for clothes when she can.

Friendships

Friendships with other adults provide needed physical and emotional support to the single mother families (Nelson, 1987).

Mom stayed at her boyfriend's house for a week so he could watch her kids while she helped her friend with her wedding.

Mom had a birthday party for her son. Other single moms and their kids came and helped out. One mom did face painting and temporary hair dye on the kids.

Mom says that she is glad that she met this new guy. It has helped her in many ways. If she hadn't met this guy she thinks she would have taken her ex-boyfriend back. The new relationship has helped her to not miss her son as much because she is out doing things with this new guy.

Her friends all chipped in and bought a beautiful crib for her daughter. They also gave her drawers full of clothes for her baby.

Mom invited her friend, another single mom, to come live with her. She just broke up with her boyfriend and she is having trouble paying the bills. Mom can't give her money, but she can offer her a place to live.

For some single mothers, this need for an intimate adult companion remains a wish and a hope (Nelson, 1987).

Mom describes how she used to think she needed a boyfriend and couldn't be alone emotionally. But she is okay with being alone now.

Mom likes the idea of having a partner, but she struggles with it because she is so independent. She is used to it being herself and her daughter and that's it.

Intimate adult relationships are an important part of the single mother's lives.

Mom has a new boyfriend who is much older than she is. He is great with her kids and has children of his own. She is much happier dating someone older because he is completely happy to just stay in and watch a movie. She finds that men her own age are more interested in going out and getting drunk, which she cannot do. A lot of the time relationships turn out to be about sex, and she doesn't want that. She wants a relationship built on more.

Mom has a new boyfriend. He comes over quite a bit. He has a daughter around the same age as her son. She really likes him. She shows me pictures of all of them together at Gammondale Farm.

Mom has been spending time with a new guy who she really likes. He is older, but she likes that because he is at the same life stage as her. He is in university and has a good job.

Other friendships are most significant for the assistance they provide in cooperative child care (Nelson, 1987).

Mom usually baby-sits for her friends so they can go out, and they do the same for her. Although usually she wants to go out with her friends, not have them baby-sit.

"I gave her a pair of jeans that don't fit me to pay her for babysitting."

Mom is babysitting her friend's kids for the summer, 9-5, five days a week while her friend works.

Friendships, at times, have grown out of initially formal connections (Nelson, 1987).

Mom speaks of the relationship she built with one of the workers at the Salvation Army Single Parents Program. "I love her, she's the sweetest lady and she's so good with everybody. I could talk to her about anything, I could go with her, to her with anything and she would be listening and she would give the best advice she had."

Friendships provide the single mothers with help that is spontaneously given and non-judgemental (Nelson, 1987).

"When people find out your having a baby, they're like "Oh my god I can get rid of all these baby clothes that I don't have any use for. And just, everyone gives you tons of stuff

Mom was having trouble keeping track of her baby's soother. Her roommate (other single mom) finds her daughter's old one and attaches it to the baby and soother for her.

Plenty of opportunities abound to return favours, making help a mutual experience

(Nelson, 1987).

The moms who are roommates often take turns babysitting each other's children so the other can get out of the house for some personal time or to visit friends.

Often the moms will say, "I'll take your kid today if you take my kid tomorrow for my appointment."

Some friendships create additional stressors and challenges for single mother families.

Mother found out who her real friends are lately. "There are some friends who only talk to you when they want something (money, babysitter to go out)." She had one friend who liked to go out with her because mom would pay for a babysitter for all of their children.

Mom is babysitting her friend's kids for her 8:30-5:30, Monday to Friday. She is not getting paid, and rarely gets groceries. She feeds the kids breakfast, lunch and dinner. Every time mom brings up getting paid or getting grocery money her friend guilt trips her by saying that she would do it for her if she needed it. Mom doesn't feel like her friend recognizes how much she does for her and feels she is being taken advantage of

Mom is going to call her friend to see if she can use her dryer, but is hesitant because every time she asks her for something she says, "I guess so." However, when her friend asks for something mom always says, "sure no problem."

Mom had problems with other single moms living in her building. She would baby-sit for them and they would take advantage of her and not come home when they said they would.

Mom is having trouble with one of her roommates. She is refusing to pay her portion of the bills. Mom had to tell her to move out by the end of the month if she is not going to pay bills.

Astuteness

The single mothers are acutely aware of how the status of 'single mother' affects their ability to influence environmental conditions (Nelson, 1987).

"But I mean if housing really cared how these houses looked then, yeah, they would do stuff like that. They would help you get a garden going and ... They don't care. But heaven forbid you don't cut your grass. They'll send somebody to do it, it will cost you three-hundred bucks."

Mom speaks of her experiences living in low-income housing. The previous tenant flooded the place and the walls never got completely dry. It was infested with centipedes, ants, and other bugs. She remembers one times she made her son some toast with butter and jam, put it on the table and went to get his juice and when she got back the toast was covered in ants. Housing wouldn't do anything about it. They said that they could fumigate it, but she would have to stay in a hotel for a few days and pay for it herself. Then they told her that the whole floor would have to stay in a hotel so they just couldn't do it.

Last month her youngest son was sick; he was throwing up and had diarrhoea. He was also acting really lethargic and not moving. She took him to the hospital twice and was told he was just sick. He was not getting better and he was really dehydrated so she took him a third time and they finally admitted him and put him on IV. They had to try to get the IV in 4 times because he was so dehydrated that it wasn't working. She felt really frustrated because he was sick and she wasn't getting any help.

Mom's neighbour is playing music loud in the middle of the night that it is shaking her bed. At 4:30 a.m. mom banged on her door to ask her to turn the music down because her and her baby needed to sleep. The neighbour turned it off for about 15 minutes and then played it even louder for the rest of the night. Mom is going to have to start calling the police if it keeps happening.

Mom wishes she could make her house a "home." She is not supposed to do anything to the inside of her house like paint and hang things. She wants to do more decorating in the house, but can't because it's not hers. She would like to paint to make it homier. She hangs her kids pictures and artwork even though she is not supposed to.

Single mothers are very perceptive about how the regulations and rules of the formal helping system work (Nelson, 1987).

"When it comes down to stuff like resource moms and health nurses, they're going to shut your file if you don't need them, you're not screwing up. You're doing a fine job, so they shut your file. So people go out and get pregnant again so they can keep their support system. Because it's the only way that they will let you keep your support system."

"Should I have to spend my time that I should be spending with my children, hunting him down to try and chase him down and get support out of him? No, because then I get a court order and they start taking it off my welfare check. Penny for penny, they take child support – penny for penny off your welfare check. And then they [child's father] stop paying, and we're still losing. It takes two months for them to process it to stop taking it off your check. So you're still losing child support, so you're kids are going hungry and you're not getting a dime. It doesn't seem very fair."

“Every three months she wants to check up with me, see what kinds of plans I have for my future, cause I don’t have to work, I don’t have to attend workshops, I don’t have to go apply for ten jobs a month, otherwise I get cut off. I don’t have to do any of that. I am what they call ‘deferred’ so I don’t have to do anything until she is five years old.”

Many single mothers do not feel they get support or rewards for being a “good mom,” they only get help when they make mistakes.

“Well, because your kids have never been beaten before. And your kids are ... they don’t look like they are going to end up in care, we can’t help you. So because I’m not a screw up I get punished for it. What about a reward for being a good parent?”

Mom shares that she is having trouble getting support. When seeking support she was told, “Your children are not in care [of CAS] and they don’t look like they will be and have never been.” She finds it frustrating because she feels like she has to “screw up or have another child in order to get her support back.” She feels like she is encouraged to be a bad mother. She says “What? Do I have to slap my kid before I can get some support?” She believes there is no prevention; it is only intervention after something has happened.

“The motivation you have to use is, you know, it’s for your kids. I take care of my kids to the best of my ability because I want my kids to grow up happy. Would it make my life easier to just give in and beat the crap out of them and get help? Yes. So then I would have all the help in the world. I can get full-time, five days a week daycare for both of them... grocery vouchers...no questions asked, ASAP, everything. It would be ... it would make my life easier if I was a bad parent.”

Mom describes the lack of resources available. She believes the only way you get support is if you are a ‘bad mom’ and you are involved with the Children’s Aid Society. If you are involved with CAS you get daycare and rides to and from, and bus passes, sometimes twice a month. She remembers when she used to live in the Single Parents building and people would hang posters to sell their bus passes.

Mom gets really frustrated when she is in the room with some of these moms who get all this extra stuff because they are ‘bad’ at parenting, while she works hard as a parent and gets nothing. She has never been involved with the Children’s Aid Society. There are no rewards for being a ‘good’ mom.

The mothers feel the punitive and policing nature of the welfare system and from the workers who carry out the welfare policies (Nelson, 1987).

Mother explains that there is no privacy when you are on Ontario Works. They want to know everything. They want to know details about the father of your children and where he can be found, but mother does not know and does not want anything to do with him.

Ontario Works wanted mother to get his info and his social insurance number, which mom does not know. "I told them that he was on Ontario Works, so why don't they look it up. They said no, we need you to get the info." She says she made the mistake of telling them that one of the fathers contacted her through email, and she had to print the email and bring it in. Now she does not want to tell them anything and lose her sense of privacy again.

Mom feels like she is getting punished for working during her pregnancy. "I worked until I was like 8 and a half months. I have to pay welfare back now though for the money I have gotten from them. And I have to keep paying them until they are paid off" Her roommate, who is in the same situation, does not have to pay welfare back. She says "Me, I don't have to pay the money back. They call me deferred."

"I've actually been told this by one of the Ontario Works workers, 'well borrow it from your family.' But I thought we weren't allowed to get money from anybody else. Or you guys penalize us for it, we can get charged with fraud. 'Well, it's just diapers.' They're telling you, you know, get help from somebody else but when you get help from somebody else that's when they start coming in and looking at your bank records. 'Well, you deposited fifty dollars here, where is it from?' 'Well, I had to borrow fifty dollars cause I ran out of milk and food, bread and meats and diapers and I needed it so I borrowed fifty dollars. 'Well, who did you borrow it from?'

Mom is able to get free daycare for her son through ODSP, but if her son misses more than five days in the contract mom has to pay, and it is about \$35 a day. Mom voiced her concerns with these rules because of her health problems. Her immune system is bad and therefore she passes infections to him easily, and he gets a lot of earaches. Her worker reiterated that she only could miss 5 days. Mom asked about getting a note from her doctor and the worker said, "It doesn't matter. Everyone has excuses and reasons that they would miss days. It doesn't matter."

The single mothers are keenly aware of the discrepancy between what money is available to them and the actual cost of maintaining certain necessities (Nelson, 1987).

Mom remembers only getting \$50 when she had her baby to help with costs. When she moved she got a start-up allowance of \$700, which did not buy much.

"Let's give them \$500, and this is being very generous. Let's give them \$500 to feed, clothe, diaper, wash their children. Two children. Because on average that's ... I mean after you take into account bills and everything, and yes, some of my bills are my frivolous spending. I don't have to have cable, I don't have to have a phone, I don't have to have a cell phone. Are they all really a necessity in logical terms? Yes. What do kids do?"

"You have \$500 and you are spending probably a \$100 of that on diapers and wipes. Another \$50, maybe \$60 on milk, because you've got to give them milk. Fruits and vegetables. God forbid you buy fruits and vegetables because then you're broke. Meats? Meats are insane. So that your kids live off hamburger because that's the only thing that's cheap. Is that really healthy? It is about \$300 a month cheaper to feed my kids junk."

Mom got her back-to-school allowance for her oldest son. \$77. It is not nearly enough to buy a new backpack, two pairs of shoes (indoor and outdoor), and at least a couple of new outfits. She doesn't want to send him to school in ratty clothes from last year. Mom really needs her check, but she still has to wait four days. She needs to go grocery shopping. She has a lot of dry goods, but she needs other food. Both her boys eat a lot.

She is not sure how she spent most of her check already. She has gone from \$700 to \$150 in a few days. She paid her bills and went to Wal-Mart and bought diapers, air freshener, cleaning supplies, a sippy cup, and toilet paper. That cost her \$70 dollars. She needs enough money to buy groceries until her next check.

Mom has no money left and she doesn't get paid until the 20th. She only got \$300 this month after her rent and bills were taken out, and she spent about \$200 on groceries. Mom needs to buy food. She doesn't have anything for dinner. "I don't understand how Ontario Works expects us to live on this money, especially with a son who eats so much."

"You get your check on the first of the month. By the time you pay your rent and buy your groceries and maybe have a little money to spend for yourself, you're broke. It gives you just enough to get by, and sometimes even then its not enough. Like with Christmas coming up, you don't get extra money to buy people Christmas presents. Like I have to go buy Christmas presents for my whole family and still support myself the whole month of December."

"From the 5th to the 20th your broke. So for 15 days of the month you are broke. Like I couldn't do anything now if I wanted to."

The single mothers feel the loss of not having a steady male companion (Nelson, 1987).

Mom wishes that she had a boyfriend to do maintenance in her apartment, help her hang curtains and shelves and stuff because she really doesn't know how.

Although mom lives with her boyfriend he works all the time. She is frustrated because he is not around to help and she is trying to do it all alone and it is not working.

These mothers are astute about their vulnerability due to limited available transportation (Nelson, 1987).

“Transportation is probably the biggest challenge. The bus is too hard with dropping the kids off at daycare and then making it to school.”

Before our meeting mom instant messaged me asking for a favour. She asked if I could pick up some milk for the baby on the way because it was raining so she couldn't take the kids to get it. “I said no problem.”

Mom needs bottle liners for her baby, but the only places that sell them are Zellers and Wal-Mart, so she needs to pack the baby up and take the bus there.

They delivered the hampers last year, but this year you have to go pick it up yourself. You can pick it up at the CLE grounds on December 18th. Mom is not sure how a mom with kids is supposed to carry their Hamper home. “Apparently you are supposed to cab it there and back. It's kinda silly. It's not a big deal for me because I can get my mom or dad to take me to pick it up. But other moms I am not sure.”

The single mothers understand the need for parental relief time. They know that engaging in recreational activities apart from their children is healthy. Yet money, stigma of being a single mother, inability to alter environmental conditions, and ample time often prevents participation in social and recreational activities (Nelson, 1987).

Mom believes that if low-income housing fenced in the backyards in her community moms would get more parental relief time. Moms would get some time to themselves if their kids could go out in the backyard and play and be safe. Mom could watch from the window or sit outside and relax because she wouldn't have to run after the kids and make sure they didn't go near the road.

Mom is excited about the possibility of going away for the weekend without her kids, but is trying to not to be because she doesn't want to be let down if it doesn't work out. She thinks it is unlikely that she will be able to go.

Mom finds it hard because her boyfriend is at work all day and when he finally gets home he is tired and cranky and doesn't want to deal with her son. Mom feels like saying, “too bad, I have been with him all day and I need a break.”

Mom is looking forward to going to her friend's birthday party tomorrow night, but she can't stay late because her little sister is babysitting.

Mom's friends wanted her to come out for a friend's birthday, but they didn't ask her until a couple hours before. She told them "it's 8:00 at night, I have a kid, I can't go out. You can't call me the day of and ask me to come out and party with you guys. It's totally not going to happen. I told them, make sure you call me three days before."

Single mothers are frustrated with the kinds of rules and regulations that impede initiative in their own attempts to better their financial situation (Nelson, 1987).

"I am frustrated by the whole thing that I did get maternity leave and I went for it and I am getting penalized for it. I worked 2 jobs for five months while I was pregnant."

Mom describes what happens if you work while on Ontario Works. "If you work your pay is deducted from your check for the first 3 months. After that they deduct 50% of your wage off your check. When I worked my pay check was \$515; \$110 was taken off by taxes and Ontario Works took \$251.50, so I only had 153.50 left. I didn't know that was going to happen." Working was not worthwhile for her.

Mom describes what happened when she started school and had to switch from Ontario Works to the Ontario Students Assistantship Program (OSAP). "I had to pay back September. When you hand in your income statement September 16th your September income is based from August 15th to September 16th. So when I got my OSAP, like September 29th, or something like that, they made me pay back...all of my September money. I didn't even start school until September 11th. I said that I didn't even have an income. It would go on my October income statement, not my September. My September one was in before my OSAP was even processed properly. I had to pay back from September 11th till the end of September. When really the amount was from August 15th-September 16th. From the 11th to the 16th is what I should have had to pay. If I had to pay anything. But they made me pay back from the 11th till the end of September."

She doesn't understand it. Ontario Works tells you to go back to work as soon as possible after you have your baby and get off Ontario Works, but there is no way for her to do that without having anyone to look after the baby. She was told she couldn't put her baby into daycare until she is 18 months old.

She thinks there should be more incentive to work. There is no need to even work part-time. It is not worth it for the money and it takes so much time away from your kids. She would rather spend time with her son. Also, in non-profit housing, if you work your rent goes up.

The father of her oldest son doesn't provide child support. She filed for support and it didn't get set up until about 8 months later. By the time it went through the system his father had lost his job and was back on assistance, so she gets nothing from him.

Mom only received \$26 from Ontario Works this month. She doesn't have money to pay rent. They say it is because of her maternity leave. They took \$868 off her welfare check

for maternity leave even though half of mom's maternity pay already goes to welfare. "It should be almost 400 dollars every two weeks but every cheque I get says, \$186 for me and \$160 or something for them."

Mom recently found out that if she goes to college part-time Ontario Works would help pay for it, but if she goes full-time she would have to pay herself or get OSAP. She figures that they assume if you can pay \$2000 tuition then you shouldn't be on Ontario Works.

Single mothers provide suggestions that they feel would be beneficial to single mothers (Nelson, 1987).

"Don't go out for three days after you get your check because everyone else got checks too. It's so busy. You usually can't even get a cab."

Mom says single mothers need "a parenting/support group for parents with kids over six. There is nothing for over six. Everything is five and under. I mean if you have one child that's over six and one child that's under six you can still go, [but] everything is based five and under. Well, eventually they grow up. Do they think you don't need support because your child is getting older?"

Another mom adds insight on how help can be too helpful if it encourages dependency (Nelson, 1987).

Mom recalls that she seemed to run out of food more when she was living in the Single Parents Program building. She still runs out of food, but not as soon. Maybe because she always knew that she could get food from the program if she needed to.

Another mom describes the need for enough money to allow their children to participate in community recreational activities (Nelson, 1987).

Mom wants to get her daughter into dance, but P.R.O. Kids takes too long. Instead she is going to try and save up money and get her into a dance program in her community. She is going to look into how much it costs.

The single mothers know the kinds of workers that are supportive of them (Nelson, 1987).

Mom really likes her Children's Aid worker. She likes her because she has kids and knows that kids will be kids.

The single moms who live together reflect on their experiences with their Ontario Works workers. One mom is having a very positive experience, while the others are negative.

The moms describe the difference as "one mom has a bad worker and the other mom has a good worker." Mom hasn't been able to find out about her maternity pay from her worker yet, so her roommate asked her worker, who explained what will happen.

"She [worker] reported me for being ignorant and I was, I'll admit that. But, first of all she made a comment about my preference in men and of course they can't, they don't, they never put that in their report right."

"But just the tone of her voice every time I even called her. Even about something simple, something she asked me to do and it would just be this huge attitude trip. Like, I don't want to have to deal with you, don't call me. And it's hard. When you're on Ontario Works and you've got to deal with these people and you know, yeah your having a bad day, I'm having a bad day too. You're holding my cheque. I can't get my kid diapers ... okay were both having a bad day, can we meet in the middle here? Like leave your personal life at home."

