A Comparison of Sociological and Demographic Factors of Custodial and Noncustodial Single Fathers

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A COMPARISON OF SOCIOLOGICAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS
OF CUSTODIAL AND NONCUSTODIAL SINGLE FATHERS

by
Daniel D. Petterson

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Education
Department of Educational Leadership

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
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The purpose of this study was to determine what differences, if any, exist in the sociological and demographic factors that are observed to be characteristics of fathers who have custody of their children, as opposed to fathers who do not have custody of their children. A review of the literature revealed that a large amount of information has been collected dealing with the situation of single mothers, but that nothing comparable exists regarding single fathers. The evidence from the literature also indicated that the increase in single fathering is at least paralleling the increase in single parenting in general. It is felt that information regarding this growing population will be extremely valuable for those planning and designing community human service programs. Educators at all levels must be constantly aware of changing family patterns and must be prepared to provide leadership to meet emerging needs.

A total of twenty hypotheses relating to possible differences in sociological and demographic factors of single fathers and noncustodial fathers were addressed in
this study. The method of data collection was survey re­
search. An instrument was sent to a sample of single fa­
thers and noncustodial fathers.

Analyses of the data generated suggest that single fathers differ from noncustodial fathers in several im­
portant sociological characteristics. First, single fa­
thers took a more active role in the care and raising of their children prior to divorce than did noncustodial fa­
thers. Second, single fathers rate their child-rearing skills at a higher level than do noncustodial fathers. Third, single fathers make a quicker recovery from the emotional stress caused by the breakup of the marriage than do noncustodial fathers. Fourth, single fathers feel more satisfied with their life as a whole than do noncustodial fathers.

The data analyzed, however, do not support many of the differences between single fathers and noncustodial fathers suggested in the available literature. The study highlights concerns of both single and noncustodial fa­
thers and points toward areas for future human services program development and research.
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A comparison of sociological and demographic factors of custodial and noncustodial single fathers

Petterson, Daniel D., Ed.D.
Western Michigan University, 1990

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DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my parents,
Ivan and Catherine Petterson,
and also to my spouse,
Susan L. Bogart.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writing of this paper demanded much time, energy, and the sacrifice of other aspects of my life. The dissertation would never have been finished without the constant support of my wife, Susan. The greatest thank-you of all must go to her for her patience, never-ending love and support and for her well-timed, gentle prodding.

A further acknowledgement must be made to my dissertation committee members, Dr. Charles C. Warfield, Committee Chairman; Dr. Robert Brashear; and Dr. Larry Schlack. Their encouragement and assistance was available when needed, and yet they provided me the freedom to find my own path to completion of this project. They steadfastly held me to the highest of standards while, at the same time, avoided erecting artificial barriers to my success.

Special thanks must go to Mr. William Camden, Kent County Friend of the Court, and the court-management team for their willingness to provide a way to access the father populations which were surveyed. Without their help, the research could not have been conducted.

A final deep appreciation must be extended to the fathers who participated in the survey. Being a parent is a difficult task regardless of the circumstances, but
when your role is a nontraditional one, the task is even greater. I thank the fathers, who not only answered the survey questions but often also shared deep emotions and thoughtful insights into the parenting role of divorced fathers.

Daniel D. Petterson
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this study was to determine what differences, if any, exist in the sociological and demographic factors that are observed to be characteristics of fathers who have custody of their children, as opposed to fathers who do not have custody of their children. Pichitino (1983) defines the single father as "that father who has custody of his children by virtue of legal decisions, private arrangements, death of spouse or desertion of mother" (p. 295). Pichitino (1983) states that single fathering arrangements are typically decided outside of custody settlements. In this study, the term single father designated those fathers who, after divorce, were granted legal custody of at least one of their minor children and have primary responsibility for raising the child or children. The term noncustodial father was used to designate fathers who, after divorce, do not have legal custody of any of their minor children and the day-to-day responsibility for raising the children rests with someone else (usually the mother). This study contrasted these two groups on the factors under
investigation.

Background of the Problem

This researcher's interest in the study developed while conducting parent education classes and meeting several single fathers; that is, fathers who, after divorce, had been granted legal custody of their children and had assumed the primary caretaker role for their children. Their expressed concerns, life-styles, and problems were in many ways unique. They expressed a concern about not knowing anyone whose example they could follow because the single father role they held was not typical. The much more usual role for the divorced father is that of the noncustodial father. In searching for ways to assist these single fathers and in trying to answer their questions, this researcher found a scarcity of information available about the role and life-style of the single father.