Mom called her worker to tell her that she got into college. Her worker told her to make an appointment and she would help her with all the paperwork and set everything up.

"It's professionalism and the workers are not supposed to have a personal opinion – they do. I had a worker who hated my guts, honest to God, and she treated me so badly. In the end we finally found our middle ground and learned to get along but ...like if I put in a request for extra money for, you know, school start-up or whatever, she would review every penny that she could find a reason to review."

Maturity

These single mothers share their efforts to move from being a dependent adolescent to an adult with child caring responsibilities (Nelson, 1987).

Mom got up early to do laundry even though she planned on sleeping in. She couldn't sleep in because she had too much to do. Saturdays she normally cleans the house in the morning and then takes her daughter to the park or out in the afternoon. Mom remembers how things used to be so different. Before she had her daughter she would spend all day shopping for a new outfit and then spend hours in front of the mirror getting ready to go out that night. "Now I couldn't care less about that stuff."

Mom wanted to live on her own and move out of her parent's house, but she wasn't able to get into low-income housing. She couldn't afford to live on her own because sometimes a one-bedroom apartment is \$500 or \$700 for a two bedroom, which she could never afford. Instead, mom rents a house with another single mom and a roommate.

Mom moved out of her parents house, which is outside of town, into town because she doesn't want to rely on them all the time to get to town. She wanted to be able to take her daughter to the store to get groceries, or diapers.

Motherhood responsibilities can force maturity on a single mom far beyond their age (Nelson, 1987).

While out shopping mom ran into an old friend. Her friend mentioned that his girlfriend and him are thinking about having kids soon. Mom recommended that they wait until they finish school. She said that she loves her kids, but wished that she had waited. She wants to go back to school, but can't see herself having any time for studying.

Mom saw many things she wanted for herself: a duffel bag for when they go away, a new entertainment unit, a clock, a lamp and a stereo. She didn't buy herself anything.

When mom had her baby at 16 she lived with a foster family whom she did everything for. She took care of the house and another baby who lived in the same home. Mom would bath, feed, and change her baby and put him to bed, and then bath, feed, change, and put the other baby to bed too.

Decisions that focus on whether or not a baby should be placed for adoption or in care are particularly difficult and demand maturity (Nelson, 1987).

Mom is still struggling with the decision to put her children into care of Dilico, or giving her oldest son to his father. She doesn't want her son to think that she loves the baby more because she gave him to his dad and not the baby. Her mom thinks that if she gives them to Dilico she will never get them back. She really hates feeling this way.

Mom believes that she had a choice in whether to have a baby. She also had a choice in keeping the baby. She believes it is all about making the right choices.

The mothers demonstrate maturity in understanding the degree to which various resources can support them. There is at times an underlying bitterness when faced with these limitations (Nelson, 1987).

Mom finally got a hold of her oldest son's father and he is going to take him for the month of August. She is really looking forward to the break.

Mom sometimes attends programs, but she tends to stay away because the other moms talk bad about each other and make judgements about parenting. The worker's don't tell the other moms to mind their own business. "It's just not a good environment to be in, it's not always supportive."

Mom found out that she has a problem with her knee that requires physiotherapy. She called disability because she knows they will provide that type of assistance, but she found out that they wouldn't pay for it because of her boyfriend.

Mom went to the food bank because she didn't have money for food and necessities. Even though she was grateful for the help, she said, "We told the food bank that we had a two week old and a 14 month old and they gave us size 3 diapers, which are too big."

The mothers show concern about their children growing up without a male role model (Nelson, 1987).

Mom started talking to son's father again and brought him back into her son's life. When he comes over she likes to stay out of the way and just let them have their time together.

It upsets mom that her baby's father doesn't want to be in her daughter's life.

The mothers demonstrate maturity in being realistic about what they can handle (Nelson, 1987).

Mom's boyfriend wants to buy her a car, but she is reluctant to accept for many reasons. First, she would want a reliable car, one that is not going to breakdown when she is out with the kids. She is concerned about paying for gas and insurance. And finally, she doesn't know for sure how long their relationship will last, so then what?

Mom's friend who is pregnant with her third child has been encouraging her to get pregnant so they can be pregnant together. Mom said, "No way, I will stick to using birth control." She thinks two kids are enough for now, she already has her hands full.

Mom really wants to go away for the weekend for a baseball tournament. She feels really stressed out and has a lot going on right now. She thinks she really needs a break from the kids.

Mom is on birth control so that she doesn't get pregnant again. She doesn't want to get her tubes tied because she may want to have more children when she is in her thirties.

They show maturity in understanding how their own behaviour affects their children (Nelson, 1987).

Mom reflects on how her son has lost a lot of close friends in his life because she picks "crappy friends." There were friends that she wanted to invite to his birthday party, but couldn't because their moms (who use to be her best friends) don't allow them to play together anymore. Son has asked mom "why do you keep taking people away from me?"

When she found out she was pregnant she immediately stopped partying and smoking. People kept encouraging her to come party with them and she just told them she didn't feel like it.

The single mothers show maturity in understanding what kind of environmental conditions are best for raising children (Nelson, 1987).

Mom describes her concern for her younger sister. She says her mother is "crazy." She raised her younger siblings and still tries to lead her sister down the right path. She is concerned that her sister, who is a young teenager, will also end up a teenage mom, despite the guidance she gives. Mom thinks it will happen even though mom gets her little sister to help out with her kids to show her how difficult it is.

She really wants to keep her son in the same school next year, but she doesn't live in the right district. She loves the school. It is a small school and her son gets the attention he needs. Her son got all A's on his report card.

"My daughter doesn't watch t.v. She would rather, push the chairs around, she would rather push things around, throw books around, or sit there and pretend to read her books and throw her toys around than watch t.v. Which is really good. I would rather have her do that. I hate seeing children who just sit there and watch t.v. all the time. They come home from school and they run and turn the t.v. on. Well. t.v's and Exersaucer's and stuff you are only supposed to leave your kid in front of those for 15-20 minutes and that's so you can get something done and then you are supposed to go back to your kid and do more activities with them."

The single mothers view existing resources from new perspectives (Nelson, 1987).

Mom uses MSN to socialize with her friends because she doesn't have enough money for babysitters.

Mom has been struggling with paying for the bus lately. She spent almost \$20 in one day because she had to travel around town so much. Mom called around and found out that she can get a discount on a bus pass because she has a disability and is on ODSP. It saves her \$10 on a monthly bus pass.

The mothers certainly do not view welfare as "living on easy street." They do remain hopeful that they can achieve independence (Nelson, 1987).

Mom doesn't plan on being on welfare forever. Once she finishes school and gets a job she hopes to support her family on her own.

Adaptable

The single mothers are adaptive and flexible in making the most out of their existing situation (Nelson, 1987).

Mom walks as much as she can, rather than spending money on the bus. Walking home from the mall her oldest son got tired and was complaining about the walk. Mom tried to motivate him to keep going, but he just couldn't. She had a sling for the youngest, so she put him in it to carry him and asked me to push the oldest in the stroller. By the time mom and I got home we were both sweating and exhausted. Mom said "who needs a gym when you can do this?"

Moms get together with their children to avoid spending money on babysitters. One mom was sleeping over at another mom's house, with her son, and they were planning on watching movies together.

Mom moved all the workout equipment out of the dining room and upstairs all by herself. She had been waiting for her boyfriend to do it, but he wasn't. She also moved a big table out of the kitchen.

Mom is very skilled at manoeuvring the stroller with one hand, she is able to open the door and walk through by herself. Every time I tried to get the door she was too quick and already in.

Mom's daughter is old enough now that she can watch a movie or play so mom could do her work. Sometimes mom takes her daughter to the park all day and her daughter will play while mom reads for school.

The moms wanted to go out for a friend's birthday but didn't have any money. One of the moms created a plan. "We get the meal tickets from my dad. We can at least go out, have our food free, and buy drinks there. And we ask [friend] if we can pay her later [for babysitting]. I am sure she will understand not having money, having children. We can return these empty bottles. Remember you said save them for a rainy day. Like a case and a half of beers, or something like that of empties, and then a bunch of bottles. There's like 10 bucks there. Maybe more. There you go. I have figured it out. So now we can go out for her birthday."

At times the single mothers must postpone desired goals (Nelson, 1987).

Mom wanted to get herself some new chapstick. She doesn't usually spend a lot of money on herself or treat herself. But, once in a while she will get herself a few new things.

Mom hasn't eaten yet today and it is 2:30 p.m. She goes hungry so her kids can eat. She never understood why her mom did that when she was young, but she does now.

Mom likes to get out of the house everyday. Mom was supposed to take her baby to a friend's house to watch a movie, but the baby has been cranky and crying a lot the last few days so she decided to stay in with the baby.

When certain opportunities are not available, the mothers will substitute (Nelson, 1987).

Mom is throwing a birthday party for her son. Since she is throwing him a party, she can't afford to buy too many presents. She buys him two pairs of shorts and two shirts for his birthday. She substitutes a party for presents.

Mom's son has hip problems and needs to be massaged frequently. Mom can't afford it as much as it is needed, so the massage therapist showed her how to do it. Mom does it herself and takes him in for a real one whenever she can afford it.

Ontario Works doesn't pay for mom to go to the dentist, so she goes to the college and pays \$20 for a cleaning.

Mom takes the baby over to her friend's house with her to watch movies. Mom enjoys getting out of the house and visiting with friends, while still being with her daughter.

Mom wants to repaint her living room because there are marks all over the walls, but can't because she can't afford paint right now. Instead she bought a Magic Eraser and wiped down all the walls. It worked.

Mom buys herself second hand clothes so she can buy her son new clothes. Mom found a lot of clothes for herself at the thrift store. She bought her son a few things that were good quality, but she prefers to buy her son new because some of the kid's stuff can be pretty shabby.

Mom moved herself into the Single Parents Program apartment and her first apartment with her boyfriend by taking the bus. She would pack up all her stuff on her stroller and take trip after trip.

Coping

The single mother families demonstrate many strengths in coping with daily survival with often very few material and emotional supports. Often the mother's energy becomes focused on how to cope with limited financial resources (Nelson, 1987).

She owes money on her hydro bill and if she doesn't pay some by the end of the week her hydro will be cut off. She put in a request for some money on Wednesday and she called her worker to find out what is happening and he said he hasn't looked at it yet. She is really getting concerned about it.

Mom is struggling with finances a lot right now. She is receiving maternity pay from her job, but she only gets \$130 a week and she hasn't started getting her Ontario Works yet.

Mom can't wait for payday. She thinks it is too long between each check. In the past she has had to go to a pre pay loan place where they loan you the money until you get your pay check. But they charge almost 100 dollars. She once got \$150 and had to pay \$230 back. She hasn't used it for a while and she is glad.

Mom doesn't have enough money to pay for rent and it is already late. She considers asking her grandma. "Hopefully she has money. If anything I could borrow money for rent. I am not that concerned about rent because I should be getting that maternity cheque next week. I get one next week, and then I get one two weeks later. Ya, before the end of the month he will have rent. Even if it is the last day of the month, he will have rent"

Mom is thinking of putting in for a transfer. She wants a smaller place because she can't handle the bills. Her hydro bill was \$300 last month. She doesn't want to live in an apartment again, but would really like a smaller house.

Options for single mother families are largely dictated by these available finances.

Money determines material assets that can be obtained, sustenance options, housing space, and how one travels (Nelson, 1987).

Mom apologized for her house being such a mess. Her vacuum isn't working properly and she is trying to get it fixed.

Mom was trying to potty train her youngest son. We went shopping for diapers. She wanted to buy pull-ups to help, but was concerned about the price. They turn out not too be too bad, so she buys them, as well as regular diapers.

"You run out of options really fast. I don't know how many times I've called my Uncle and I am absolutely bawling. I'm out of milk and my cheque does not come in for another week. And everybody's like, "well, you know, maybe you should have put away some money." What money? And this is what I keep asking people. Put away what money?"

Mom really needs a filing cabinet, but can't afford one. She has so many papers that need to be filed. Mom showed me a big pile of papers on her counter that she needs to get organized. She went through it and found things she had forgotten to do. She forgot to mail her oldest sons speech pathologist form, his head start questionnaire, and forgot to pay a bill.

Mom is concerned about her housing because her cousin who she lives with broke up with his girlfriend. She doesn't know what is going to happen to the house. Mom and her

cousin can't afford the house by themselves. Mom pays rent, which covers the mortgage, but she can't afford to pay any bills. If they are going to sell the house she needs to know because the emergency housing list has about a 3-month wait and she doesn't know what she will do until then.

"When I was living with my parents and I was looking for a place of my own I realized there is no way I can afford living on my own with a child. Unless I were to do geared to income housing. Because one bedrooms are, you can't find a one bedroom for less than 500 bucks a month and if you do it's like in the scummiest neighbourhood ever with the biggest crack shack you have ever seen. And then like two bedrooms are like 700-800 dollars for a two-bedroom apartment. Like how can a single mom on assistance afford that? And after a kid is, how old, you can't share a bedroom with them. I think it's like two or three, maybe even a year. And if you have two children, like a boy and a girl, after the age of 5, or something like that they can't share the same room either."

"I've still got garbage in my basement that ... from when I moved in. Like all the boxes and stuff. I've got no way to get it to the dump."

Many of the single moms in the study don't have a driver's license because it is too expensive. Half of the moms are currently trying to save up their money in order to get it.

Mom's son wants something to eat. He wants cereal. Mom can't give him cereal because she doesn't have any milk. We wants pudding, but there's none left; he wants crackers, but there's none left. She asks him if he wants Kraft Dinner, then remembers that she doesn't have any milk. So she makes soup. Mom gets her welfare check tomorrow.

Parental relief time is restricted by available finances. The single mothers do not have the luxury of parent "time-off" as an essential activity (Nelson, 1987).

"I have to scrounge all around to find a babysitter and then pay them, what 20 bucks or more."

The kitchen is mom's personal space where she can get some time away from the kids, while still being able to hear and watch them playing in the living room. She has her computer in the kitchen and a baby gate to keep the children out. She says it is the only place where she can get some alone time.

"We take 20 bucks from the food we are going to eat to be able to go out."

Since her son was born 3 years ago, mom has gone out for coffee six times and the movies twice. Her friends tell her that she needs to get out more. She doesn't really have that option; she doesn't have someone to baby-sit.

“She always wants me to go out with her, but I can’t afford to go out with her. And she is like, ‘well, I will lend you the money and you will pay me back.’ But I can’t borrow money off her to go out with her. If I don’t have money, I don’t have money.”

Illness brings additional strained situations for the single mother families (Nelson, 1987).

Mom had a really bad headache. She has neck problems and needs to see a chiropractor, but it is too expensive.

Because of all her weird health issues, even when she sleeps 12 hours she is still really tired. Mom is always tired.

Mom is really sick and has been throwing up all morning. She is trying not to touch baby because she doesn’t want to get her sick, but the baby is crying constantly and wants to be held. Mom thinks the baby senses that she is sick.

Mom has a really sore back, shoulder and knee. ‘I want to take some Tylenol when I get home, but I don’t like to take it because it really zonks me out and I need to take care of my son.’

Her son was sick the last few days. He was vomiting and had a fever. It was his first time vomiting, other than baby spit up and it confused him. Mom had to get up in the middle of the night to clean him and get him back in bed. He woke up at 4 am, feeling better, and ready to play. Mom was awake until 7:30 am with him and then had to get up at 8:30 am when her boyfriend went to work.

Mom hates being sick because she thinks it is unfair for her kids to be stuck inside all day while she is lying down. She is avoiding going to the doctor because she thinks she will be prescribed strong drugs that she can’t take because she needs to take care of her kids.

Mom hasn’t been feeling well the last couple of weeks. She went to the doctor to get blood work done. She is in a lot of pain and doesn’t know if she can wait until next week for the results. She thinks she may have to go to the hospital, but she hates having to drag the kids there so she probably won’t go.

Children present special coping situations for moms (Nelson, 1987).

Mom is feeling very frustrated with her kids. Her oldest is giving her a lot of attitude lately.

Her son used to be a vegetarian, almost a vegan. He didn’t like meat or cheese and milk didn’t agree with his stomach. They had to eat a lot of soy products. The price of meat alternatives became a problem. “It was \$8 for 5 soy hamburgers, which isn’t much compared to how much ground beef you could get for that.”

Mom is having a hard time getting her son to stop hitting her. She has a worker from the Children's Centre helping her.

Mom can't go to one of her regular programs because she doesn't have money for the bus. That morning her son ripped up her bus pass that still had 6 punches left on it.

Mom is now realizing how hard going out is when you are potty training your children. "You can't go out for long periods of time without risking an accident. I remember my friend saying how hard this was. We need to get home soon, but I still need to go to Wal-Mart. I guess I will have to take a cab home from Wal-Mart."

Her son peed his pants before leaving daycare. He peed everywhere; his shoes and socks were even wet. Mom had to take his socks off and put his boots on without them. She put a diaper on him so he didn't have any more accidents on the way home because she didn't have any more clean clothes. Mom was very frustrated because now she would have to run to catch the bus.

Mom had a really difficult time when her daughter was young because she was hitting all the time and she couldn't get her to stop. Mom had to drop out of school to focus all her time and energy on her daughter.

Many single mothers have felt the loss of the Salvation Army Single Parents

Program.

Mom is having a tougher time since the Salvation Army Single Parents Program closed. "I lost my family when that program closed. I lost the only stable support system I had."

"It was great when SPP was open because moms could get milk coupons or grocery coupons if they ran out of money for milk or healthy food."

Mom misses the Single Parents Program. She stayed living in the building after they left. The building changed when the program left. "People just started partying like crazy and no one stopped them or dealt with them. There were more drugs and drinking."

Mom misses the old Single Parents Program. She went to the new one a few times but didn't like it. She found that the programs were too rigid and the snacks weren't good. She felt like they were always trying to get her out of their office as fast as possible. You couldn't just talk to them like you used to if you were having a rough time.

Biological fathers create special coping situations for the single mothers.

Mom says her oldest son's father has the option of visiting his son. She has told him that he can call at any 'reasonable' time and if they are home he can come see their son. He doesn't. She invited him to all her sons' birthday parties, but he rarely shows up. A friend forced him to come last year and he caused a big scene.

Her baby's father is no longer willing to sign over custody. Mom called her lawyer to inform him that they are going to have to serve him with custody papers. Mom knows that there is no way that he will get custody of their son, but now she has to deal with all this.

Mom has difficulty disciplining the kids when dad is around because he always undermines her. She says "no" and he always gives them what they want. It's hard because it makes her look like a "meanie." She thinks it would "almost be easier if I was alone."

The baby's father called at six in the morning and wanted to come over. Mom told him that he could come over later. Mom says the whole time he was there he was playing games with her and saying sweet things to try and get in her good books. He doesn't seem to understand that their relationship is over. At one point he called her 'his girlfriend.' Mom told him firmly "I am not your girlfriend." He said, "Well, you still are to me."

"I need to see what this guy wants to do, whether he wants to be in her life or not. Right now he is still confused and wants me not to tell anyone who he is or anything like that. I am worried about the whole family thing. She[daughter] has aunts, uncles, and grandparents. And I talk to them all on a regular basis, but I can't tell them. I haven't seen him I have only talked to him on the phone. I want him to come meet her. He doesn't want to be the father because he doesn't think he can do anything and he thinks people will look at him as a bad father. And I say, 'well what are you going to do when she is six years old and you finally tell people. You'll be a dad who hasn't done anything for her, her whole life. That will make it much worse'."

Tenacity

The single mothers are stubborn seekers of those things needed to survive (Nelson, 1987).

Mom makes a number of calls to try and get the 'hold' taken off her Ontario Works check. She describes how Ontario Works has changed. "You have two workers now and they don't make their own appointments anymore. You have to call the appointment lady." Mom called one worker, who told her that the other worker put her check on hold and that she had to call the appointment lady. Mom called the "appointment lady", but got no answer, so she left a message. The "appointment lady" called her back about an hour later and she made an appointment. Then she called her first worker to tell him about the appointment, and then called the other worker to tell her about the appointment and try to get her check off "hold." She leaves a message for both of them. Then the second worker calls her back to tell her that the other worker is the one who said to put her check on "hold," so she has to call him.

Mom had problems with her nipples when she was breastfeeding and her foster mother wouldn't believe her and refused to call her lactation nurse for her. After her concerns

were continually being ignored mom called the nurse herself and confirmed that mom and baby had thrush. Both mom and baby had to take medicine.

Mom has been asking her formal supports for help with potty training her son for months and she was often told that she shouldn't worry and she has lots of time before school starts. But he still hasn't potty trained. She realizes that she needs help and is no longer taking 'no' for an answer. After much persistence she is getting set up to have her son in daycare three times a weeks so they can help potty train him.

Mom's worker is not calling her back so mom has stopped by her office numerous times. She needs to find out how her maternity pay works with Ontario Works. She is worried about spending the money she has received, in case she has to pay some of it back, but it is all she has. Finally, after much persistence, mom got back pay from Ontario Works.

"I got a card for a Christmas Hamper and she didn't get one. I think it's because we live in the same house. But even if she doesn't get one, she should at least be put on mine and I should get a bigger hamper. I think you should call them and ask them for the hamper. Call them right now."

It is during times of emergencies that limited resources can seem almost too big a hurdle to overcome. The single mothers demonstrate their tenacity in dealing with these crisis (Nelson, 1987).

Mom told me that she hasn't fed the kids yet because she doesn't know what to feed them. She has leftover pasta and meat sauce in the fridge, but if she feeds them that for lunch she doesn't have anything for dinner. She has gone through 700 dollars worth of groceries in a month feeding all these kids. Mom decides she hopes it's late enough (2:30) that she can give the kids spaghetti and get away with not giving them dinner until the other kids go home at 6. She just can't afford giving them all dinner anymore.

Mom is going to have to break down and rent a U-haul on Friday to finish moving. She still has to get the big things out of her house, like stove, couch, freezer, and washer and dryer. She is not sure how she and her friend are going to carry all that stuff alone. She may have to call Ed's Pawn Shop and sell her stuff to them, because they will come and pick it up.

Mom needed to take her son to the emergency, but had no way to get there and no one to leave her younger son with. She waited for her friend to get off work, hoping that she would take them.

The single mothers diligently strive to achieve desired goals (Nelson, 1987).

Mom completed college regardless of the challenges she faced by receiving Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), not Ontario Works. The money she got on OSAP

was less than what she used to get on Ontario Works, and it has to be paid back. She also lost her drug coverage. She got no help with transportation to school for herself or her kids. She feels like if you chose to go to school over working, the system says. "well too bad, I guess you should figure it out on your own."

Mom has saved up enough money for her G1 driver's test and to pay for some driving lessons. By next summer she will have her license. She hopes to get a car by then too.

Mom doesn't have a computer so she has to write everything down and then go the University to transfer it to the computer. She keeps a notebook with her all the time and writes down ideas that come to her while she is cleaning, cooking, playing with her daughter, etc.

Her son fell asleep on the bus. Mom says they had a long day. She was up at 6:30 a.m. making snacks for the day in order to get to her community kitchen and then to her friends. She is also tired.

Bus transportation is a frequent challenge for the single moms (Nelson, 1987).

Particular issues are fitting strollers on the bus, the cost of the bus, and the amount of time that transit takes.

Mom finds the bus challenging for taking her son to school. "It takes her two bus stamps a day, five days a week, and Ontario Works only gives her 20 stamps a month."

Normally she doesn't bring her stroller, especially when her friend has hers, but they weren't taking the bus so it was okay. On the bus there are usually a ton of strollers, which makes it very difficult.

We caught the bus downtown to head to the bank to get money. Both of the stroller spots are taken and Mom constantly has to shift around to let people on the bus. Her son keeps throwing his cup on the ground.

Taking the bus to get her kids to daycare and to get mom to school is a huge challenge. She has to "get up at 6:30 just so I could get ready, catch the bus before 8, get the kids to the daycare by 8:30 and be at the bus terminal at 8:45, so I could make it to school for 9:30. It was really hard. At the end of the day I had to repeat the whole process."

Mom spends a lot of money on the bus and hates asking her boyfriend to drive her places. She takes the bus when she can. She often goes grocery shopping with a stroller and a wagon.

The bus is a challenge for mom because it only runs every half an hour and she always ends up getting to the stop 5 minutes after the last bus and has to wait for the next one. She gets to her sons daycare too early if she takes the first one.

Mom has to buy her bus pass herself and it is really expensive. Often you can use 3-5 punches a day. Rarely can you get to and from an appointment, or do your shopping within an hour, which is the length of a transfer.

Mom hates taking her stroller on the bus, especially if there are other strollers on it. Last week there were already 3 strollers so she had to manage to squish in.

Hopeful

The single mothers display a lot of vivaciousness about the future. They are young and hopeful that they can achieve their dream for more independent living (Nelson, 1987).

Mom wants to get a job. She was going to apply at the hospital because she has an aunt who works there. She hates being on welfare.

Some of her friends have asked her why she needs more money? Why doesn't she just stay on welfare forever? Mom tells them that she wants to create a good life for her kids.

Mom is glad that she is actually doing something. She can't imagine getting up in the morning and not having something to do. Some moms, and she used to be one of them, don't do much, just go out for coffee everyday. She wants to make their life better, and to her that means getting her education.

Mom got a job as an AVON sales representative and is really excited. She can work from home and even if she gets pregnant she can still do it. She already made a sale and she just started yesterday.

Many of their future plans centre on pursuing more formal education. Some moms have set their goal on completing high school, others on a college diploma, or a university degree (Nelson, 1987).

Mom is going to take some updating classes for Math and English at the college so that next September she can enrol in a program.

Mom wants to go to the university to take psychology. She is interested in doing a research project on the effects of drugs on the brain.

Mom is presently completing high school through correspondence. She is thinking about taking advantage of her son starting school next year to go to the adult centre and get it all done in a year.

Mom wants to go to college in September and take a pre-tech course.

Mom would like to go to college to take massage therapy.

She will be attending the PSW program part-time at the college in September 2008.

The moms remain hopeful that further learning will benefit their children too

(Nelson, 1987).

Mom sees school as a good thing because she is preparing to make a better life for her and her kids and is teaching the kids a great lesson about going back to school and graduating.

Although the moms are hopeful, they have a good grasp of the hurdles that confront them (Nelson, 1987).

Mom is aware of the challenges of getting off Ontario Works. "They claim that they are trying to help everybody get off Ontario Works. What are they doing? Well, you know, if you need clothes for an interview you can come into our little clothing store. Have you ever been in that little clothing store? And it's supposed to be really nice clothes. I wouldn't hire anybody wearing most of those clothes. I'm sure they get nice stuff once in a while. But I'm telling you, most of that stuff I wouldn't hire anybody wearing. It's horrible, ugly clothing and, as much as it's a very vain thing to say, people are hired mostly based on looks. You can get an employment start-up; it's two hundred dollars. And, you know, if you need special shoes there's fifty bucks."

Mom realizes that she will have to finish high school before she can reach any of her goals.

Mom wants to go to college, but she is nervous about receiving OSAP. She is worried about paying all that money back, and about getting lump sums of money. She says she does better when she gets a little each month.

Mom wants to take the Safe Food Handling course at the Thunder Bay District Health Unit. She has her WHMIS and Smart Serve, but she tried to apply for a job cooking and she couldn't get it because she didn't have it. She needs to write a letter to Ontario Works explaining why she wants to take the course in order for them to pay for it.

Mom wants to go to school, but daycare is a problem. She can only get her oldest son in a facility daycare and her baby in home daycare, which is just not going to work.

Moms have a variety of job interests (Nelson, 1987).

Mom wants to get a job. She thinks maybe at Zellers Restaurant because you get tips and then she would always have money at work to pick up things for her kids before she goes home.

Mom really wants to be a lawyer. Her dream job would be a lawyer for Dilico because she thinks she could bring a lot of her Aboriginal experience.

Mom went to school to be a medical assistant. Once her youngest is a little older she will look for a job in that field.

Mom would like to be a sexual assault counsellor for kids or a midwife.

Mom has been thinking about a career lately. She really enjoys giving massages. When she was younger she took some massage classes through the Children's Aid Society.

The single mothers are hopeful about pursuing their hobbies. Photography seems to be an interest of many of the single mothers (Nelson, 1987).

Mom really enjoys photography. Sometimes when her son is staying at his grandma's house mom will go for a walk in the middle of the night to take pictures.

Mom is interested in photography as a job, but feels it would be better as a hobby.

Mom hopes to make a scrapbook out of all the keepsakes she has saved from when her son was a baby.

Quantitative Approach

Findings from Human Service Agencies/Organizations

The findings are presented using descriptive statistics, which identify how formal agency services support single mothers living in Thunder Bay. According to Creswell, descriptive statistics reveal basic patterns in the data allowing for a clear representation of the research "at a glance" (Creswell, 2003, p. 329).

The questionnaire for human service agencies/organizations was divided into four major sections. The first section asked agencies/organizations about any special services/programs that focused on needs of single moms between the ages of 18-25 with children under five. The second section asked the respondents to indicate the involvement of these single mothers in their regular programs. The third sections addressed any new services that the agency/organization would be interested in providing for these single

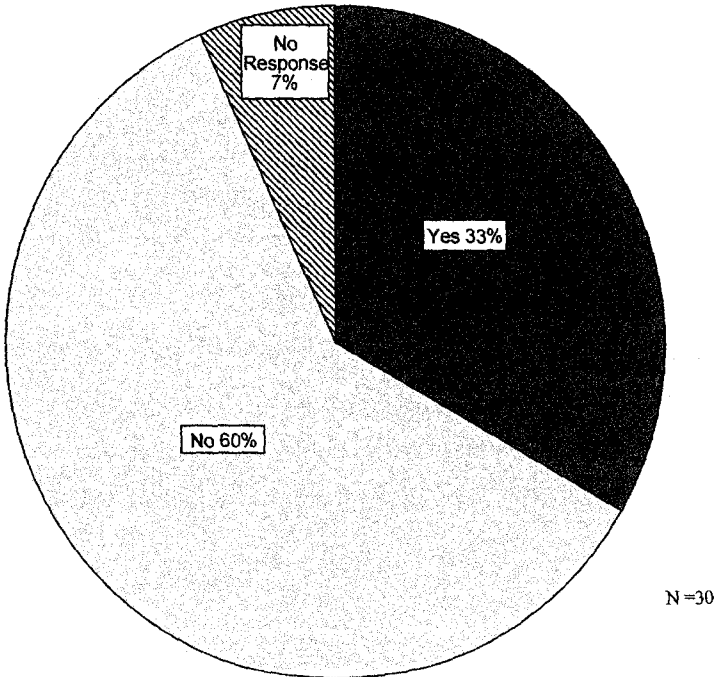
mother families if the agencies/organizations had available to them the necessary resources. The final section asked respondents what types of services they think should be developed for single mother families in Thunder Bay.

Section 1: Special Services/Programs

Number Providing Special Services

Respondents were asked if their agency/organization provides any special services/programs to single mothers between the ages of 18-25 with children under the ages of five. Figure 4.1 presents the number of agencies/organizations who provide these services.

Figure 4.1: Number of Agencies/Organizations that Provide Special Services/Programs to Single Mothers, by percent



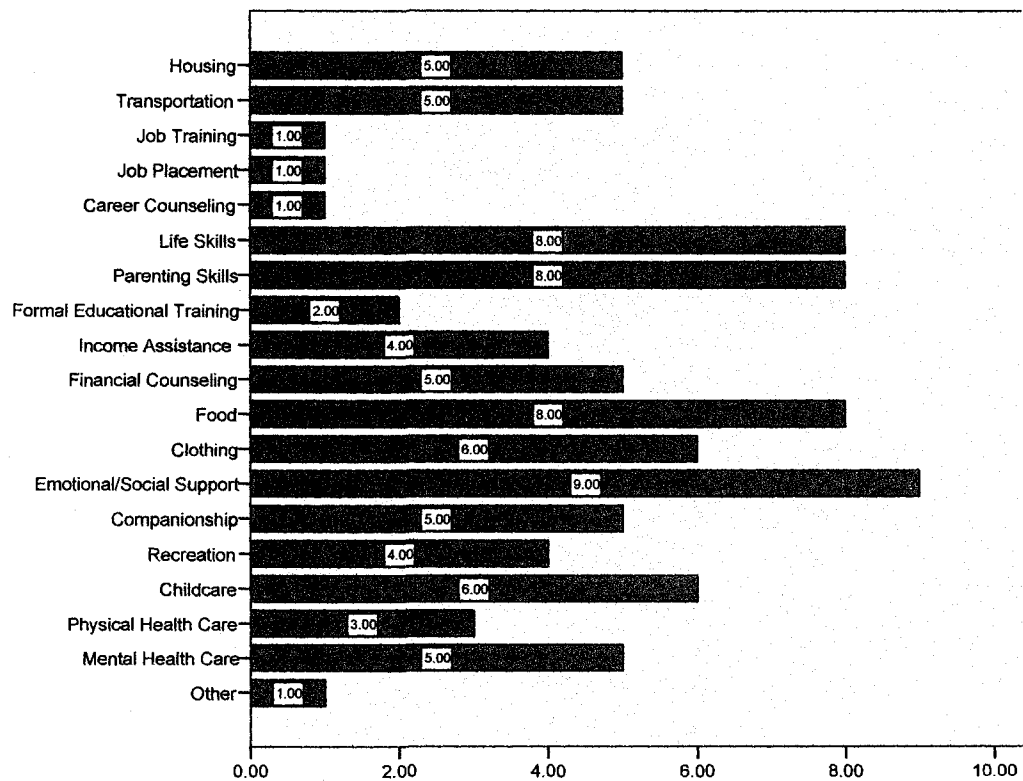
Ten or 33 percent of the agencies/organizations that responded to the questionnaire indicated that they provide special services/programs to single mothers between the ages of 18-25 who have children under the age of five. Only five of these 10

agencies/organizations with special services/programs report the number of single mothers and their families that were assisted since January 2006. The number served by agencies/organizations ranged from 5 to 48, with the mean number of mothers served being 36.

Needs Addressed Through Special Services/Programs

The questionnaire asked respondents to identify what needs of single mothers are addressed through their special services/programs. Figure 4.2 presents the needs addressed by special services/programs.

Figure 4.2: Needs Addressed by the Ten Agencies/Organizations Providing Special Services/Programs

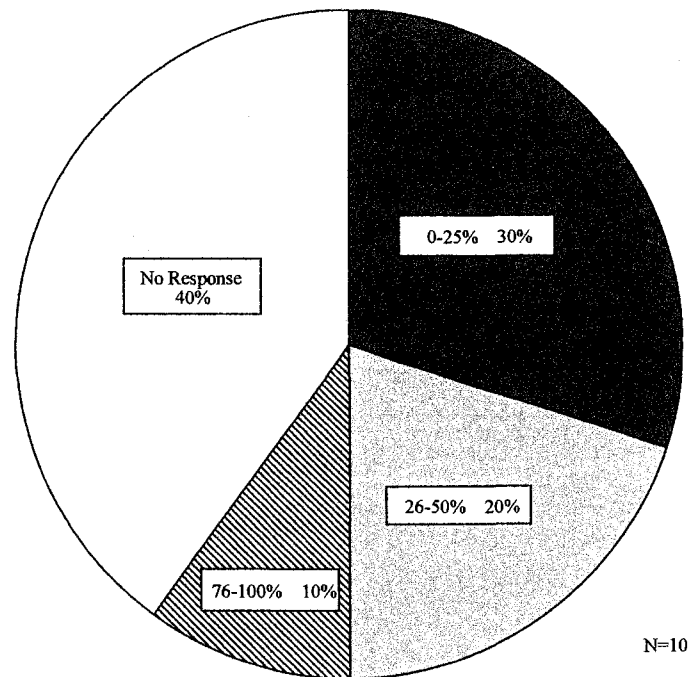


These 10 agencies/organizations provide a broad range of assistance to single mother families, with a split between tangible needs such as housing, transportation, food, clothing, and childcare; and skill development such as life skills, parenting skills, financial counseling, and emotional/social support.

Budget Allocation for Special Services/Programs

Respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of their services/programs' budget that would be used for these special services/programs. Figure 4.3 presents the percentage of the budget allocated for these special services/programs.

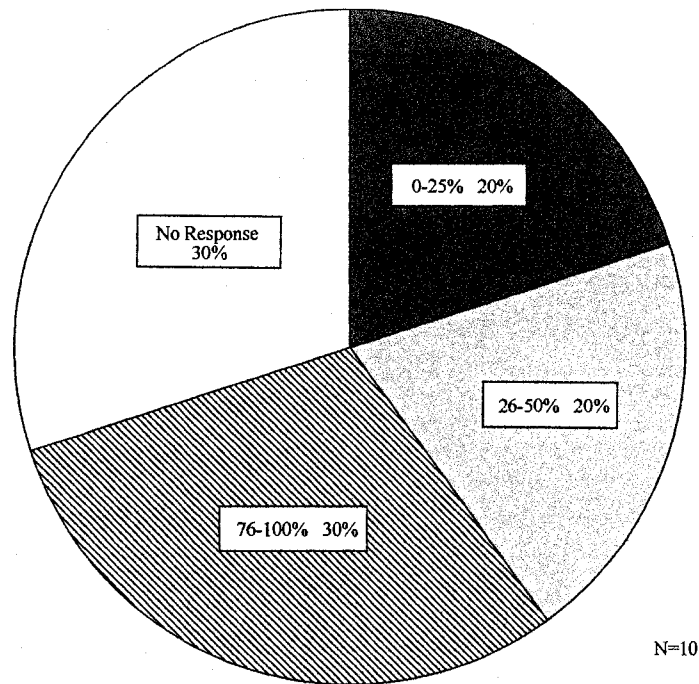
Figure 4.3: Percentage of Budget Allocated for Special Services/Programs



Half of these 10 agencies/organizations devote less than 50% of their budget for these special services/programs, while only one devoted 100% of their budget. Two-fifths of agencies/organizations did not respond to the question.

Staff Allocation for Special Services/Programs

Respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of their staff's workload (both direct and indirect services, and administrative duties) that would be used for these special services/programs. Figure 4.4 presents the percentage of their staff's workload used for special services/programs.

Figure 4.4: Staff Allocation for Special Services/Programs

Four of these ten agencies/organizations (40%) devote less than 50 percent of their staff time to these special services/programs for single mothers. Approximately one third (30%) of these ten agencies/organizations devote 75-100 percent of their staff time to these special services. Three of these ten agencies/organizations did not respond to the question.