"Literature on the profile of the single father, that is, his psychological make-up, personal problems, interpersonal difficulties, life-style, and so forth, is virtually nonexistent. Only within the last few years have researchers really begun to investigate the situation of the single father as a phenomenon in its own right." (Pichitino, 1983, p. 295). Price-Bonham (1976) presented a bibliography of the literature related to the

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role of the father and found only 2 books, 13 articles, and 1 dissertation under the category of fathers alone and single fathers. Much of this literature addresses the young, never-married father, not the single father as defined here. Atkin and Rubin (1976) and Orthner, Brown, and Ferguson (1976) point out that very little research exists dealing with the psychological, sociological, and demographic factors of the single father. Lewis (1978) noted that by the end of the 1960s a large amount of data had been collected dealing with the situation of single mothers, but that nothing comparable existed regarding single fathers. Burgess (1970) and Gersink (1979) note that generally the articles and books that have been written on single fathering tend to be anecdotal and author opinionated.

Barry (1979) emphasized the need for research to assist those in the helping professions who work with single fathers, and Tedder, Libbee, and Scherman (1981) developed their own program for assisting the single father after finding no resources designed specifically for helping single fathers cope more effectively with their situations. These studies provide evidence for the fact that sound research information regarding single fathers is very scarce.
Limitations of the Study

This researcher's ability to generalize results from this study have been limited because of the criteria imposed upon the selection of the populations to be studied. Those parameters were: (a) Kent County (Grand Rapids), Michigan; (b) divorce cases; (c) 1985 to 1988 cases inclusive; and (d) active status indicating minor children involved. From computer records generated with those parameters, single fathers were identified as those individuals who receive child support payments and have a commonly recognized male-gender name. Noncustodial fathers were identified as the ex-spouse of those individuals who receive child support payments and have a commonly recognized female-gender name.

Significance of the Study

Estimates of the number of single parent families in the U.S. suggest that this phenomenon is definitely on the increase (Gasser & Taylor, 1976; McLanahan, Wedemeyer, & Adelberg, 1981). Victor and Winkler (1977) report the number of single father families in 1970 to be about 219,000. In 1978, this estimate was 445,000 (Bartz & Witcher, 1978). Smith and Smith (1981) estimate that the number of dependent children living with their fathers only, in 1970, was 0.7 million and in 1972, 1 million. Lewis (1978) has suggested that these estimates
may be conservative because they were based on legal documents which do not take into account private arrangements, desertions, and other situations that result in single father families.

U.S. Census Bureau estimates would seem to support Lewis's (1978) contention. Census bureau estimates for 1970 and 1980, establish the number of family groups with children under 18 maintained by the father with no spouse present, at 393,000 and 703,000, respectively. Using census bureau figures for the average family size for 1970 and 1980, the number of children living with their father only, in these two years, would be 1,406,940 and 2,312,870 (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, 1988).

Although there is some indication that fathers are winning more custody battles (George & Wilding, 1972; Mendes, 1976; Orthner et al., 1976; Tedder et al., 1981), other data suggest that the percentage of fathers receiving custody has remained relatively stable (Gersink, 1979; Keshet & Rosenthal, 1978). Defrain and Eirick (1981) report that perhaps one out of every ten divorced single parents is a male. U.S. News and World Report ("Rising Problems," 1973) indicated that the number of single mothers heading households increased by 58% between 1965 and 1972 while the number of single fathers heading households increased by 71% during the same
period. The 1986 U.S. Census Bureau estimates place the number of family groups with children under 18 maintained by a father only, at 1,088,000. The ratio of single mother families (with children under 18) to single father families (with children under 18) in 1970, was 8.7 to 1; in 1980, 9.0 to 1; but had dropped to 7.2 to 1 by 1986 (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, 1988). The evidence indicates that the increase in single fathering is at least paralleling the increase in single parenting in general. Information regarding this growing population will be extremely valuable for those planning and designing community human services programs. Educators at all levels must be constantly aware of changing family patterns and must be prepared to provide leadership to meet emerging needs. Educators have recognized that many school children do not come from traditional two parent families and have adjusted programs and policies to meet the needs of children from single parent homes. Recognition must also be given to the fact that many of the single parent families are headed by fathers alone.