Discussion of Special Services/Programs for Single Mother Families

Less than half (33%) of the agencies/organizations that responded to the questionnaire provide special services for single mothers, ages 18-25, with children under five in Thunder Bay. There is no way of deciphering from the available data if the number of mothers reported by the agencies/organizations is different mothers or if there is some overlap among the lists. If the single mother families are assumed to be different, then the total number reported being served by the special programs is 178. At maximum these services are used by 4 percent of the 4850 female lone parent families in Thunder

Bay (Statistics Canada, 2007). A more likely occurrence is that some of the single mother families are found on multiple agency lists, meaning the number of single mother families being served by special services/programs is less than 4 percent of the female lone parent population.

Some of these special programs aim to teach single moms about parenting, infant and child health and development, positive discipline, and setting limits for their children. Other programs work with pregnant and postpartum single moms to reduce high-risk pregnancy through assistance with housing, finances, child protection, receiving prenatal health care, gestational diabetes, and smoking. Furthermore, some of these special programs for single moms focus on information and support, substance abuse, education and employment, life skills, healthy relationships, counseling, budgeting, daycare, connections with other single parents, transportation, and linkages to other community programs. Some special programs provide breakfast or supper programs.

A number of the needs addressed by agencies/organizations providing special services to single mothers, ages 18-25, with children under five, overlap and provide duplicate services. Over 50 percent of these agencies/organizations have services/programs that address life skills, parenting skills, food, clothing, emotional/social support, and childcare. Less than half provide services/programs that address job training, career counseling, job placement, formal educational training, income assistance, recreation, and physical health care.

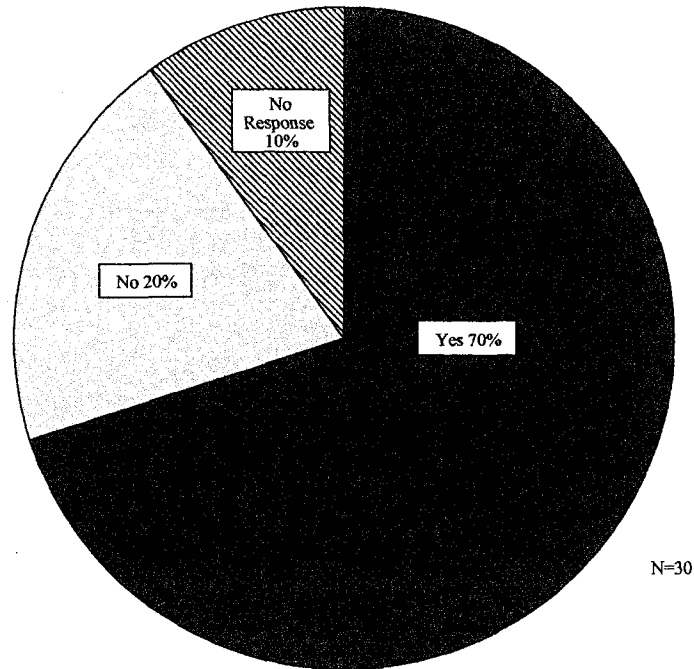
Section 2: Regular Programs

Number Providing Regular Services/Programs that may include Single Mother Families

The questionnaire asked if single mothers between the ages of 18-25 with children

under five participate in any of the regular services/programs offered by agencies/organizations. Figure 4.5 presents the number of agencies/organizations who provide these services.

Figure 4.5: Number of Agencies/Organizations Providing Assistance to Single Mothers through their Regular Services/Programs, by percent



Twenty-one or 70 percent of the agencies/organizations that responded to the questionnaire indicate that single mothers between the ages of 18-25, who have children under the age of five, may participate in their regular services/programs. Seven of these 21 agencies/organizations reported the number of single mothers and their families they assisted since January 2006 in these regular programs. The number served ranged from 1 to 50, with the mean number of mothers served being 17.

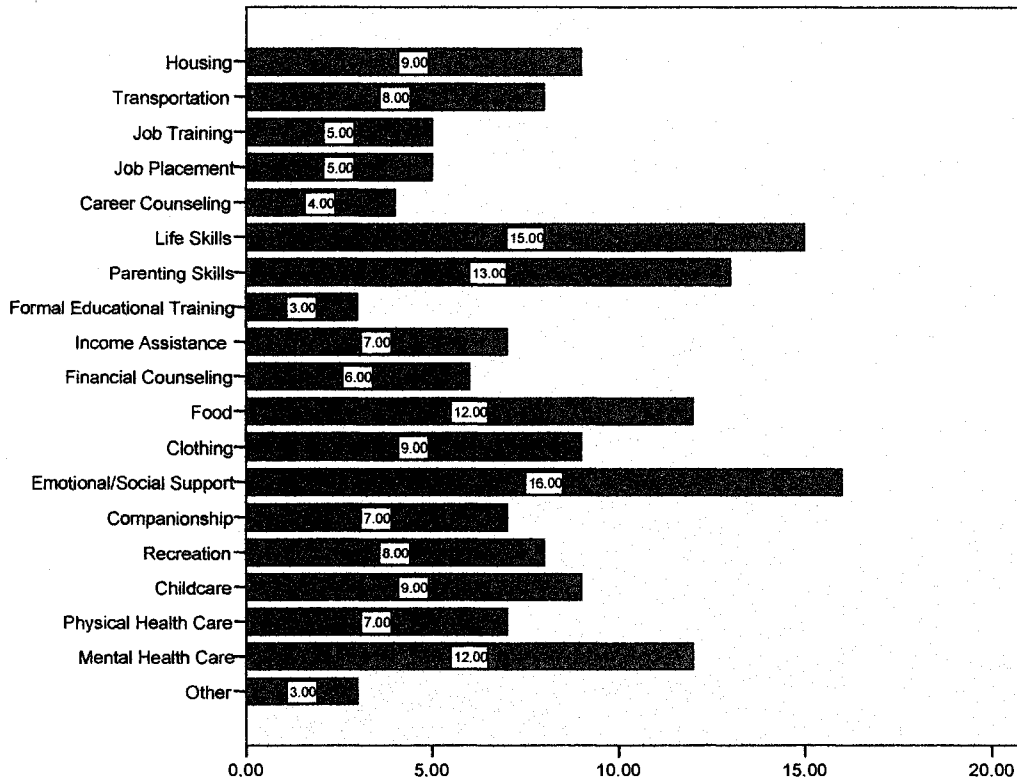
Needs Addressed through Regular Services/Programs that may include Single Mother Families

The questionnaire asked respondents to identify what needs of single mothers are

addressed through their regular services/programs that single mothers may participate in.

Figure 4.6 presents the needs addressed by regular services/programs.

Figure 4.6: Needs Addressed by the Twenty-one Agencies/Organization that may assist Single Mothers through their Regular Service/Programs



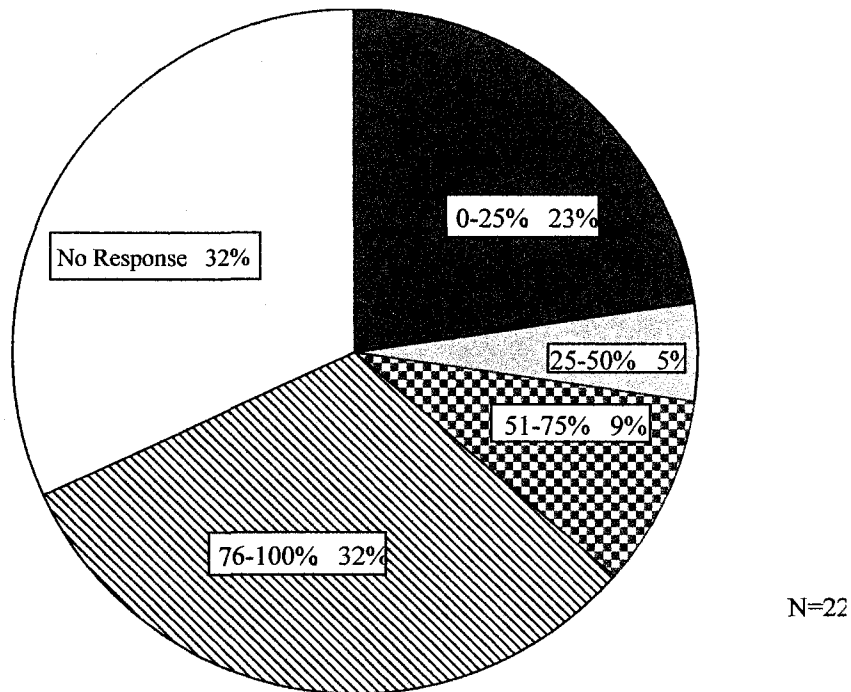
There is a heavy emphasis in the regular services/programs on providing skills-oriented programs, such as life skills and parenting skills; and on emotional/social supports and mental health care. Over half (57%) of the agencies/organizations provide food for single mother families and 42 percent provide housing, clothing and childcare. Thirty-eight percent of the agencies/organizations provide transportation and recreation through their regular services/programs.

Budget Allocation for Regular Services/Programs

Respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of their staff’s workload (both direct and indirect service, and administrative duties) that would be used for these regular

services/programs that would include this age group of single mothers. Figure 4.7 presents the percentage of their staff's workload used for these regular services/programs.

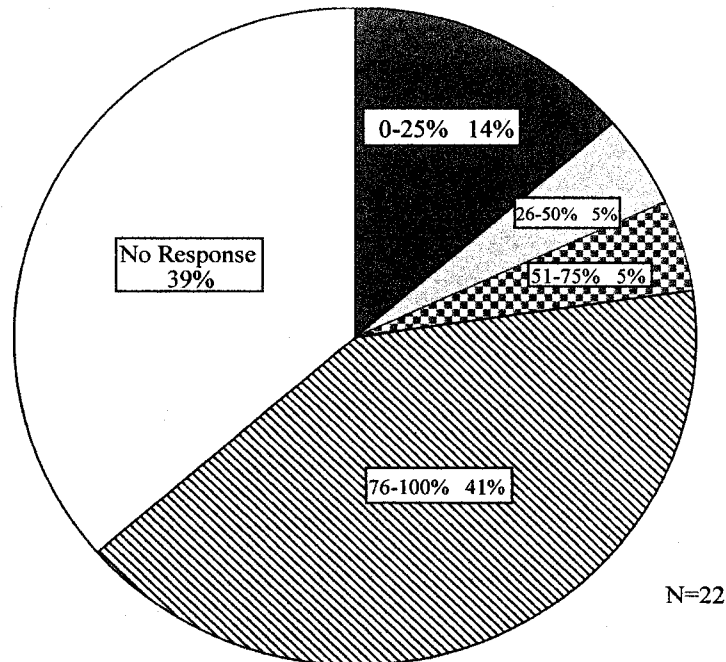
Figure 4.7: Percentage of Budget Allocated for Regular Services/Programs



Approximately one third (32 %) of the agencies/organizations spend 76-100 percent of their budgets on regular programs in which single mothers are eligible to participate. About another one third spend less than 75 percent of their budgets on these regular services/programs. One third of the agencies/organizations did not respond to the question.

Staff Allocation for Regular Services/Programs

Respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of their staff's workload (both direct and indirect service, and administrative duties) that would be used for these regular services/programs that include this age group of single mothers. Figure 4.7 presents the percentage of their staff's workload used for regular services/programs.

Figure 4.8: Staff Allocation for Regular Services/Programs

Almost half (41%) of these twenty-two agencies/organizations devote 76-100 percent of their staff time to regular services/programs in which single mothers are eligible to participate. Four of these 22 agencies/organizations devote less than 50 percent of their staff time to regular services programs in which single mothers are eligible to participate. Eight of the agencies/organizations did not respond to the question.

Discussion of Regular Services/Programs for Single Mother Families

Approximately two-thirds of the agencies/organizations offer regular services/programs that single mothers between the ages of 18-25, with children under 5, may participate in. One-third of these agencies/organizations has single mother families, ages 18-25, with children under 5 enrolled in their regular services and programs. The total number of mothers reported using these services is 119. However, a number of agencies/organizations reported that they do not keep track of single mother demographics. This number represents about 2 percent of the 4850 female lone parent

families in Thunder Bay. Again, this figure must be interpreted with caution, as the total number of moms may be less due to overlap in agency lists.

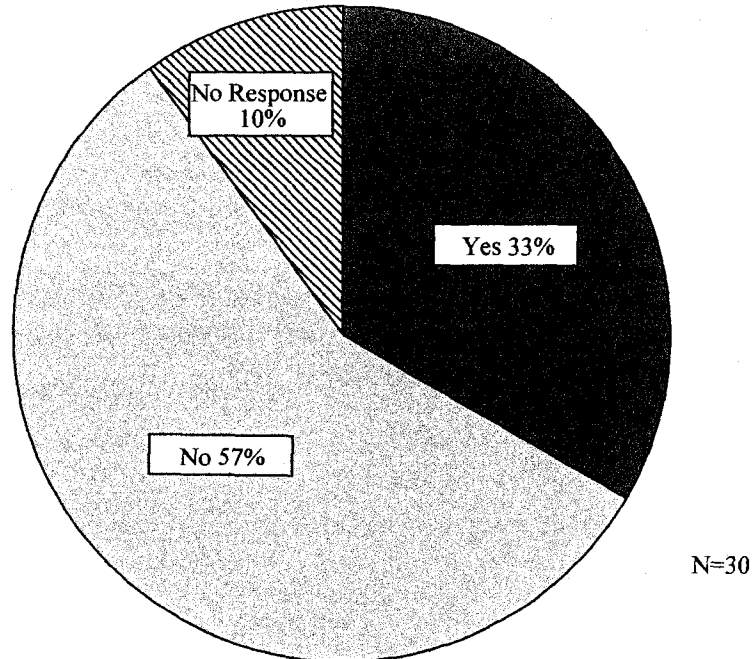
The agencies/organizations who reported single mother families, ages 18-25, with children under 5 using their services/programs offer a number of regular services/programs. Some of these programs/services accessed by single mother families include: treatment for drug and alcohol abuse; support for young adults with developmental disabilities, spiritual and relationship development; multicultural support; daycare; individual counseling; practical support, such as grocery vouchers, food cupboard, bus tickets, and nutritional supplements; medical support; and social support activities, such as theme focus groups (life skills, money management, etc), support groups, and social events.

Over half of the agencies/organizations who provide regular services/programs that single mother families may participate in provide life skills, parenting skills, food, emotional/social support, and mental health care. Forty-three percent provide housing, clothing, and childcare and 38 percent provide transportation and recreation.

Section 3: Suggested New Services/Programs by Agencies/Organizations

Number Interested in Providing New Types of Services/Programs

The questionnaire asked respondents if, given the necessary resources, their organization was interested in developing new services/programs for single mothers between the ages 18-25, who have children under the age of five. Figure 4.9 presents the number of agencies/organizations who are interested in providing new services for single mother families.

Figure 4.9: Percentage of Agencies/Organizations Interested in providing New Services/Programs

Ten or 33 percent of the thirty agencies/organizations that responded to this questionnaire indicate that they would be interested in providing new services for single mother families if the necessary resources were available.

The types of new services/programs that the agencies/organizations would like to develop, given the necessary resources, for single mothers between the ages of 18-25 who have children under the age of five, and the potential primary objectives of these services/programs, are presented in table 4.3.

Some of the agencies/organizations made additional comments on suggested new services:

“Prior to deciding on what is needed, a needs assessment should be done first, rather than rolling out a program and then see if it meets the needs.”

“Not at this time”

“[Agency] tends to work with others who develop programs specifically for target populations. We participate in a large number of coalitions.”

Table 4.3: Suggested New Services/Programs and the Potential Primary Objectives by Agencies/Organizations

Type of New Service/Program	Potential Primary Objectives
A. Parenting Group (Psycho-Education)	Address parenting within context of presenting health issues.
B. Wellness Sessions	1. Promotion of healthy living. 2. Stress Management 3. Resource Brokerage
C. Clothing	A clothing exchange at the daycare.
D. Life Skills	Teach "lost" skills such as sewing, knitting, etc.
E. Food	Community Kitchens
F. Support to Single moms of Simpson St. Area.	Care and support to moms and their children.
G. Parenting Program	
H. Breakfast Clubs	Providing nutritious breakfast to moms and kids.
J. Outreach Work	Being more usable in the community to women we serve.
K. More counselling services	To meet crisis situations.
L. Positive (Parenting) Guidance Technique	Modeling for parents.
M. Nutritional Information	Home cooking seems to be gone. "Community Kitchen" type program.
N. Support Group	1. Empower these moms by providing opportunities to share their victories and challenges with others with similar experiences. 2. Provide childcare and transportation.
O. Counselling	1. To empower these moms to look after themselves as well as their children 2. To help educate them about community supports 3. To provide health care.

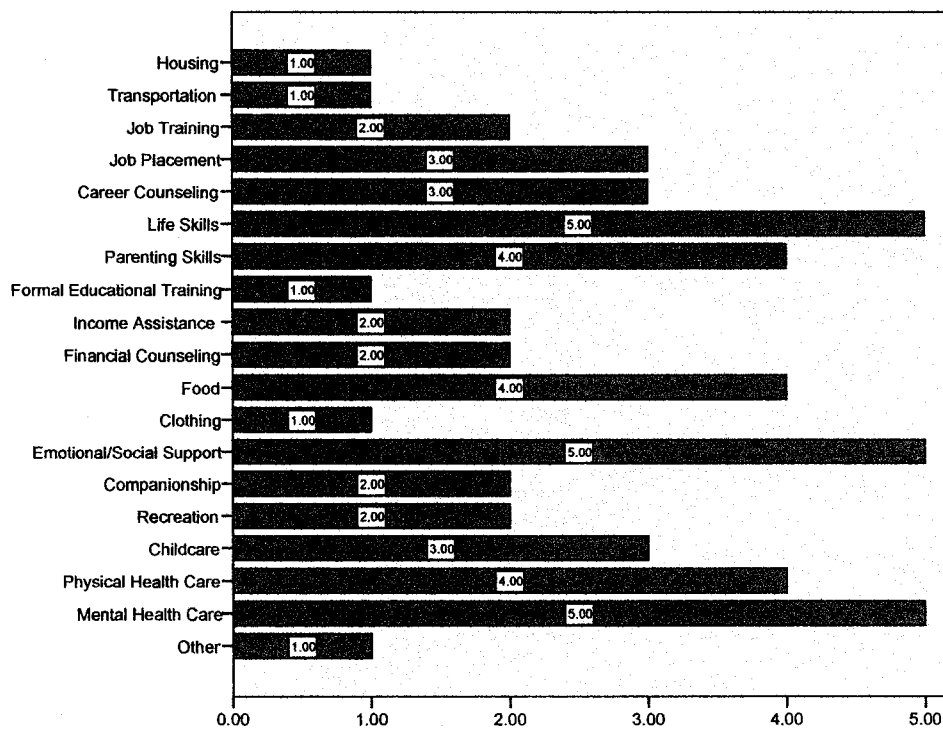
“Absolutely. Since [agency] works under a community development model, we would have to bring this question to the participants to see what they feel would benefit them. We would organize a focus group to do this with appropriate facilitation”

“I would much prefer a conversation about ideas for these moms and their children. At our centre, we tend to tailor our services (as much as we can) around the needs of our clients and therefore, it’s a bit presumptuous of me to guess their needs at this point.”

Needs of Interest to Agencies/Organizations

The respondents were asked which needs they would like to address through the new services/programs for single mothers they identified. Figure 4.10 presents the needs the agencies/organizations would like to address through new programs/services.

Figure 4.10: Needs that Agencies/Organizations would be interested in Addressing Through New Services/Programs



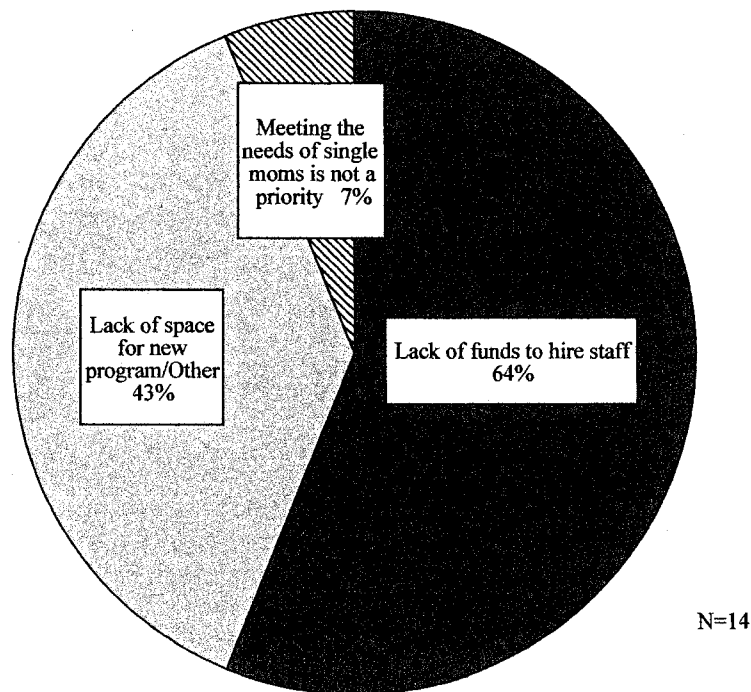
The new programs that the agencies/organizations would like to develop, given the necessary resources, would provide, most commonly, life skills, emotional/social support, mental health care, parenting skills, food, and physical health care, respectively. All of these are among the most identified needs in special and regular services/programs,

except physical health care. Other needs that would be addressed through these new services/programs include job placement, career counselling, and childcare.

Reason Why No Services/Programs

Respondents were asked about the primary reasons why their agency/organization does not develop new services/programs for single mothers between the ages of 18-25 with children under the age of 5. Figure 4.11 presents the primary reason why agencies/organizations have not developed these new programs.

Figure 4.11: The Primary Reasons Why Agencies/Organizations have Not Developed these New Services/Programs



The most common reason for not beginning new services is lack of funds to hire staff; with lack of space and “other” being the second most important reasons. Under “Other” agencies/organizations have these comments:

“Single moms are one of many priorities.”

“Our programs are not sex specific to access.”

“This type of program will require coordination of services between different service providers and our capacity to coordinate this is not there at this time. I believe this questionnaire is the ‘first step in this direction.’”

“Mandate is very specific.”

“Many of these services already exist in the community.”

“Beyond our current scope or capacity.”

Discussion of Suggested New Services/Programs for Single Mother Families

Over half (57%) of the agencies/organizations are not interested in developing new services for single mother families living in Thunder Bay, while 33 percent identified services/programs their agencies/organizations would like to develop, given the necessary resources.

Life skills, parenting skills, emotional/social support, mental health care, physical health care, and food, are the most identified needs the agencies/organizations are interested in developing through new services/programs. Physical health care is not among the most common needs identified in special and regular services/programs, but is significant in the needs these new services/programs would address. Interestingly, food and mental health care are among the most identified needs provided through special and regular services/programs, yet they are still identified as common needs that agencies/organizations are interested in developing through new services/programs. In addition, only 10 percent of special services/ programs for single mother families provide job training, job placement, and career counselling, however, about one-third of the agencies/organizations identify job placement and career counselling as a need that should be offered to single mother families through new services/programs.

The most common reason for not developing these new programs is lack of funds to hire staff, followed by lack of space for new programs.

Section 4: Community Issues Related to Single Mothers

Respondents were asked if there were additional types of services/programs for single mothers between the ages of 18-25 who have children under five that they feel should be developed in Thunder Bay that are not presently a part of their agency/organizations priorities. Table 4.4 presents these types of services/programs and their primary objectives.

Some of the agencies/organizations made additional comments on types of services that should be developed for single mothers in Thunder Bay:

“The community provides so much. The [moms] are extremely fortunate to tap into these.”

“I am not familiar enough with current services (18-25) to identify what may be needed. The population this agency services are youth up to the age of 18yrs.”

“A systemic issue really-we have plenty of services-need to be enhanced.”

“Seeking additional services/programs for your specific research cohort does not fit with our mandate. We do refer to community resources as necessary.”

Table 4.4: Types of Services that Should be Developed in Thunder Bay, but Are Not a Part of Agency/Organizations Priorities.

Type of Service/Program that Should be Developed	Primary Objectives
A. Priority Status on Waiting Lists	
B. More Financial Resources	Ontario Works funding is <u>inadequate</u> .
C. More Childcare Options	Options for single moms who work night shifts.

D. Residential/Housing Support	Support in a residential set-up for young moms with a developmental disability.
E. Legal advice and support	Support specific to needs of single moms and the related legal and child welfare issues.
F. Child Care	It is difficult to find childcare for drop-ins.
G. Enhanced services for women attempting to leave abusive relationships	Providing sufficient funds for woman and their children and enough support to make their transitions meet their needs.
H. Support to Teen Moms in making decisions about parenting- a full service agency for teen health.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To provide support immediately following the confirmation of pregnancy. 2. Options and ongoing counselling during the pregnancy with respect to parenting, adoption, or abortion. 3. Follow-up counselling and support regardless of the decision.
J. Single Mom Support Group	Sharing childrearing experiences and discuss resource access.
K. Access to Transportation	Single moms could attend/participate in community service appointments as needed.
L. Community Based Programs	Programs based in the community (esp. low income housing areas) would not require transportation.
M. Additional Funding for programs	For programs such as Our Kids Count and Pregnancy & Health Outreach Program.
N. Transitional House for women in conflict with the law.	
O. Breakfast	

Additional Comments

Respondents were asked to share any additional comments or concerns that they felt should be addressed.

“We provide mental health services to people of all ages and don’t do anything unique

for single mothers of this description. Our services are available to all those who meet criteria for service.”

“We have, over the years, tried to involve [single mothers] in various workshops but no interest shown. Workshops such as budgeting, menu planning, buying in bulk, and gardening.”

“We have several single fathers in our program. They seem to always be forgotten. Approximately 80 percent of our clients are single parents (mothers/fathers). The rest are two parent families. There are many programs for single parents, but it is hard to reach them due to the busy lives that they have.”

“The community provides so much. The [single moms] are extremely fortunate to tap into these.”

“We do not provide services directly focused for single parents. I try to meet the needs of each female on an individual basis and provide services to meet their unique needs.”

“I think that we have a number of excellent programs for single parents in our community. They [single mom programs] lack sufficient funds to offer the necessary programs.”

“Thanks for the opportunity to participate. Good luck with your research and be sure to share the findings with this office if possible.”

Chapter 5

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Single Mother Families- Interpretations and Implications

The experiences of single mother families living in Thunder Bay are shaped around maintaining daily family living. The single mothers are young and their children are young, nonetheless they demonstrate resourcefulness, dignity, caution, astuteness, maturity, adaptability, coping, and tenacity in maintaining their family, and hopefulness towards their futures. The single mothers demonstrate genuine and caring relationships with their children, often with children at the hub of their daily routines. Additionally, the mothers often rely on support from family and friends to maintain and provide for their families.

Resourceful

Single mothers must rely on their own resources to cope with their limited budgets. In other words, single mothers are not receiving enough money to get by without being resourceful through custom making items, maximizing every dollar they receive, substituting, and stretching what they can. Edin and Lein (1997) also identified that neither single mother's wages from work or social assistance benefits provide sufficient resources for their families and recognized that they must draw on various sources for support. Therefore, life for single mothers is 'surviving' until they get their next pay cheque or their next social assistance payment. The single mothers in this study have accepted that they must live on a limited income, and rather than dwelling on the challenges it creates, they seek other ways to meet the needs of their families. Single mothers often put their children's needs above their own. For example, the single mothers

in this study demonstrated the following behaviours that put the children first: moms do not eat so their kids can, and moms buy second hand clothes so their kids can have new clothes thus risking teasing or bullying behaviours by others at school or other public places. Over time, single mothers demonstrated that they have become 'experts' in stretching and maximizing their limited finances. They buy old bread, second-hand clothing, sale items, and food in bulk whenever possible. It is common for single mothers to do without in one area of their lives to make ends meet in another. For example, a mom ate cereal for a month so she had money for her kids and will pawn her personal items, like her television and cd's, so she has money for groceries.

Despite single mothers resourcefulness there is not always 'enough' to stretch and they must find ways to make money under the table. Some of the single mothers clean other peoples houses or do yard work to make extra money. Extra money to buy food in bulk is not always an option and some single mothers are not able to stretch their finances by buying large quantities of old bread and food in bulk because they cannot afford a deep freezer for storage of bulk purchases. 'Working under the table' is the best option for most single mother families. At least half of the single mothers in this study have worked under the table at some point to make ends meet. However, there comes a point for some single mothers where they have to report their employment, and working no longer becomes 'worth it'. For example, if their employer starts to claim the single mothers work, she has no choice but to report her employment to Ontario Works and therefore be susceptible to earning exemptions. If single mothers claim their employment, every dollar earned for the first three months is deducted off their welfare check. Following the first three months, the single mothers can earn a certain amount of

money, called a basic exemption. Once earnings exceed the single mother's basic exemption amount, which is based on her family size, seventy-five percent of earnings are deducted for the first year of employment, eighty-five percent in the second year, and one hundred percent in the third and following years (Government of Canada, 2006a). It follows that single mother families are right back where they started.

In addition, single mothers in this study extend their resourcefulness by reaching out to friends. Friendships provide support that is sympathetic, understanding, and can be obtained with minimal risk to losing self-worth. Equally, there are many opportunities for returning the favour. Similarly, Quinn and Allen (1989) reported that single mothers found friends to be a vital part of their resource network. Their study revealed that in some cases they exchanged babysitting with friends to free up time for social activities or just for rest. Adding to this research, the single mothers in this study shared that they also exchanged babysitting and children's clothes, alternated taking each other's children to school, and assisted each other with household responsibilities. Social capital theory explains this as 'generalized reciprocity,' which refers to a continuing relationship of exchange, that is, at any given time, unrequited or imbalanced, but that involves mutual expectations that a benefit granted should be paid in the future (Putnam, 1993). Stack (1974) agrees that survival strategies of poor, single mothers are based on this relationship. Additionally, mothers in this study revealed that friendships could create additional stress when generalized reciprocity does not occur. Some single mothers shared that friends have taken advantage of them. For example, one single mother revealed that there are some friends who only talk to her when they want something like money or a babysitter; another shared that she would baby-sit for friends and they would

never come home when they said they would; and one more described how whenever she asked her friend for a favour she was reluctant, yet mom always said “sure, no problem” and helped her friend out whenever she could. Trust, an emergent property of social capital, is not evident in these latter types of relationships that do not provide reciprocal benefits. Initially the friends gain access to their networks automatically, by nature of being a fellow single mother, however, in not following the implicit rules, specifically making equivalent returns, they are thrust out of the network. Nelson (2000) saw similar patterns in her study of single mother families.

Although single mothers are resourceful in taking initiative to use formal services, at times they find it difficult to receive appropriate help. The bureaucracy of the formal helping system often tests the mother’s determination. To receive additional assistance they must be knowledgeable of the steps needed and persistent in their goals. Matthews (2004), in a review of “Employment Assistance Programs in Ontario Works & Disability Support Programs” also revealed recipient difficulties with the rules and administration of formal systems, such as Ontario Works. Rather than a system that requires single mothers to actively pursue resources, why not create a system that says, “ Here is what is available to you. What do you need?” Single mothers feel stuck in this cycle of poverty, as attempts they make to better their situation, like moving out of low-income housing or working, are often challenged by a whole new set of barriers. For example, one mom in trying to move out of low-income housing received no financial help with moving costs because help is only provided when moving into low-income housing, not out. Trying to move out jeopardizes their status quo for receiving formal resources. As a result, it perpetuates mother’s reliance on the system, and reinforces their feelings of inadequacy

in providing for their families. For instance, many single mothers in this study revealed a strained relationship with Thunder Bay Housing. They were often frustrated with the rules that impeded their ability to be resourceful. The single mothers did not feel they received respect from Housing, which fits within literature that recognizes that local housing authorities label single mothers as 'problem tenants' or 'difficult tenants' (Hardy & Crow, 1991). The single mothers in this study identified many things that could be done to make low-income housing more supportive of families. They had simple requests, such as gardens and fences, but saw sizeable benefits of these changes. Gardens would allow mothers to grow vegetables to supplement their food costs and fences would allow children to play safely in their yards.

Dignity

Societal constructions of the 'good mother' often challenge single mothers feelings of dignity. Single mothers are rarely seen as 'good' mothers because of perceived rejection of fathers, (McLanahan & Booth, 1989), perceived negative impacts on children (McLanahan & Booth, 1989; Amato, 1995), frequent dependency on social assistance (McDermott & Graham, 2005), and judgement as an economic drain on society (Dafoe-Whitehead, 2007). The single mothers in this study are proud of their accomplishments. All accomplishments, mothers and children alike, are celebrated to counterbalance the experiences that challenge their feelings of self-worth. Emphasizing accomplishments encourages single mothers' hopes and goals.

The single mothers are very conscious of the public stigma of being a single mother and the primarily negative approach to single mother families, often neglecting their strengths (Hanson, 1986; Ford-Gilboe, 2000). Davies, McMullin, and Avison (2001)

found that with Ontario Works not formally recognizing the work and effort of childrearing, single mothers must struggle to prove their worthiness as good mothers. The single mothers in this study revealed similar findings. The mothers in this study feel that society, including formal services, judge them first, and get to know them later. Single moms feel they constantly have to prove themselves as good mothers, with no room for mistakes or learning experiences. For example, they are likely to be suspected of child abuse first with questions asked later; and moreover, are often assumed to be scamming the system. The single mothers feel punished by other people's shortcomings or mistakes. Although single mothers may have some similar experiences, they are unique and different and one cannot assume that they are all the same. Some single mothers parent well, while others do not, just as some two-parent families are 'good' parents and 'bad' parents. Life for single mothers is constantly trying to live up to the standards of a "good" mother.

The single mothers who received assistance from Ontario Works are especially sensitive to situations that jeopardize their sense of self-worth. Matthews (2004), Evans (1997), and Haggart (1997) found that people on social assistance are often not considered people in need of assistance, but rather as burdens on society who need to be penalized for their misfortunes. The single mothers in this study feel a huge disconnect between the welfare system and understanding what life is actually like for single mothers families. They are treated like just another women living off the system and needing her next check. The seriousness of the mother's situation seems to get lost in the bureaucracy. Withholding a check if something is missing or filled out wrong is apart of the system, yet for these moms it means their children do not eat. Somewhere along the

lines they stopped being treated like human beings. Furthermore, single mothers appear from this study to always be at fault for their checks being put on hold. It means from the perception of Ontario Works, the single mothers did something wrong. For example, the mothers may be told that they did not hand in their income statement, but of course they did, because their survival depends on it. This mentality reinforces single mothers' insecurities or humiliation with relying on assistance to take care of their families. As a result, single mothers are especially sensitive to situations where they cannot meet their children's basic needs or provide them with things that other children have. The single mothers often feel they are letting their children down. At times when the single mothers are the most vulnerable, as new young single mothers, the system can further limit their feelings of self worth, rather than encourage and support them towards independence. Alongside this internalization of fault, the single mothers feel that too high of expectations are put on them. When the moms cannot meet these expectations it affects their feelings of self worth, as well as how they are viewed by the 'system.' Against popular opinion, mothers expressed in this research that they would rather not be on welfare and that they do want to take care of their families themselves. It remains a common goal among many.

Caution

The single mothers' in this study are aware of their limited ability to alter their environment, specifically their housing options, that threaten the security and safety of their family. Brotchie (2006) identifies that adequate housing is not available to all families in Thunder Bay. Furthermore, single mother families are more likely to be renters (Hardey & Crow, 1991), to live in older apartments, and to have inferior housing

facilities than their married counterparts (Hudson & Galaway, 1993). Confirming this finding, all single mother families in this study rent their houses or apartments, three of the eight families live in low-income rental units, two families share a house because they could not afford to live on their own, and one family rents from relatives. Seventy-five percent, or six, of the families are unhappy with their housing arrangements, but are unable to make changes. The mothers in this study identified that housing options available for single mother families on limited incomes are often unsafe and unhealthy for their children. The single mothers who live in low-income housing feel that safety is not a priority to Thunder Bay Housing. Requests for fences, hazardous clean up, health checks, and security often go unheard.

Consequently, the single mothers understand the cautionary fragile balance in maintaining the resources they do have and are sensitive to the protocol that sustains their existence. The single mothers must always be concerned with following the rules or risk being unable to provide for their families. They must attend all appointments, hand in their income statements, and be 'perfect' mothers. Otherwise, they receive no money and have their children removed from their care. This is a constant worry, and there is no room for error. Sometimes the single mothers are so afraid of doing something wrong that they are dishonest about parenting. Some of the mothers are intimidated by the Children's Aid Society and other formal helping systems and feel they must lie to maintain their families, while others recognize that they are good mothers and are honest about their lives.

Safety of children is a concern for all parents, but for single mothers their limited finances create additional safety concerns and limit their access to safe environments.

They exercise caution in relation to responsible and reliable babysitters or child care, a safe place for children to play, and physical safety. Safe and reliable child care often takes priority over ease for mothers, with some mothers travelling across town for access to what they perceive to be a safer school and child care options. However, sometimes babysitters are not always those whom mothers trust the most, but rather who they trust the most out of who they can afford. This finding contrasts with that of Quinn and Allen (1989) and Hudson and Galaway (1993) who found through their research that single mothers had concerns about finding affordable and quality child care, but did not report specifically on caution in choosing safe environments for children. The single mothers in this study also shared their concerns about sexual predators in their neighbourhoods. Sometimes concerns for children's safety consume mothers thoughts and time. Fenced in backyards would relieve for most of the mothers some of this stress and concern.

Personal issues, family backgrounds, and abusive relationships create especially cautious situations for the single mothers in this study. Most of this caution is directed towards their children's safety. Safety concerns sometimes involve mother's families or their children's biological fathers. In some cases, the moms are concerned that if the biological fathers took the children, they would have a difficult time getting their children back. These personal issues and challenges sometimes make parenting challenging for single mothers because they are consumed with stressful thoughts about these concerns.

Concerns about the health of their children and proper development growth are also significant in the lives of these single mothers. A number of wide ranging effects of poverty on the well-being of single mother families have been identified in the literature, including being at a high-risk for health problems (Avison, 1997; Huff & Thorpe, 1997).

Furthermore, food security and nutrition in the households of low-income single parent families has also been recognized as a challenge to the well being of the family (Tarasuck & Maclean, 1999; McIntyre, Glanville, Officer, Anderson, Raine, & Dayle, 2002).

Providing food that supports a healthy diet and proper growth of their children was a large concern for the single mothers in this study. They do their best to provide their children with healthy foods like soy products, fruits and vegetables, but they are expensive. The single mothers are especially concerned with learning disabilities, mental health issues, and social development of their children. The limited resources that single mothers have available to them make dealing with these challenges especially difficult. They do not want their kids to be at a larger disadvantage.

The single mothers in this study are aware of the challenges of daily living and therefore remain cautious of the environment and situations that create additional challenges and stress.