Research Hypotheses

This study explored the following 20 research hypotheses in order to determine what differences, if any, exist in the sociological and demographic factors
that are observed to be characteristics of fathers who have custody of their children, as opposed to fathers who do not have custody of their children:

1. Single fathers will more often report being raised primarily by their mothers than will noncustodial fathers.

2. Single fathers will more often report feeling emotionally close to their mothers than will noncustodial fathers.

3. Single fathers had a higher degree of involvement with the child care responsibilities of their children prior to marital separation than did noncustodial fathers.

4. Single fathers will rate their child-rearing abilities at a higher level than will noncustodial fathers.

5. Single fathers have a higher level of confidence in their child-rearing skills than do noncustodial fathers.

6. Single fathers have fewer role models than do noncustodial fathers.

7. Single fathers are more likely to be employed than noncustodial fathers.

8. Single fathers have, on the average, a higher level of educational attainment than noncustodial fathers.
9. Single fathers have a higher average monthly income than noncustodial fathers.
10. Single fathers make a more rapid adjustment to their marital separations than do noncustodial fathers.
11. Single fathers feel more satisfied with their lives as a whole than do noncustodial fathers.
12. Single fathers lead more conservative lifestyles than do noncustodial fathers.
13. Single fathers are less likely to remarry than are noncustodial fathers.
14. Single (custodial) fathers are less likely to be currently married than noncustodial fathers.
15. Single fathers are more restrictive in their relationships with women than are noncustodial fathers.
16. Women (excluding relatives, sitters, and ex-spouse) involved (see definitions) in the lives of fathers are allowed a less active role with the children of single fathers than the children of noncustodial fathers.
17. On the average, single fathers will have been married longer than noncustodial fathers.
18. Single fathers have a higher average age at the time of separation than do noncustodial fathers.
19. On the average, the children of single fathers are older than the children of noncustodial fathers.
20. The children of single fathers are more often male than the children of noncustodial fathers.
Summary

In this section, literature indicating a lack of information regarding sociological and demographic factors that are characteristic of single fathers was cited. The problem investigated was defined; limitations and significance of the study was outlined; and 20 specific research hypotheses, which were explored, were listed.

The context and background of the study will be expanded on in Chapter II. Chapter III will provide an outline of the design and method of the study. Chapter IV presents an analysis of the data gathered and the results of the hypothesis testing. Also included in Chapter IV is information relating to response rate. The final chapter outlines conclusions drawn by the researcher concerning the data analyzed and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF SELECTED RELATED LITERATURE

U.S. Census Bureau estimates for 1986 place the number of family groups with children under 18 maintained by a single father, at 1,088,000. Using average-family-size figures for 1986, approximately 3,492,480 children under the age of 18 resided in households headed by their fathers only. (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, 1988). For educators, social service workers, court personnel, and other helping professionals, these figures are certainly significant.

Although it may be difficult to pinpoint a particular set of variables that are descriptive of the single father or that distinguish the single father from the noncustodial father, the literature does give some indication of the form such a description might take. A study by Gersink (1979) suggests that the single father's family of origin may have some influence in the decision to assume the role of single father. In his extensive interviews with 20 single fathers, Gersink (1979) found that single fathers tended to be more emotionally attached to their mothers and more distant from their fathers when compared to a group of noncustodial fathers.
Several studies point to the fact that single fathers tend to have had a much higher degree of involvement in the child-care responsibilities prior to separation than did noncustodial fathers. In a sample of 27 single fathers, Smith and Smith (1981) found a majority were very involved in child-care activities and the discipline responsibilities of their children during their marriage. Bartz and Witcher (1978) report that most of the single fathers in their sample of 34, classify themselves as being more actively involved in the raising of the children than the typical father. A study of 40 single fathers by Gasser and Taylor (1976) showed that those who had been more involved in the child-care roles usually associated with the mother, were less reluctant to assume the role of single father. These researchers also indicate that the single father who had an active child-care role during their marriage, adjusted more easily to their single fathering role.