Astuteness

The single mothers recognize that it is their status of “single mother” that affects their ability to influence their environment, create change, and receive appropriate help. The single mothers feel undervalued by the community and the formal helping systems. They feel that the formal helping systems do not care about them. If they did, they would make things easier on them, not harder. Single mothers are expected to simply ‘exist’, without truly making a mark. They are not able to make their house a “home,” or receive assistance that improves their family’s environment. It resembles punishment. It seems that single motherhood is made the most challenging as possible to try and discourage young unmarried women from having children. However, does this create the best

environment for the children of single mother families? Instead, couldn't the system help single mothers to feel valued and motivated towards change, helping them move towards more independence?

Single mothers are aware of how the rules and regulations of the formal helping system work. The quality of life for the single mother families in this study requires knowing the system and using it to the best of their ability. The single mothers are rarely informed of these rules and regulations by the formal helping system, but discover them through their past experiences, or other single mothers' experiences.

Many of the single mothers in this study do not feel they get support or rewards for being "good moms." They only get help when they make mistakes. To the mothers, this means 'screw up' and you can get all the help you need. For some single mothers this means not to bother trying, and for others it is motivation to be the best mom they can be. They see no prevention in the services for single mother families.

Single mothers in this study feel the punitive and policing nature of Ontario Works and from the workers who carry out the policies. The single mothers feel that they have no privacy when they are receiving Ontario Works. This lack of privacy could explain why single mothers sometimes lie to their workers. It may not be because they think they are doing something wrong, but simply because they think it is none of their business. Regardless, it does not create an open and honest helping relationship. The single mothers reported receiving mixed messages from their Ontario Works workers, to the point where they are unsure of what is expected of them or they break the "rules" without realizing it. Very quickly, making a mistake or not understanding the system can become fraud. They often feel they are punished for not knowing the rules, yet no one has

actually taught them how the system works. One of the objectives of the Ontario Works Act, "...is to ensure that [the system is] being fair, not only to the people who need assistance, but also to the people who are working very hard to pay the taxes to support that program" (Haggart, 1997, p.1). Bearing this in mind, however, in some instances single mothers feel they are not being treated equally. Some moms must pay back the welfare they receive, while for others there is no intent to pay back. One mom, who worked late into her pregnancy and received maternity pay and Ontario Works, was barely getting by on what she was receiving, and must pay back what she has received when she gets back to work. Her roommate, another single mother, on the other hand has been told she is not required to pay back anything. This situation has left one mother feeling mistreated and discouraged.

Life for single mother families is never having enough money. The single mothers in this study are keenly aware of the discrepancy between what money is available to them and the actual cost of maintaining certain necessities. They identified that Ontario Works does not give them enough money. The single mothers cannot make ends meet on what they receive. Usually it is just enough money to get by, but sometimes, it falls short and families go hungry. Purdon (2003) also found, in speaking with single mothers about their experiences with Ontario Works, that it does not provide enough money to meet the basic needs of women and their children. These women had to rely on family support and food banks to feed themselves and their children and make ends meet. The single mothers in this study do not believe that Ontario Work has a true understanding of how much money it takes to support their families. There is a disconnection between policy and reality. Ontario Works is seen as a transitional program that is supposed to lead back to

independence (Haggart, 1997). However, living month to month leaves no opportunity for single mothers to generate savings. The single moms identified that for half of each month, from the 5th to the 20th, they are broke. Single mothers in Little (1994) also identified difficulty in getting off Ontario Works because of the inability to save enough money to move ahead. Their experiences reveal that it is not simply a matter of budgeting their money incorrectly, but a matter of not enough money.

The single mother families see transportation as one of their largest vulnerabilities because it affects all facets of their lives. It impacts their ability to acquire food and necessities, get to appointments, do activities with children, utilize child care, go to school, or participate in employment. Single mother families' challenges with transportation seem to be overlooked in the current literature that examines their experiences.

The single mothers in this study understand the need for parental relief time and know that engaging in recreational activities apart from their children is healthy. Yet, they experience many barriers to engaging in such relief. The single mothers in Cook (2000) described that having to attend to their child's needs gave them little time to do anything of interest for themselves. Similarly, the single mothers in this study often must negotiate for relief time, with money, environmental conditions, time, and parenting responsibilities often preventing participation. For the mothers in this study, parental relief time is an exception to normalcy in their household. As a result, they often prepare themselves for disappointment and isolation. Thompson (1986) supports these findings with his research, which found that due to financial insecurity, many single mothers have minimal opportunity for socialization, and therefore spend most of their time with their

children. Those single mothers in this study with supportive families tended to get more parental relief time than those who do not.

Rules and regulations often impede single mothers own attempts to better their financial situation. Single mothers must attend school or find employment on a full-time basis when their youngest child has reached six years of age and is attending school (Mayson, 1998)). However, the mothers in this study revealed that education and employment does not move their families into a better situation. The mothers feel discouraged from going back to school, especially with the challenges the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) creates. As identified in the literature, sole support parents who want to attend full-time post secondary education must access student loans from OSAP to cover direct costs and personal living costs for themselves and their families (Government of Ontario, 2006b). The mothers in this study expressed reservations about applying for student loans from OSAP, as did the single mothers in McMullin, Davies, and Cassidy (2002). The single mothers must repay this loan once they have completed their education, they fear creating a more challenging situation in the future. One mother shared further frustrations and discouragement because of forced repayment of her Ontario Works after receiving OSAP. They single mothers feel that although they are encouraged towards post-secondary education, they are not appropriately supported by the system. Despite the attention that has been put on the employability of single mothers through the Ontario Works Act, the single mothers in this study feel there is no incentive to work. The deductions from their paychecks by Ontario Works mean working is not worth it. It takes time away from their kids, and provides less money than assistance, which already is a struggle to support a family on.

Similar research has recognized this disadvantage; with other single mothers reporting being less well off employed, than when they received assistance (Avison, 1997; Powell, 1998; Stier & Tienda, 2000). As revealed by Little (1994), and supported through this research, employment moves single mothers from the “unemployed poor” to the “working poor.” With these rules and regulations single mothers money is never *their* money. They can be forced to pay back money they have received from assistance. As a result, single mothers experience constant uncertainty in their financial situation and ability to improve it.

The experiences of the single mothers in this study reveals that their experiences with the ‘system’ and the support they receive are dependent on the worker they are assigned. Some mothers found their workers supportive and helpful, while others struggled to see eye to eye and find support. It seems the bureaucracy of the system disallows single mothers to be seen as people and they are treated like another single mother looking for her Ontario Works check. The interface between the workers and single mothers can turn into a negative experience for both. While the worker is attempting to do his or her job within the rules of their services, to the single mothers it comes off as disrespectful and robotic. As a result, many single mothers feel disconnected with their workers, dismantling the helping relationship.

Maturity

For many of the single mothers in this study parenthood has moved them from dependent adolescents, to adults with child caring responsibilities. They often show maturity beyond their age. The single mothers seek independence with their new family unit. Although they appreciate help from family and friends, they want to be adults who

provide for and care for their children. The single mothers grow up quickly and their lives become about compromise and change. The things that use to seem important to them have no place in their lives now. Their children and the basic needs of their family become priority. For some mothers there is a constant battle between thinking you can do it, and not knowing whether or not you can take care of your children. Recognizing this battle demonstrates maturity. The mothers also show maturity in making the right choices.

Despite difficult situations and father's decisions not to be involved in their children's lives, the mothers understand the importance of growing up with a male role model and therefore leave the door open for involvement. In most cases the single mothers would prefer their children's fathers to be involved with their children.

At a time in their lives when peer pressure is strong and opportunities are wide, single mothers must be realistic about what they can handle. There are many things that these single mothers want, or want to do, but they think carefully about situations so not to get themselves in over their heads. They evaluate consequences and take precautions based on what they know they can handle. Additionally, the single mothers show maturity in recognizing and considering how their actions will affect their children. They experience guilt when their actions hurt their children unintentionally.

The single mother are not only aware of the best environments for children, but they do the best they can to maintain them. However, sometimes life for single mothers is being aware of what is best for your children, but not always being able to provide it.

Given single mothers maturity in recognizing what they can handle, how their actions affect their children, and the best environments for children, they constantly must

re-evaluate what is available to them and view existing resources from new perspectives. Since new resources are not regularly developed, single mothers must call on their maturity and creativity to find new ways to use existing resources. Consistent with social capital theory, the single mothers recognize all forms of capital, and bond with existing services and resources to gather as much capital as possible (economic and social), as all capital turns into potential resources the single mothers can rely on (Bourdieu, 1983).

Adaptability

To make the best of their existing situation the single mothers must be adaptive and flexible. Limited resources, especially financial, create situations requiring the most adaptability and flexibility for the single mother families. They walk because they cannot afford the bus, they have friends come over because they cannot afford a babysitter, and they save up empties bottles to get extra money. The single mothers do not dwell on what they do not have, but make the best of what they do have. Single mothers who do not have additional support from family or friends must be extra adaptive to their situations. Sometimes they find themselves doing things they never thought they could do, like moving exercise equipment or going to university.

In order to provide for their families, single mothers must postpone desired goals, usually putting their children's needs before their own. Furthermore, when certain options are not available, the single mothers substitute. Most often these substitutions are inferior to the desired goal. Examples are washing the walls instead of painting or buying used clothing rather than new. Single mother families almost always find a way to make it work, even if it is more difficult.

Coping

The single mother families demonstrate much strength in coping with daily survival, as most of their energy becomes focused on coping with limited financial resources. They show strength and determination in their ability to cope with these challenges. They always seem to manage. However, they recognize that sometimes the ways they must cope with these limited resources are not the best for them or their families. Often single mothers' thoughts are consumed with how to cope with these limited financial resources, creating challenges in all other areas of their lives. If single mothers had more money they would be able to focus more attention on other areas of their lives.

Low-income families often have been recognized as having limited choices in many aspects of their lives; including schooling, clothing, food, transportation, recreation, and social events (Callaham & Lamb, 1995). Similarly, the single mothers in this study identify that available finances largely dictate their options. The mothers described the challenges they face in providing for their families, as finances limit their material assets, sustenance options, housing space, and how they travel. The single mothers experiences demonstrate that life for single mother families is: always getting by with less, not being able to live where you want, not being able to get around easily or to the places you need to go, not always being able to feed your kids or yourself, and always telling your kids "sorry I can't afford it." Half of the single mothers in this study wanted to get their drivers license to increase their options, but could not afford it. Sometimes they have had the opportunity to borrow a car, but without the available money to get their license, it was useless. In times of emergencies, additional options are not always

available. The single mothers do not have extra money to put away for those times when they are out of options; those times that they have no milk for their children, and their check doesn't come in for another week. The single mother families see additional finances as creating more options.

Limited resources also limit parent relief time. Most single mothers do not have the money for a babysitter, or to go out with friends. Often they do not see the justification in spending money for their children on parent relief time. When they do go out, some single mothers use the money they would normally spend on food for themselves. Parent relief time usually costs money, even if it is twenty dollars for a babysitter. Even when the single mothers have time apart from their kids they are often making dinner, cleaning the house, or conducting other parenting duties. These single mothers' experiences support past research that has recognized that some households can cope with housekeeping demands by reducing them, hiring help, or relocating tasks, but in the single parent family the possibilities for relocation of time are reduced (Masnick & Bane (1980).

Illness creates additional challenges for single mother families. When the single mother or her child is sick all other responsibilities are more difficult to manage. Illness adds one more challenge to a mountain of concerns. The single mothers found their own illness especially challenging, as they have no time to be sick. Few of the single mother families are able to draw on family support for help during these times. The single moms are often hesitant to take medications because it affects their ability to take care of their children. The mothers relate tremendous guilt in being sick because care of their children suffers. Illness that requires medical attention is especially challenging for single

mothers, as going to the doctors or hospital with children is difficult. It is the last resort for most single mothers. Ford-Gilboe (2000) shared related results, indicating that single mothers show more self-reliance in solving health problems.

Children present special coping situations for single mothers. Sometimes children challenge single mothers' patience and they find it difficult to manage all elements of parenting alone. Life for single mothers can be frustrating, as they do not have another parent to rely on when feeling stressed. They are in charge, all the time. Children are unpredictable, and the single mothers must always be ready for a change of plans. Just when the mothers feel like they have everything figured out and feel confident about their plans for the next week, children do something, like ripping up a bus pass, which requires them to find new ways of coping. Furthermore, children's individuality, behaviour problems, and likes and dislikes make it especially difficult to cope with limited resources. As mentioned earlier, with limited financial resources additional options are not readily available.

The single mothers in this study felt a tremendous loss when the Salvation Army Single Parents Program closed. The program provided moms with emotional as well as tangible support. Often, they provided someone to talk to when the mothers were having a bad day. It is not only the support that the program provided, but also the connections with the staff and other participants that the single mothers miss. Some of the mothers in the study have not attended any programs since the closure of the Single Parents Program in 2006.

Biological fathers create difficult coping situations for single mother families, both when they are involved in their children's lives and when they are not. Mothers

work hard to protect their children, but they are unable to control their father's impact on their lives. Fathers not seeing their children or denying fatherhood are one of the most shared challenges of the single mother families in this study. As a result of these difficult situations, the single mothers often struggle with wanting their child's father in their lives, and yet, finding parenting easier on their own.

The single mothers show strength and resilience in dealing with the many challenges they face. Few studies have examined coping experiences in the lives of single mother families.

Tenacity

Single mothers demonstrate tenacity in their stubbornness towards things needed to survive. As indicated throughout this discussion, 'survival' for the single mothers depends highly on their financial resources, most often the assistance they receive from Ontario Works. Knowing this, the single mothers are persistent in seeking what they need for their families. When a single mother's Ontario Works check is put on hold, or they do not receive the amount of money they are supposed to, they actively seek resolution of the situation, even if it requires all their time and energy. The single mothers recognize that they are experts in their lives and will not hesitate to speak of exactly what it is they need. They have learned that in order to receive assistance, they must be persistent in asking for help. Even moms, who in the past have been reserved and introverted, quickly learn what it takes to take care of your family as a single parent. If it takes being on the phone all day to make an appointment or get answers, they will do it. If it means packing all your kids up and going to the office, they will do it. If it means going above someone who is supposed to be in charge, they will do it. They have to, to survive. When faced

with emergencies, single mothers evaluate every possible option and find a way to make it work, even if it means they have to give something up in the process.

Despite challenges, single mothers strive diligently towards their goals, most of which involve creating independence for their families through education, receiving her license, or using formal services. It may take them longer to achieve goals because of all the obstacles in the way, but their tenacity helps them through it.

Bus transportation is a common challenge for all single mothers who participated in this study. The cost of the bus, the lack of space for strollers, and the amount of time it takes, often hinder mothers' ability to work or go to school, get to appointments, shop for necessities, or complete errands. The single mothers find other options for transportation, like walking or asking for a ride, whenever possible. However, these challenges can sometimes discourage mothers from leaving their houses.

Hopefulness

The single mothers have goals for their families. They do not see life on welfare as a good life for their children, and therefore seek independence. Despite challenges, and thinking that raising children on their own is too much to bear, the single mothers are young and hopeful that they can achieve their goals and independence in the future. For some single mothers they feel independence will come when they get their education. Although hopeful, the single mothers are realistic about the hurdles that will stand in the way of their dreams. For some single mothers, thinking about their future dreams is what gets them through the difficult times they are having now. Many of the hurdles that the single mother's identify are already initiatives of government programs, such as daycare, financial resources, upgrading, education, and employment.

Interestingly, photography is a hobby of many of the single mother families in this study, most likely because it is flexible to the experiences of single mothers. The single mothers are able to participate in their hobby and parenting simultaneously by involving their children.

Bonding

Research has indicated that the most important relationship for single mothers is with her child(ren) (Mitchell & Green, 2002; McDermott & Graham, 2005). The single mother families in this study have very tight family units, with exceptionally close relationships with their children. Similar to the findings of McLanahan and Sandefur (1994), the mothers in this study demonstrated that the bonding is immensely developed as they often provide enough love and affection to fulfill two parent roles. Also, similar to this literature, the single mothers found it challenging to balance bonding with discipline. The single mothers share contrary opinions to Sigel-Ruston and McLanahan (2002), who support the socialization deficit perspective, which maintains that the relationship with fathers and mothers play different, but important roles, a loss that cannot be compensated by greater (or better quality) time from the custodial parents. One single mother in this study, although she wishes her children's fathers were involved in their lives, believes that she and the other people that love her children provide them with what they are missing in the father-child relationship. According to Coleman (1988) children's human capital, their individual ability, can also be found in the community consisting of social relations. Therefore, this outside social capital, the other people in the single mother's life who love her children, can provide the missing capital that a father would provide.

Children also provide single mothers with love and affection that is very important to them and has reoriented their lives. McDermott and Graham (2005) found that the mother-child dyad provided a source of intimacy, fulfillment, self-identity, and self-worth for single mothers. Similarly, the mothers in this study find joy and comfort in their relationships with their children. Although the single mothers sometimes wish they did not have their children so young, they recognize the drastic impact their children have had on their lives, often orienting them towards a better path.

In contrast, there are times when the responsibility of raising children is too much to bear for single mothers. During these times single mothers battle with feelings of guilt and regret. On the one hand they love their children and cannot imagine living without them, but on the other hand they fantasize about what their life could be like without children. Often they just need some time to collect themselves when they are stressed, angry or upset. However, usually they do not have this opportunity because their children take all of their time and attention. As a result their stress, anger, or sadness becomes monstrous to the point that they feel unable to take care of their children. Life for single mother families sometimes just gets to be too much.

Single mothers must make tough choices in order to keep their children because of lack of alternative supports other than formal services like the Children's Aid Society. The mothers in this study often feel like their only option for support is putting their children into care. They only see one extreme or the other. Either they keep their children and struggle, or they give them up. They feel there is no middle ground of support. The single mothers find that the support provided by the Children's Aid Society is helpful, but they wish you could access it without a child welfare case. Commonly, the single mothers

do not want to give up their children, but they just need a break. They wish there were more respite and child care options to avoid situations causing these tough choices. Most of all single mother's just want help. Single mothers experiences with these challenges is missing in the literature on single mother families.

Family

The single mother families speak frequently of the importance of supportive family relationships in handling life tasks. Other research has also identified the importance of family as providing an important source of informal support, practically, emotionally, and financially (Monroe & Tiller, 2001; Mitchell & Green, 2002). In this study, only three of the eight single mothers received frequent support from their families. Another four received occasional help from their families, and one had no contact with her family, and therefore no support. Family support provides a safety net for some of the mothers, while others know they are on their own if are in trouble. All of the mothers, even those without family support are aware of how important it can be. Those who do not have it wish they did and feel their lives would be easier.

Monroe and Tiller's (2001) study found the support offered most often was housing; however none of the single mothers in this study live with their parents, but for some the option is available if needed. The mothers in this study identified child care as one of the supports offered most often by family. It is also seemed to be one of the most important supports, as getting a break seemed to make coping with life challenges easier for the mothers. Family provided single mothers with other supports, such as transportation, discipline, furniture, laundry, food and extra cash. The support that single mother's family provided helped single mothers to stretch their Ontario Works check.

Food, free furniture, low cost housing, transportation, and extra-cash specifically, have helped financial situations of the single mother families in this study. Livermore and Powers (2006) also found that single mothers combine wages from public assistance with monetary and other various sources of support to try and meet their family's needs.

Most families have shown their emotional support to the single mothers by being accepting of her pregnancy and children. McDermott and Graham (2005) found that families' responses to young single pregnancy are shock and disappointment, but after time, in the majority of cases the single mothers were able to renegotiate their relationships, welcoming and accepting mother and baby. While not all of the single mothers' families provide tangible support to the mothers they do demonstrate acceptance of her family.

Not all single mothers receive adequate support from their parents or families (Henninger & Nelson, 1984). As mentioned, only three (38%) of the single mothers received frequent, and therefore adequate, support from their families. Some of the single mothers are hesitant to ask for support from family because it is not always judgement free or because they have been let down in the past. The single mothers show deep disappointment when they ask for help and do not receive it. Also, sometimes these family members can become a part of the single mother's responsibility, and drain her available resources, both material and emotional.

The single mothers who have family support seem to manage daily life tasks easier than those who have little or no support. Possibly because they have a safety net, because they can make their money last longer with family support, or because more support simply means they are in a better place mentally, emotionally, and physically.

Friendships

Friendships provide important support for the single mother families in this study. They provide tangible support as well as emotional support. Single mothers in similar research have identified friends as a vital part of their resource network (Quinn & Allen, 1989; Harknett, 2006). The single mothers who lack family support often make up for it with supportive friendships. Friends become family for these single mothers.

Romantic relationships are also important to single mothers. They provide mothers with needed love and affection, as well as tangible support with their kids. Unlike past studies (Brown & Harris, 1981; Gladow & Ray, 1986), the single mothers in this study did not speak of these relationships as a route towards marriage. However, they did identify that relationships work best with men who are older and at the same life stage as the single mothers, or with men who have children of their own. The single mothers are tired of entering relationships with men who are only interested in partying and sex. The single mothers want more. They want to be involved with men who are interested in a family because that is where the single mothers are in their lives right now. Some single mothers find romantic relationships challenging because of their independence. They have worked hard to become strong and self-sufficient and relationships represent a challenge to their status quo. Trusting men is also a challenge for some single mothers. It can be difficult to open themselves up and be vulnerable. Single mothers in Edin (2000) shared similar uncertainties when considering marriage. Concerns about having a passive role in bargaining and decision-making challenged their independence. Preparations for a failed marriage by the mothers in her study also indicated trust issues when entering relationships.

The single mothers shared that they find formal relationships that are more like friendship the most helpful. They do not want to be judged, told what to do, or treated like just another appointment. Instead they want someone to listen, give them genuine advice, and be there for them when they need it.

Although research identifies friends as an important form of support for single mother families (McLanahan, Wedemeyer, & Adelberg, 1981; Livermore & Powers, 2006), few studies examine, in depth, single mothers' experiences with this support. The single mothers in this study revealed that friendships with other single mothers provide a unique source of support. Single mothers can draw on their own experiences to recognize when another mother is having a difficult time and needs a helping hand. For instance, one mother offered to take another single mother's children for a few days because she could tell that she was having a really difficult time, and that she needed some help. There seems to be an intrinsic bond between single mothers because of their experiences and understanding of what it takes to support a family alone. One single mother, in reviewing the findings of this study, shared that although she could tell which observations or quotations were about her, she could also relate with everything else in the study. Sometimes she even questioned if someone else's quotations were actually her own.

Maintaining daily survival for single mother families is not based solely on social assistance and single mothers' resourcefulness, dignity, caution, astuteness, maturity, adaptability, coping, and tenacity, but also requires the mothers to rely on social capital that they have acquired through friendships, family ties, and membership in formal programs and services.

Human Service Agencies/Organizations and Single Mother Families – Integration and Implications

Integration of the experiences of single mother families and the support provided by human service agencies/organizations support yielded expected results. In outlining my presuppositions I identified that I commenced this study with the perception that single mother families in Thunder Bay had many unmet needs. The needs that I perceived to be inadequate were transportation, housing, child care, and financial resources. The needs of single mother families between the ages 18-25 with children under 5 living in Thunder Bay are not sufficiently met by the services/programs available. Specific discussion of the special and regular services/programs, the programs agencies/organizations would like to develop, and the programs that should be developed for single mother families in Thunder Bay with the experiences of the single mother families in this study will support these findings.

Special Services/Programs

Thirty-three percent of the agencies/organizations that responded to the questionnaire indicated that they provide special services/programs to single mothers between the ages of 18-25 who have children under the age of five. However, although there are special services/programs available for single mother families, at maximum only 4% of the female lone parent population in Thunder Bay is accessing these services. Even if all ten special services/programs served the maximum number of single mother families reported (48), there would still be 4370 or 90% of the single mom families in Thunder Bay not receiving services. These results could indicate two things. Firstly, there are not enough services to meet the needs of the growing population of single mother families in Thunder Bay and secondly, single mother families are unable to or are

choosing not to access these services. Of the single mother families who participated in this study, only half were currently accessing services/programs in addition to Ontario Works. For one of these single mothers the only additional service/program accessed was the Children's Aid Society. The single mother families identified reasons for not attending special services/programs for single mother families. They included: lack of affordable transportation; disconnection with workers; loss of self-worth, strict rules and regulations; unsupportive environments; lack of services to meet required needs; lack of rewards for being a "good" mom; too rigid; concerns for children's safety; and lack of child care. An additional reason for a small number of single mother families accessing these special services/programs could be lack of awareness of formal services/programs available.

The lack of special services/programs for single mother families limits the social capital, or resources they can gather together through membership in organizations (Bourdieu, 1983), they are able to acquire. The number of single mother families receiving special services in Thunder Bay, four percent, indicates that many families have not created the social relationships with agencies/organizations that allow them to claim access to the resources they possess. Furthermore, the single mother families who are not directly involved with these agencies/organizations have less quantity and quality of social capital, than those who are. As a result, single mother families struggle over resources.

Emotional/social support, parenting skills, and life skills are among the needs provided most through the special services/programs, yet the single mothers in this study indicated that their biggest challenges revolved around meeting their families' basic

needs for food, clothing, and safe and affordable housing. In most cases, it is unclear whether the agencies/organization who identified providing food (80%) and clothing (60%), actually distribute food and clothing or whether they refer moms to food banks and free clothing places. Single mothers in the study identified the challenges of using food banks because of limited access, and restriction to a two-day emergency supply of food at the discretion of the food bank. Another single mother identified that although she is grateful for donated clothes, they are not always in the best shape, or the most appropriate for employment opportunities. Child care and transportation were also among the most faced challenges by single mothers in this study; however these needs were only met by about half of the agencies/organizations providing special services/programs. All the single mothers identified employment as one of their most important goals, yet job training, job placement, and career counseling were minimal on the list of needs provided by these special services/programs. Furthermore, parent relief time and recreational activities for children were identified as important, but limited for the single mother families in this study, yet only 40% of the agencies/organizations met this need. The single mothers in this study identified a number of concerns about their children's health and development and often received few answers. Only 30 percent of the special services/programs provide physical health care, and only 50 percent provide mental health care.

As the single mothers in this study identified, consistent with the literature (Olsen & Banyard, 1993; Callahan & Lumb, 1995), limited finances create many challenges and limit options for single mother families. Special services/programs have identified some focus on income assistance (40%) and financial counselling (50%), including budgeting,

but little change towards the incomes is made. However, it is understandable that the best some of these agencies can do within their resources and mandates, is to help mothers learn to stretch and budget their money as best possible. These findings are consistent with Lipman and Boyle's (2005) recognition that the provincial government has invested in non-financial programs rather than making an increase in financial supports a high priority. However, it is not a matter of bad budgeting or frivolous spending that creates these challenges, rather it is that single mothers do not get enough money to live off. If it were a matter of poor spending habits and budgeting then we would see a drastic difference between the financial situations of many single mothers. In reality, they all run out of money sometimes before their next check comes and they all must stretch, maximize, and substitute for lack of money. Rather than these types of programs, single mother families need to see an increase in financial supports.

A great deal of overlap in services that single mothers do not see as most important occurs in the special services/programs. Although developing parenting and life skills are important for single mom families, perhaps addressing some of these other issues may result in less need for developing these skills. For example, if the single mothers get more parental relief time and are less stressed about their financial situation, housing options, and transportation, they may be less likely to lose patience with their children or have more time to contribute to parenting.

The needs these agencies/organizations provided within their services/programs represent two distinct kinds of capital: social support and social leverage. They provide social support in the form of emotional and expressive supports, as well as instrumental support like transportation, child care, food and clothing. Social leverage, which is social

capital that helps one 'get ahead' or change their opportunity, is provided through programs that provide job training and placement, or financial counselling (Dominquez & Watkins, 2003). A key function of social capital is the capacity to leverage resources, ideas, and information from formal services/organizations (World Bank, 2000), but 90% of the single parent families in Thunder Bay are unable to do this.

Moreover, for those agencies/organizations that provided special services/programs for single mother families, only 10 percent use more than 50% of their budget towards these programs and only 30 percent use more than 50 % of their staff allocation. Therefore it is not surprising that these programs do not serve more single mother families or meet more needs. Furthermore, high caseloads with limited staff allocation may be contributing to the single mothers feelings of disconnection with the workers, and thus limiting their use of these services. The single mother families' connection to the agencies/organizations that provide services/programs to single mother families represents a 'vertical' network of civic engagement. This network links unequal agents in asymmetrical relations of hierarchy and dependence; single mothers and workers. Putnam (2003) sees networks of civic engagement as an essential part of social capital because the denser such networks in a community the more likely that its citizens will be able to cooperate for mutual benefit. Therefore, the more relationships single mother families create with workers in these agencies/organizations, and thus the denser the networks, the more likely it becomes that single mother families and agencies and organizations can work together for mutual benefit.

Although the literature review identified a number of Internet supports providing special services for single mother families, none of the mothers in this study identified

accessing them. Furthermore, none of the human service agencies/organizations made reference to these types of services.

Regular Services/Programs

Seventy percent of the agencies that responded to the questionnaire indicated they offer regular services/programs that single mothers between the ages of 18-25, who have children under the age of five, may participate in. However, as one single mother in the study pointed out, it is sometimes difficult for them to join services/programs with other families because they get stigmatized and looked down upon for their situation. The agencies/organizations reported only 119 single mother families using their services, which is only 2 percent of the 4850 female lone parent families in Thunder Bay. The low percentage of single mother families participating in these regular services programs could be because single mother families must compete with other populations to participate in these regular services/programs.

Although 70 percent of the agencies that responded to the questionnaire indicated that single mothers may participate in a number of their regular services/programs that address a wide variety of needs, the findings of the single mother observations indicate that for single mothers there continue to be a number of challenges and stresses. For example, although 57 percent of agencies/organization identified that they address the need for food, all single mothers in this study reported challenges in feeding their children on their limited budget, and providing a healthy diet. Additionally, one single mother identified that the food given by programs or food banks is not the type of food she needs. She needs “fridge stuff like milk, fruit and veggies, and stuff for dinner.” Forty-three percent of the agencies/organization’s reported that their programs address

housing and child care needs, but most single mothers in this study are unhappy with their housing situation and have had difficulty getting their children into child care. Only three of the single moms have their children enrolled in regular child care. Common challenges included their children being too young, not being able to get both children in one facility, cost, and transportation to child care. Despite federal recognition of child care challenges with the enactment of the Universal Child Care Benefit (Services Canada, 2007) it still remains a widespread problem for all families, but especially single mother families (Kamerman & Kahn, 1988; Quinn & Allen, 1989; Olson & Banyard, 1993; Stephenson & Emery, 2003). Clothing is another need addressed by 43 percent of the regular services/programs, yet single mothers identify the need to substitute and maximize second hand clothes for new, and create informal clothing exchanges. Transportation and recreation are among needs addressed by 38 percent of the agencies/organizations; however transportation was a concern for all single mothers in the study and many reported challenges in finding and affording recreational activities for themselves and their children. Of the single mothers in this study only one received any assistance with transportation. The single mothers paid for bus transportation for all appointments and programs they attended. Although these examples demonstrate that agencies/organizations are addressing needs that the single mother families identify as challenges and sources of concern, they remain that way.

Seventy-six percent of the regular services/programs offered emotional and social support to single mother families; however, mothers in this study identified a number of relationships including family, friends, and romantic partners that provided them with needed support. Clearly this is a significant need that regular services/programs devoted

resources to, but perhaps the resources going towards emotion and social support from the formal services need to be reevaluated. Safety of children was identified as a huge source of concern for single mother families, however, none of these agencies identified that any of their resources were used for enhancing community safety for children.

Fifty-seven percent of regular services/programs, however, provided mental health services to single mother families, which were identified by the single mother families as a need through the participant observations. Next, the challenge becomes ensuring that moms are aware of and seek out these services.

Approximately one-third of these agencies/organizations devoted 75-100 percent of their budget and almost half devote 75-100 percent of their staff to these regular services/programs that single mothers may participate in. Important to remember, however, is that other populations, as mentioned earlier, can use these services as well, limiting the allocation towards single mother families.

Suggested New Services

Thirty-three percent of the agencies/organizations indicated that they would be interested in providing new services for single mother families if the necessary resources were available. Out of the ten agencies/organizations already providing special services to single mother families, only 40 percent were interested in providing new services if the necessary resources were available. This finding suggests that 60 percent of the agencies felt that they were providing adequate services to meet the needs of single mother families. On the contrary, as discussed earlier indicated, single mother families in this study identified a number of needs that are not currently being met. One agency/organization commented, "The community provides so much. The [single moms]

are extremely fortunate to tap into these.” Some single mother’s are fortunate to ‘tap into these,’ but as we saw earlier only 4 percent of the female lone parent population is receiving/accessing these services. It is possible that not all single mothers receive equal access to these services/programs, and the available services/programs are being monopolized by a very small number of single mothers. Another agency/organization shared, “We have, over the years, tried to involve [single mothers] in various workshops but no interest shown. Workshops such as budgeting, menu planning, buying in bulk, and gardening.” ‘No interest’ in these types of programs is not surprising given the experiences the single mother families in this study shared. Budgeting, menu planning, and buying in bulk would not be of much interest to single mother families when there is often not enough money to budget or buy food in bulk. Furthermore, most single mothers would not show interest in gardening when most of the housing units do not provide gardens, and many landlords do not allow renters to break up the grass to sod for a garden. The single mothers do, however, see the benefits of gardening, as one of them recommended that all low-income houses should have gardens.

The agencies/organizations that indicated they would be interested in providing new services identified a number needs they would like to provide services/programs for. Thirty percent identified they would like to develop programs providing food directly to single mother families through programs like breakfast clubs and community kitchens. This recognition of the need for programs providing food is congruent with the single mother family observations, which indicated that food was a major concern to single mother families. Forty percent of these agencies indicated physical health care as a need they would like to address through new services/programs. Physical health care was not

of high priority in the special and regular services/programs, yet single mother families in the study indicated concern for their children's health and development, as well as difficulty coping with illness. Clearly these agencies have recognized this need within the single mother family community. Furthermore, about one-third of the agencies/organizations identified job placement and career counseling as a need that should be offered to single mother families through new services/programs. These programs would be significantly helpful to the single mother families who are hopeful for independence and have a variety of job interests, especially considering only 10 percent of agencies/organizations providing special services/programs currently meet these needs. Some agencies/organizations interested in providing new services/programs wanted to assist single mothers to further develop their resourcefulness through life skills such as sewing, cooking, and knitting. Although life skills are not of high priority to single mom families in this study, the resourcefulness they shared indicates that the more resources available, the better. Counseling services specifically for single mother families was identified as programs that 20 percent of the agencies/organizations were interested in developing. The challenges single mothers experienced with abuse, feelings of loss of self worth, the personal issues that brought caution to their lives, and the times when the responsibility of raising children is too much to bear, indicate that single mother families could benefit from their own counseling services.

There is some discrepancy between what the single mother families identified as priority needs and what the agencies/organizations reported as the needs they are interested in providing given sufficient resources. Among the highest needs identified through the new services/programs are life skills, emotional/social support, and parenting

skills, however the single mothers in this study indicated more challenges with basic needs or immediate survival needs of their families, such as money, food, clothing, and housing. Furthermore, life skills, emotional/social support, and parenting skills, are the most provided needs through the special and regular services/programs already. As identified earlier most of the single mothers already receive emotional and social support from friends and family, and learn parenting skills from other single mothers. Also, it appears that most parenting challenges for the single mothers arose from stress of not being able to provide basic needs for the family. This incongruency could be the result of lack of funds. Programs that provide emotional/social support, life skills, and parenting skills require less financial resources than programs that provide assistance with housing, food, clothing, and financial assistance. Lack of child care, and cost of child care was identified by single mother families as a challenge; however, only 30 percent of agencies/organizations were interested in addressing this need through new services/programs. This under-acknowledgment of the need for child care in the new services/programs may mean that single mother families would be unable to participate in any new services/programs developed. Formal education training is not a need of interest to agencies/organization wanting to provide new services. There are special services for single mother up to the age of 21 to help with formal educational training, however, there is little support for mothers between 18-25. Therefore, the single mothers over 21 in the study who identified plans to pursue a formal education continue to face of number of hurdles to achieving this goal. Thirty percent of the agencies/organizations commented that they would like to conduct a needs assessment prior to developing any new

services/programs for single mother families. This practice would allow single mothers to identify what it is they need most from formal services/programs.

The agencies/organizations interested in developing new programs for single mother families identified the most common reason for not starting these new services as lack of funds to hire staff, followed by lack of space for new services/programs. It is clear that the funding these agencies/organizations receive is not adequate to meet the number of single mother families in Thunder Bay needing service. Although some of the agencies/organizations recognized the need for new services/programs for single mother families in Thunder Bay the reality is that these programs are not going to be developed unless more federal and provincial funding is allocated towards service/programs for single mother families.

Community Issues Related to Single Mothers

The agencies/organizations that identified additional types of services/programs for single mother families that should be developed in Thunder Bay were accurate in pinpointing services that are underrepresented and that the single mothers in this study identified as missing or inadequate. One agency/organization recommended priority status on waiting lists for single mother families, which recognizes the challenges single mother families experience in competing for regular services/programs. More child care options was identified by two agencies/organizations, which the single mothers identified as a barrier to a number of their opportunities, including parental relief time, education, employment, and attending formal services/programs. Another agency/organization identified that the community needs enhanced services for women attempting to leave abusive relationships, which also speaks to the experiences of the single mother families

in this study. A full service agency for teen health was identified as a service/program that should be developed in Thunder Bay. This type of service, which would be sensitive to the experiences of single mother families, may help to alleviate some of the loss of dignity and self-worth the single mothers identified in using formal services. Suggested access to transportation and the development of community based programs that do not require transportation reflects the challenges single mothers have identified with transportation. The recommendation of additional funding for programs providing services to single mothers clearly supports the findings of this study, which indicated reasons for not developing new services/programs as lack of funds to hire staff and lack of space for new services/programs. And finally, and perhaps most importantly, one agency/organization identified that the community should develop more financial resources, as Ontario Works funding is inadequate, which directly supports the most identified challenge by the single mother families.

Overall, there is recognition within the Thunder Bay community that single mother families need special services and programs. While there are a number of agencies/organizations already providing these services, it is clear that they are not meeting the needs of the growing population of single mother families in Thunder Bay. Although there is some discrepancy between the needs served by special and regular services/programs and the needs communicated by single mother families, the agencies/organizations have identified more accurately the needs and services required through the new services they would like to develop and their suggestions for the community to develop. This recognition represents a clear step towards developing more special services for single mother families in Thunder Bay.

Conclusions

There are more single mother families than ever before (Meadow, 2007); yet, little research has examined the whole lived experience of single mother families, including multiple perspectives on formal services and programs available. This study examined what life was like for single mother families living in Thunder Bay from their perspectives and examined how formal agency services supported single mothers living in Thunder Bay.