A characteristic that is logically associated with the more active involvement the single father had with the children during marriage than the noncustodial father, is the confidence they have in themselves and their child-rearing skills. Orthner et al. (1976) found that the 20 single fathers in their study felt capable and successful in taking on their single-parenting role. This finding was contrary to what the researchers
expected. Victor and Winkler (1977) commented that they were impressed by the stability and quality of the relationships they witnessed between single fathers and their children. In fact, they stated that the situations they found during their visits with single fathers were much better than in many intact families they had visited.

Although this literature indicates that single fathers tend to be confident in their child-rearing abilities, the role that they assume is made more difficult because society provides no clear guidelines for performing the new role the single parent father has accepted (Mendes, 1976; Smith & Smith, 1981). In fact, studies by Barry (1979), Schlesinger (1978), and Victor and Winkler (1977) indicate that the single father faces a number of social prejudices concerning the role they have chosen. Burgess (1970) suggests that reviewing the literature from a sociological perspective, indicates that there are no established cultural patterns in the U.S. society that provide clear models for single parenting. A study by Mendes (1976) of 32 single fathers, indicated that the lack of clear definitions for carrying out their role was a source of increased stress for single fathers. Seagull and Seagull (1977) discuss the fact that in our society it is not considered imperative for fathers to develop child-nurturing skills because the mother is viewed as the important nurturing person in the child's life.
Wedemeyer and Johnson (1982) point out that from the early years of this century, parental roles after divorce, in the U.S., have been treated legally as an extension of the mother-is-homemaker, father-is-provider division of labor. This socialization tendency increases the problem of finding appropriate models for the single-father role.

A distinction between single fathers and noncustodial fathers may lie in their educational backgrounds, current life-styles, and financial status. Understandably, and as Barry (1979) notes, increased financial pressure resulting from being a single parent is a common complaint from those who hold this role. The financial burden of raising children alone is generally greater for the single mother than the single father. Smith and Smith (1981) note that none of the single fathers in their study reported a significant loss of income with their new role. Additionally, most felt very capable of continuing their careers while raising the children. Being a single parent, whether father or mother, places limitations on hours worked; career advancements; work relations; and, ultimately, earnings. It is noteworthy, however, that the single fathers in Keshet and Rosenthal's (1978) study had more than just adequate incomes. Adequate financial resources are a major factor in court custody decisions. Using single father samples including individuals whose custody rights resulted from
court decisions, it might be logical to assume higher average incomes for single fathers than noncustodial fathers. Factors associated with the higher income, such as steady employment and higher level of education, would also be predicted. This prediction is supported by the results of the interviews conducted by Orthner et al. (1976). Twelve of the twenty men in their sample were in professional or managerial positions and another was in sales. Only five of the men were classified as blue-collar workers, and the remaining two men included a student and a previous manager who was unemployed. Sixteen of the fathers had some post-high school education. Thirteen held college degrees and nine had advanced or professional degrees. The researchers state, "Concerted but comparatively unsuccessful attempts to locate lower income single parent fathers suggest that their frequency is lower in the population and that they may remarry faster than those men with higher incomes" (p. 432).

Studies such as Atkin and Rubin (1976) document the fact that marital separation is an emotional ordeal and that it is doubtful that anyone could go through the process without being emotionally affected. There are, however, many variables that have an influence on the magnitude of the stress one experiences. Atkin and Rubin (1976), in their study on the role of the part-time father, concluded that age of the child, parental
relationship, and individual needs are especially important determinants of level of stress in the father when he leaves home. Gasser and Taylor (1976) identified age of children, intimacy of family members prior to marital breakdown, and events causing the dissolution of the marriage as important general variables that influence the successful adjustment of new single fathers to their role. The custody decision itself seems to have a strong impact on the emotional adjustment of the separated male. That is, does the separated male become a single father with full responsibility for the care of his children, or does he become a noncustodial father? The father's emotional adjustment seems to be enhanced when he is granted custody of the children.

Hetherington, Cox, and Cox (1976) report that noncustodial fathers undergo a major change in self-concept and complain of having no structure in their lives. They report that these noncustodial fathers have periods of marked guilt and depression, with the general feeling that they have failed as fathers. Weiss (1975) reports that not being a member of the children's household is the most important distinguishing emotional characteristic of the separated, noncustodial father. That is, he feels discouraged by the fact that he can no longer assume a position of authority or protector for his children. On the other hand, studies of single fathers (as
opposed to noncustodial fathers) have found them to be emotionally strong and stable. Victor and Winkler (1977), after visiting single father homes, commented that they were impressed by the stability they witnessed. Other studies have indicated that single fathers find the process of raising their children by themselves to be a time of great personal satisfaction and growth (Keshet & Rosenthal, 1978). The impact of custodial arrangements on the adjustment of recently divorced fathers was directly addressed in a study by Stewart, Schwebel, and Fine (1986). They report several statistically significant findings that indicate that divorced fathers with custody of their children exhibit less depression and anxiety and fewer problems in general adjustment than those without custody.