Social capital theory was the guiding framework for this mixed methods study (Bourdieu, 1983; Coleman, 1990, 1998; Putnam, 1993) because single mothers, as a sometimes vulnerable population, often have multiple needs and concerns with limited financial or social support to assist them. The single mother families in this study revealed that their biggest challenges revolved around meeting their families' basic needs for food, clothing, and safe and affordable housing, needs which are not adequately met by the agencies/organization providing special services/programs for single mother families in Thunder Bay. In contrast, emotional/social support, parenting skills, and life skills are among the needs provided most through the special and regular services/programs, which the single mother families indicated they received from friends, romantic partners, and family. There is a clear discrepancy between the needs served by special and regular services/programs and the needs communicated by the single mother families. Furthermore, this study indicated that although there are agencies and organizations that provide special and regular services/programs to single mother families, they do not provide adequate service levels to meet the growing population of single mother families in Thunder Bay. Taking into account both special and regular

services/programs, only 297 or 6 percent of the single mother population in Thunder Bay is receiving any services, leaving 94 percent of the single mother population without services. Therefore, this study revealed that the needs of single mother families between the ages 18-25 with children under 5 living in Thunder Bay are not sufficiently met by the services/programs available.

Despite the fact that the single mothers in this study experienced financial difficulties and tremendous challenges in maintaining daily family living, their resourcefulness, dignity, caution, astuteness, maturity, coping and tenacity allowed them to rise above the conditions they face in day-to-day life and make the best out of their situation. However, when the single mothers' individual capacities in providing for their families were exhausted, the single mothers had to rely on social capital acquired through friendships, family ties, and membership in formal programs and services. The single mothers relied on a number of features of social capital. Friendships and family ties provided generalized reciprocity, a continuing relationship of exchange of resources that required a high level of trust and implicit rules. Formal support through membership in agencies and organizations provided some single mothers with social support, emotional and expressive supports, and social leverage, opportunities to get ahead. However, access to this source of social support is limited by the lack of special and regular services and programs in Thunder Bay, thus limiting the resources the single mothers can gather through these memberships.

Through the insight provided by the single mother families into their lives, and examination of the effectiveness of the human service agencies and organizations in meeting the needs of these families, a more comprehensive understanding of the lives of

single mother families in Thunder Bay has become apparent. Our survival as a community continues to be inherently linked to our ability to emphasize community building and connections to ensure the well-being of single mothers and their families.

Recommendations

Based on the experiences of the single mother families in this study and the findings from the survey of human services/programs, recommendations for change can be suggested in several areas.

Recommendation 1

The single mothers in this study demonstrate tenacity in addressing things needed for survival. This finding raises important questions: Should single mothers have to spend all their time and energy fighting bureaucratic issues that challenge their families' well being? What needs to change within the system so that single mothers can focus more time and energy on their families, and less on fighting to survive? Many of the hurdles to independence that the single mothers identify are already initiatives of government programs, such as daycare, financial resources, upgrading, education, and employment. It is clear that reanalysis of these programs, as well as additional resources, based on these findings and other voices of single mothers, are needed. Therefore, human service agencies/organizations, that wish to assist single mother families, should reassess the needs of the population and how their resources can be more effectively used in minimizing the challenges faced by single mother families. In addition, these human services agencies/organizations can support advocacy efforts that address the concerns of the single mothers who participated in this study.

Recommendation 2

With regard to the formal helping system, there needs to be a balance between the bureaucracy of the system and human empathy towards individual situations. Instead of a hierarchy putting worker and the single mother on either ends of the spectrum, what needs to occur is a meeting in the middle on common ground. This is where a real helping relationship can be built. For example, the single mothers in this study felt a tremendous loss when the Salvation Army Single Parents Program closed. The program provided them with emotional as well as tangible support directed specifically towards their experiences. It is not only the support that the program provided, but also the connections with the staff and other participants that the single mothers miss. It is clear that we need to create programs that support the full single mother family experience like the Salvation Army Single Parents Program did.

Recommendation 3

Attending post-secondary education was identified as a common goal among most single mothers in this study, and has also been identified as a vehicle by which single mothers can rise out of poverty (Davies, McMullin & Avison, 2001; Bruns, 2004; Zhan and Pandey, 2004). However, for single mothers the task hinges on overcoming the many obstacles in the way. A support group for single mothers attending college or university, similar to Bruns (2004), where single mothers could meet in a supportive atmosphere, build a social network, share experiences and childcare, and express fears, challenges and hurdles of being a single mother in college or university should be developed. It would aid and support single mothers on their journey through their education by decreasing stress and increase feelings of a sense of community.

Recommendation 4

Bus transportation was a common challenge for all single mothers who participated in this study. The cost of the bus often limited their ability to work or go to school, get to appointments, shop for necessities, or complete errands. Single mothers would benefit from free or discounted bus passes.

Recommendation 5

The single mothers identified that the support provided by the Children's Aid Society is helpful, but they wish they could access it without a child welfare case. They identified that they need to see more rewards for "good" parenting within the formal system. Therefore, there needs to be more special services, such as respite care, child care, transportation assistance, and grocery vouchers, for single mothers who are not having child protection issues. Furthermore, we need to ensure that all single mothers get equal access to special service/programs. As the single mothers in this study revealed they still need services/programs even though they are "good" mothers.

Recommendation 6

The single mother's in this study identified that services tend to end once their children are older and unless they have another child they lose all services. Therefore agencies/organizations need to ensure that moms who want support can get it. Additional programming for moms with children transitioning into a new age category needs to be created.

Recommendation 7

Based on the single mother cautions about the health and development of their children and the limited supports providing these services, more emphasis on children's

physical and mental health is needed through special services/programs. In addition to diagnosis or identification of health issues, single mother families' need resources put in place to deal with the health issues identified.

Recommendation 8

All the single mothers identified employment as one of their most important goals, yet job training, job placement, and career counseling were minimal on the list of needs provided by special services/programs. Thunder Bay needs agencies and organizations that assist single mothers in finding "family friendly" employment

Recommendation 9

Further research is needed to explore in what ways formal services can assist the single mother family population.

The single mothers in this study expressed their perceptions of their lives in order to allow others to learn more about the experiences of single mother families. Therefore, further investigation of the ideas and challenges raised here could enable professionals to have a better understanding of the life of single mother families and the special services and programs needed to better serve this population.

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Appendix A

Participant Observation Introductory Letter

Hello,

My name is Melissa Reynolds and I am a Master's of Social Work Student at Lakehead University. I am doing a research study on the experiences and needs of single moms from their perspectives. My interest in this topic comes from my work with single mothers and from my interest in learning more from single mothers about their experiences.

I am looking for single mothers between the ages of 18 and 25 who have children under the age of 5 who live in the City of Thunder Bay that would like to participate in my research.

As a social worker in the field, I realize the importance of confidentiality. I would like to inform you, before your agreement to participate, that all of the information you share will remain confidential.

If this sounds like something you are interested in participating in, or if you have any questions please email me at Melissa_A_Reynolds@hotmail.com, or contact my supervisor, Dr. Connie Nelson, at cnelson@lakeheadu.ca or 343-8447.

I hope that this research will bring awareness to the Community of Thunder Bay and provide single mothers with the opportunity to share their experiences with others.

Thank you in advance for your time and willingness to share your experiences.

Sincerely,

Melissa Reynolds
MSW Candidate

Appendix B

Poster Seeking Participants

Participants Needed for a Study on Single Mother Families

Researcher: Melissa Reynolds

My name is Melissa Reynolds and I am a Master's of Social Work Student at Lakehead University. I am doing a research study on the experiences and needs of single moms from their perspectives. My interest in this topic comes from my work with single mothers and from my interest in learning more from single mothers about their experiences.

I am looking for single mothers between the ages of 18 and 25 who have children under the age of 5 who live in the City of Thunder Bay that would like to participate in my research.

If this sounds like something you are interested in participating in, or if you have any questions please email me at Melissa_A_Reynolds@hotmail.com, or contact my supervisor, Dr. Connie Nelson, at cnelson@lakeheadu.ca or 343-8447.

I hope that this research will bring awareness to the Community of Thunder Bay and provide single mothers with the opportunity to share their experiences with others.

Thank you in advance for your time and willingness to share your experiences.

Appendix C

Participant Observation Cover Letter

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Melissa Reynolds and I am currently a Master's of Social Work Student at Lakehead University. I am doing a research study on the experiences of single moms between the ages of 18 and 25 who have children under the age of 5 who live in the City of Thunder Bay.

I would like to thank you for the interest you expressed in this research study. I would like to invite you to participate in this study titled, *Single Mom Families: A Participant Observation Study*, which aims to understand the needs and experiences of single moms from their perspective. A similar study was conducted 20 years ago by Dr. Connie Nelson and will provide a comparison for this study's findings. I hope that this research will bring awareness to the community of Thunder Bay about the needs of single moms; and provide single mothers with the opportunity to share their experiences with others.

Your participation in this research will require a commitment of 3 months, in which I will "hang around" and be with you during daily activities, a minimum of one day a week and a maximum of 5. The observation will be based on a convenient and previously agreed on schedule between us.

I would like to inform you that your participation is voluntary, you may refuse to participate in any part of the study, and that you may withdraw from the study at any point in time. Also, I would like to remind you that all of the information you share will remain confidential, between the researcher and yourself, unless potential harm to yourself or others is suspected. The research supervisor will have access to the research information, and will follow the same confidentiality agreement outlined above. At no time during this research study will an individual's name or identifying information be released, unless requested by the individual participant. With your consent, some interactions will be audio recorded to ensure accurate portrayal of your experiences. During the research process, the data, including all written notes and audio recordings, will be locked in a secure place and only be accessible by the researcher. Once the study is completed, all research information will be locked and secured at Lakehead University by my supervisor for 7 years. In the event that this research is published I would like to assure you that no identifying information will be included.

There is no apparent physical and psychological risk of harm; however if at any point during the research you feel that you need support or are feeling distress at any time please speak to me about your concerns or refer to a list of contact numbers that will be provided to you at the beginning of this research.

By participating in this research it is anticipated that you will have the opportunity to share your experiences and stories and contribute to the knowledge of this topic.

A summary of the findings of this study can be made available to you, at your request, upon the completion of this project.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at Melissa_A_Reynolds@hotmail.com or contact my supervisor, Dr. Connie Nelson, at cnelson@lakeheadu.ca or 343-8447. You may also contact Lakehead University's Research Ethics Board at 343-8283.

I look forward to the opportunity to learn from you.

Sincerely,

Melissa Reynolds
MSW Candidate

Appendix D

Observation Recording Tool

Participant #: _____
Date: _____
Time: _____
Place of Observation: _____

What's going on here? (observations)	Inferences/Analytic Notes (thoughts/meaning of what's going on)	Personal Notes (such as speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices)

Appendix E

Participant Observation Consent Form

Single Mom Families: A Participant Observation Study

I _____ agree to participate in the study conducted by
Please Print

Melissa Reynolds, on *Single Mom Families: A Participant Observation Study*, and I fully

understand the following:

1. I have read and fully understood the cover letter for the study, including the nature of the study, its purpose, and its procedures.
2. I understand I am a volunteer and I can withdraw from the study at any time.
3. There are no apparent risks of physical or psychological harm.
4. I agree to have my participation in this study audio recorded.
5. I understand that all information will remain confidential, unless I am at risk to myself or others, or in the event that the information must be released or requested by subpoena.
6. The data I provide will be securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years.
7. I will not be named, or identified in any materials published as a result of this study.
8. I will be provided, upon request, a summary of the findings of this study.

Participants Signature

Witness

Date

Date

Appendix F
Survey Cover Letter

Dear [Agency/Organization]

My name is Melissa Reynolds and I am currently a Master's of Social Work Student at Lakehead University. For my practicum I am exploring the formal services that are currently available to single mom families in Thunder Bay. This survey is a follow up to a study conducted 20 years ago by Dr. Connie H. Nelson.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study titled, *Single Mom Families: A Survey of Human Service Programs*. I am interested in learning about the special services/programs and regular services/programs your agency/organization provides for single mom families. I am also investigating any new services that your agency/organization would be interested in developing for single mom families if you had available the necessary resources.

I would appreciate it if you could take the time to fill out this questionnaire to help me understand the services/programs your agency/organization provides to single mom families. Enclosed you will find a consent form and a copy of the questionnaire to be completed. You must sign the consent form and return it with the completed survey. You will receive a phone call from me two weeks following the distribution of the survey to set up a time, at your convenience, for the survey to be picked up. If you have any questions or concerns, please call me at (807) 683-3815 or email me at mreynold@lakeheadu.ca.

Your organization's participation is voluntary, you may refuse to participate in any part of the study, and you may withdraw from the study at any point in time. Also, I would like to remind you that all of the information your organization shares will remain confidential, between the researcher and the organization. The research supervisor will have access to the research information, and will follow the same confidentiality agreement outlined above. At no time during this research study will an organization's name or identifying information be released, unless requested by the individual organization. There are no apparent risks of physical or psychological harm to this study. During the research process, the data, including all surveys, will be locked in a secure place and only be accessible by the researcher and supervisor. Once the study is completed, all research information will be locked and secured at Lakehead University by my supervisor for 7 years. In the event that this research is published I would like to assure you that no identifying information will be included.

The results of your participation will be used to provide a database to compare the formal services currently available to single mom families, with the services available 20 years ago. A summary of the findings of this study can be made available to you, at your request, upon the completion of this project. This data will also be included in my thesis, which will be publicly available at the Lakehead University Library or through the School of Social Work by Summer 2008.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at mreynold@lakeheadu.ca, or by phone at 683-3815, or contact my supervisor, Dr. Connie Nelson, at cnelson@lakeheadu.ca or 343-8447. You may also contact Lakehead University's Research Ethics Board at 343-8283.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate. I hope that the outcome of this study will be helpful in gaining an understanding of the available services/programs, in Thunder Bay, for single mom families and indicate how they have changed over the last twenty years.

Sincerely,

Melissa Reynolds
MSW Candidate

Appendix G
Survey Consent Form

Single Mom Families: A Survey of Human Service Programs

I _____ agree to participate in the study conducted by
Please Print

Melissa Reynolds, on *Single Mom Families: A Survey of Human Service Programs*, and I
fully understand the following:

1. I have read and fully understood the cover letter for the study, including the nature of the study, its purpose, and its procedures.
2. I understand I am a volunteer and I can withdraw from the study at any time.
3. There are no apparent risks of physical or psychological harm.
4. I understand that all information will remain confidential, unless requested by the organization.
5. All information collected through the survey will be kept confidential and securely stored at Lakehead University with my supervisor Dr. Connie H. Nelson for a period of seven years.
6. The organization will not be named, or identified in any materials published as a result of this study.
7. I will be provided, upon request, a summary of the findings of this study.

Participant's Signature

Date

Appendix H

Survey

Single Moms Questionnaire

Lakehead University

School of Social Work

Social Work Practicum 9601

1. SPECIAL SERVICES/PROGRAMS

1.1 Does your organization provide any special services/programs to single moms between the ages of 18-25 who have children under the age of 5?

		Office use only
	Yes (1)	
	No (2) If no, please proceed to questions 2.1	

1.2 Please indicate how many single moms between the ages of 18-25 who have children under the age of 5 have used these special services/programs since January 2006.

--	--

1.3 Please identify what types of special services/programs you offer to this age group of single moms and what are the primary objectives of these services/programs.

NAME OF SPECIAL SERVICE/PROGRAM	PRIMARY OBJECTIVES	
A.		
B.		
C.		

1.4 Which of the following needs of single moms are addressed through these special services/programs. PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

	Office use only
Housing	
Transportation	
Job training	
Job placement	
Career counselling	
Life skills	
Parenting skills	
Formal educational training	
Income assistance	
Financial counselling	
Food	
Clothing	
Emotional/Social support	
Companionship	
Recreation	
Childcare	
Physical health care	
Mental health care	
Other (please explain)	

1.5 Please estimate what percentage of your service/programs budget would be used for these special services/programs.

--	--

1.6 Please estimate what percentage of your staff workload (both direct and indirect service, and administrative duties) would be used for these special services/programs.

--	--

2. REGULAR SERVICE/PROGRAMS

2.1 Does your organization provide any other services/programs in which single moms between the ages of 18-25 who have children under the age of 5 may participate?

Yes (1)	
No (2) If no, please proceed to question 3.1	

2.2 Please indicate how many single moms between the ages of 18-25 who have children under the age of 5 participated in these regular services/programs since January 2006.

--	--

2.3 Please identify the types of regular services/programs your organization has that include assistance to single moms between the ages of 18-25 who have children under 5. Please indicate what are the primary objectives of each of these regular services/programs.

NAME OF SERVICE/PROGRAM	PRIMARY OBJECTIVES	Office use only
A.		
B.		
C.		

2.4 Which of the following needs of single moms are addressed through these regular services/programs. PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

	Housing	
	Transportation	
	Job training	
	Job placement	
	Career counselling	
	Life skills	
	Parenting skills	
	Formal educational training	
	Income assistance	
	Financial counselling	
	Food	
	Clothing	
	Emotional/Social support	
	Companionship	
	Recreation	
	Childcare	
	Physical health care	
	Mental health care	
	Other (please explain)	

2.5 Please estimate what percentage of your services/programs budget would be used for these regular services/programs that would include this age group of single moms.

		Office use only

2.6 Please estimate what percentage of your staff workload (both direct and indirect service, and administrative duties) would be used for these regular services/programs that include this age group of single moms.

--	--

3. NEW SERVICES

3.1 Given the necessary resources, is your organization interested in developing new services/programs for single moms between the ages of 18-25 who have children under the age of 5?

	Yes (1)	
	No (2) If no, please proceed to question 4.1	

3.2 Please identify what types of new services/programs might be developed to single moms between the ages of 18-25 who have children under the age of 5 and what the potential primary objectives of these new services/programs would be.

TYPE OF NEW SERVICE/PROGRAM	POTENTIAL PRIMARY OBJECTIVES	
A.		
B.		
C.		

3.3 Which of the following needs of single moms would be addressed through these new services/programs. PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY.

	Office use only
Housing	
Transportation	
Job training	
Job placement	
Career counselling	
Life skills	
Parenting skills	
Formal educational training	
Income assistance	
Financial counselling	
Food	
Clothing	
Emotional/Social support	
Companionship	
Recreation	
Childcare	
Physical health care	
Mental health care	
Other (please explain)	

3.4 Please indicate what are the primary reasons why your organization does not develop these new services/programs for single moms between the ages of 18-25 who have children under the age of 5?

Lack of funds to hire staff	
Lack of space for new program	
Meeting the needs of single moms is not a priority	
Other (please specify)	

4. COMMUNITY ISSUES RELATED TO SINGLE MOMS

4.1 Are there additional types of services/programs for single moms between the ages of 18-25 who have children under 5 that you feel should be developed in Thunder Bay that are not presently a part of your organizations priorities? Please identify the types of these services/programs and their primary objectives.

TYPE OF SERVICE/PROGRAM	PRIMARY OBJECTIVES	Office use only
A.		
B.		
C.		

4.2 Please indicate if your organization is:

	a church group	
	a service club	
	a government funded social service agency	
	a non-profit organization	
	a volunteer group	
	Other	

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND PARTICIPATION. We have covered a number of issues in this questionnaire, but there may be concerns we have missed that you feel should be addressed. We value your additional comments.