This contrast is not to suggest that the single father's adjustment to his role is not without its problems and emotional difficulties. It is, however, to suggest that having custody, or not, of the children, may be a prime determining factor in how rapidly and well the separated male adjusts to his new situation.

One might hypothesize, as did Gersink (1979), that more radical individuals would tend to opt for the alternative life-style of the single father. Gersink found, however, that the single fathers in his sample tended to be older and more established and come from rather
traditional family backgrounds. Many single fathers find it necessary to restrict their involvement in adult organizations. Gasser and Taylor (1976) report that a majority of the 40 single fathers in their sample found it necessary to relinquish memberships in clubs and social groups.

There is some indication, then, that the single father, by choice, nature, or necessity, leads a conservative life-style. In this regard, single fathers may also be more conservative or restrictive in their relationships with women than are noncustodial fathers, and may be more likely to keep the women who are involved in their lives from having an active role with the children. Over two-thirds of the 20 fathers in the study by Orthner et al. (1976) viewed cohabitation as totally unacceptable for themselves, but the majority felt that living together is an acceptable means for other persons to test their relationship prior to marriage. A study of 49 single fathers by Keshet and Rosenthal (1978) revealed that 50% lived alone, 35% shared housing with other adults, and only 15% lived with lovers. The same study noted that while women would frequently accompany the family on outings, the women lovers were usually not allowed to assume any major child care responsibilities.

These studies indicating that single fathers tend to be older, more established, from traditional family
backgrounds, and live a relatively conservative lifestyle, lead to several other logical propositions: first, that single fathers will have been, on the average, married longer than noncustodial fathers; and then the related propositions that the single fathers' ages at separation and the ages of their children will be higher than those of the noncustodial father. In addition, the children of single fathers will be more often male. Orthner et al. (1976) state, "The efficacy of daughters being reared by their fathers has frequently been questioned. The courts have traditionally looked askance at this and rarely in a contested case do judges grant a father custody of a girl" (p. 433). Smith and Smith (1981), in their report of the findings of a nonrepresentative study of 27 single parent fathers conducted in the spring of 1977, state, "It would appear that the historical assumption of the very young needing a mother and the sanctions regarding daughters being raised solely by the father still have influences" (p. 414).

Conclusion

In this section, literature helpful in providing a background for the study was reviewed. Estimates of the number of children living with families headed by the father alone were cited. Several studies which indicate that single fathers take a very active role in child care
prior to separation, were reviewed. These studies also
indicated that single fathers have a high level of confi-
dence in their child-rearing ability. A number of stud-
ies reviewed indicated that single fathers do not have
role models available to them after which they can pat-
tern their life-style. Additional studies cited, indi-
cated that single fathers may earn higher incomes, more
often be steadily employed, and may be more highly edu-
cated than noncustodial fathers. A group of studies
cited, indicated that single fathers may make a faster
recovery from the emotional stress caused by the separa-
tion than do noncustodial fathers. Studies were also
reviewed which indicate that single fathers tend to be
conservative in their relationships with women and in
their life-styles as a whole. Finally, studies relating
to the age and sex of children from single father fami-
lies were reviewed. These studies indicated that the
children from single father families are older and more
often male than are the children of noncustodial fathers.

Research studies were cited which relate to each of
the 20 research hypotheses investigated. This citation
of related literature was presented in the order in which
the research hypotheses were initially listed.

Chapter III will provide an outline of the design
and methods of the study.
CHAPTER III

METHODS

Introduction

The research hypotheses which were used to determine what differences, if any, exist in the sociological and demographic factors that are observed to be characteristics of the fathers who have custody of their children, as opposed to fathers who do not have custody of their children, are examined in this chapter. The methods used to test those hypotheses are also examined. These methods include the research design, population and samples, instrumentation, design and general procedures, definition of terms, data collection, a validation statement, and the methods of data analyses.

Research Design

The design used in this study was descriptive research using a survey. Although it was possible to survey all of the identified single father population, it was not feasible to survey all of the noncustodial father population; therefore, a sample of this group was used. The survey was designed to answer 20 research hypotheses developed from a comprehensive review of the literature.
Population and Samples

The population and samples for this study were drawn from the 1985 to 1988 active caseload of the Kent County, Michigan, Friend of the Court Office. All divorce cases where minor children are involved, become active cases of the Friend of the Court Office. Of the total number of active cases, it was estimated that 5 to 10% would be situations where the father had legal custody of at least one minor child and had primary responsibility for raising the child or children. The actual total number of 1985 to 1988 cases equaled 3,481. Of this total, 164 or 4.71% were identified as single fathers. The remaining number constituted the noncustodial father population. The entire single father population was surveyed and a random sample of the noncustodial father population, totaling 205, was surveyed.

Instrumentation

Responses to a survey questionnaire constituted the data of this investigation. Survey questions were designed to address each of the research hypotheses, provide a check for accuracy of the identified population, and allow for respondents to express individual concerns (see Appendix A).
Design and General Procedures

The two populations were identified from the Friend of the Court total caseload by utilizing computer retrieve specifications which identified 1985 to 1988 active cases with minor children. The computer records system allowed for the retrieval of names and address for payees only, that is, individuals who receive support payments. Payees with male-gender names were identified as the single father population. The ex-spouse of payees with female-gender names were identified as the noncustodial father population. The entire single father population was surveyed. A random sample equal to 125% of the single father population was selected as the noncustodial sample. Predictions that the rate of incorrect addresses for the noncustodial fathers would be greater and that the return rate from noncustodial fathers would be less, led to the unequal numbers.

Once the population and sample were identified, a letter was mailed alerting the fathers of their selection, explaining confidentiality procedures, and encouraging their participation. (See Appendix B). The letter outlined the steps taken to maintain confidentiality and also provided the researcher's home telephone number and encouraged any father who had questions about the survey to call collect. It was assumed that the providing of the telephone number would help alleviate some anxiety on
the part of participants and, therefore, increase response rate. The survey packet was mailed four days after the initial letter. The cover letter accompanying the survey again reminded participants of the confidentiality procedures and again provided the researcher's home telephone number (see Appendix A).

A follow-up postcard was sent to all nonrespondents encouraging them to complete the survey. The telephone number was again provided encouraging a collect call if anyone had questions regarding the survey.

Definition of Terms

The definitions for "single father" and "noncustodial father" were formulated by the researcher. The definitions for "role model," "role," and "involved," are straightforward:

Single father: Fathers who, after divorce, are granted legal custody of at least one of their minor children and have primary responsibility for raising the child or children.

Noncustodial father: Fathers who, after divorce, do not have legal custody of any of their minor children and the day-to-day responsibility for raising the children rests with someone else.

Role model: A person whose behavior, example, or success is or can be emulated by others.
Role: The rights, obligations, and expected behavior patterns and conditions associated with a particular social position.

Involved: Engage the interests, emotions, or commitment of (as used in Research Question Number 12).

Data Collection

A survey was sent to 164 single fathers and 205 non-custodial fathers. The survey contained 19 questions designed to address 20 research hypotheses, 4 questions designed as a check for accuracy and to serve as an introduction to the survey, and 2 open-ended questions (see Appendix A). The open-ended questions were included to allow participants to express ideas, concerns, or emotions that the restrictiveness of the other questions would not allow. The open-ended questions were also intended to give the researcher clues to what divorced fathers felt were areas of concern needing further research.

Pre-survey introduction letters were mailed to all participants on January 16, 1990 (see Appendix B). The actual surveys were mailed January 19, 1990. The survey also included an introduction letter (see Appendix A). Seven days after the surveys were mailed, a postcard was sent as a reminder to all noncustodial fathers who had not returned the survey. Eleven days after the survey
was mailed, a postcard was sent as a reminder to all single fathers who had not returned the survey.

Validation of Survey Questions

A group of twelve divorced fathers who would not be among the surveyed population were asked to validate the proposed survey questions. The validation group was informed of the purposes of the study and were asked to examine the proposed questions for clarity, redundancy, and appropriateness to the study. Upon recommendation of the validation group, the final survey instrument was printed.

Data Analyses

In this section, each of the research hypotheses stated in Chapter I, page 7 and 8, will be written in the form of a null hypothesis. Each of the null hypotheses will be followed by a statement of the sample statistic appropriate to test the hypothesis, and the established alpha level. Corresponding survey questions will be identified.

Research Hypothesis 1 related to who had primary responsibility for raising the divorced fathers when they were children. Research Hypothesis 2 related to the parental emotional attachment of the divorced fathers. The review of the literature in Chapter II generated the
following two null hypotheses to be tested in this study.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in who had main responsibility for raising the fathers, as measured by responses to a self-report survey, between the two father populations. This hypothesis was tested by utilizing a chi-square test of independence on Question 21 of the survey (see Appendix A). The null hypothesis was tested at the .05 level.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no difference in which parent the fathers felt most emotionally attached to, as measured by responses to a self-report survey, between the two father populations. This hypothesis was tested by utilizing a chi-square test of independence on Question 22 of the survey (see Appendix A). The null hypothesis was tested at the .05 level.

The third research hypothesis pertained to the amount of responsibility for care of the children that fathers held prior to their divorce. The literature reported in Chapter II helped generate the following null hypothesis regarding Research Hypothesis 3.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no difference in the amount of responsibility for care of children that fathers held prior to divorce, as measured by responses to a self-report survey, between the two father populations. Appropriate data analysis for this hypothesis is a chi-square test applied to the results of Survey Question 18.
(see Appendix A). The null hypothesis was tested at .05 level.

Research Hypotheses 4 and 5 related to the fathers' child-rearing ability. The literature review helped generate two null hypotheses related to Research Hypotheses 4 and 5.

**Hypothesis 4:** There is no difference in the level of child-rearing ability as measured by a self-report survey, between the two father populations. Appropriate data analysis for this hypothesis is a chi-square test of independence applied to the results of Survey Question 19 (see Appendix A). The null hypothesis was tested at the .05 level.

**Hypothesis 5:** There is no difference in level of confidence in ability to raise children, as measured by responses to a self-report survey, between the two father populations. Survey Question 20 (see Appendix A) addresses this hypothesis and the appropriate data analysis is a chi-square test. The null hypothesis was tested at the .05 level.

Review of the literature indicated the possible lack of role models for single fathers and led to Research Hypothesis Number 6. One null hypothesis related to this research hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 6:** There is no difference in the perception of the availability of role models, as measured by
responses to a self-report survey, between the two father populations. Appropriate data analysis for this hypothesis is a chi-square test applied to the results of Survey Question Number 11.

Research Hypothesis Number 7 related to the employment status of the divorced fathers. The literature reported in Chapter II led to the generation of the following null hypothesis.

Hypothesis 7: There is no difference, as measured by responses to a self-report survey, between the two father populations concerning employment status. This hypothesis was tested using a chi-square test of independence. The responses to Question 8 (see Appendix A) were used to test this hypothesis. The hypothesis was tested at the .05 level.

Research Hypothesis Number 8 relates to educational attainment of the two father populations. The literature review helped generate the following null hypothesis related to this research hypothesis.

Hypothesis 8: There is no difference in the level of educational attainment, as measured by responses to a self-report survey, between the two father populations. Responses to Survey Question Number 7 (see Appendix A) were used to test this hypothesis. Data was analyzed using a chi-square test of independence. The null hypothesis was tested at the .05 level.
Research Hypothesis Number 9 logically follows from Research Hypotheses 7 and 8 and is related to the income level of the fathers. The review of the literature reported in Chapter II led to the following null hypothesis regarding income level.

**Hypothesis 9:** There is no difference, as measured by responses to a self-report survey, in the mean monthly income of the two father populations. Appropriate data analysis for this hypothesis is a t test applied to the results of Survey Question Number 9 (see Appendix A). The hypothesis was tested at the .05 level.

Research Hypothesis Number 10 addressed the amount of time it takes for the fathers to adjust to their marital separation. The literature review suggests that fathers who retain custody of their children may adjust more rapidly and this indication led to the formation of the following null hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 10:** There is no difference in the recovery time, as measured by responses on a self-report scale, between the two father populations. A chi-square test applied to the results of Survey Question Number 12 (see Appendix A) was used to test this hypothesis. Level of significance was established at .05.

Research Hypothesis Number 11 related to general life satisfaction. After careful review of the literature, the following null hypothesis was formed.

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Hypothesis 11: There is no difference in felt satisfaction about life as a whole, as measured by responses to a self-report survey, between the two father populations. Survey Question Number 23 relates to this hypothesis. The responses generated by this question were used to test the hypothesis (see Appendix A). The appropriate data analysis is a chi-square test. The hypothesis was tested at the .05 level.

Research Hypothesis Number 12 related to life-style description of the fathers. The literature suggested that fathers who have custody of their children may lead a more conservative life-style than noncustodial fathers. This led to the formation of the following null hypothesis.

Hypothesis 12: There is no difference in life-style description, as measured by responses to a self-report survey, between the two father populations. A chi-square test applied to the results of Survey Question Number 10 (see Appendix A) was used to test this hypothesis. The hypothesis was tested at the .05 level.

Research Hypotheses 13, 14, and 15 related to divorced fathers' likelihood to remarry, current marital status, and current relationship with women. The review of the literature reported in Chapter II led to the following null hypotheses.

Hypothesis 13: There is no difference, as measured
by responses to a self-report survey, between the two father populations concerning remarriage.

**Hypothesis 14:** There is no difference, as measured by responses to a self-report survey, between the two father populations concerning current marital status.

**Hypothesis 15:** There is no difference, as measured by responses to a self-report survey, between the two father populations concerning romantic relationships.

These three hypotheses were tested using the results of Survey Questions 14, 15, and 16, respectively (see Appendix A). A chi square was the appropriate data analyses for all three of these hypotheses and all were tested at the .05 level.

Research Hypothesis Number 16 related to the role that women involved in the fathers' lives were allowed to take with the fathers' children. The literature review helped generate the following null hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 16:** There is no difference, as measured by responses to a self-report survey, between the two father populations concerning the allowed involvement in child rearing by the women (excluding relatives, sitters, or ex-spouse) involved in the fathers' lives. Responses to Survey Question Number 17 (see Appendix A) were used to test this hypothesis. The data was analyzed using a chi square, and the hypothesis was tested at the .05 level.
Research Hypothesis Number 17 concerned the length of time the fathers had been married prior to their divorce. The literature indicated there may be a difference in the length of time the marriage was maintained and led to the following null hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 17:** There is no difference, as measured by responses to a self-report survey, in the mean number of years married, between the two father populations. Responses to Survey Question Number 13 (see Appendix A) were analyzed using a t test to test this hypothesis. The hypothesis was tested at the .05 level.

Research Hypothesis Number 18 concerned the age of the fathers at the time of divorce. The review of the literature led to the formation of the following null hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 18:** There is no difference, as measured by responses to a self-report survey, in the mean age of the fathers at the time of divorce, between the two father populations. Responses to Survey Question Number 5 (see Appendix A) were analyzed using a t test to test this hypothesis. The hypothesis was tested at the .05 level.

Research Hypotheses Number 19 and 20 related to the age and sex of the children of divorced fathers. Literature reviewed and reported in Chapter II led to the formation of the following two null hypotheses.
Hypothesis 19: There is no difference in the mean age of the children belonging to the families of the two father populations as reported by the fathers' responses to a survey.

Hypothesis 20: There is no difference in gender distribution of the children belonging to the families of the two father populations as reported by the fathers' responses to a survey. These two hypotheses were tested by using responses to Survey Questions Number 6, part "a" and part "b," respectively (see Appendix A). Data were analyzed using a t test and a chi square, respectively. The hypotheses were tested at the .05 level.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the construction of the survey, the validation of the survey, the data collection, and the methods of data analyses.

The following chapter presents the interpretation of the data following the methods explained in this chapter.
CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Introduction

Chapter IV continues the presentation of information pertinent to determining what differences, if any, exist in the sociological and demographic factors that are observed to be characteristics of fathers who have custody of their children, as opposed to fathers who do not have custody of their children. Chapter III reviewed the construction and validation of the survey, the data collection, and the method of data analysis. The survey responses and the results of the testing of the hypotheses are reported in this chapter.

Survey Responses

Surveys were sent to 164 men identified as fathers who, after divorce, were granted legal custody of at least one minor child and have primary responsibility for raising the child or children. This group was designated the single father population. A random sample of 205 noncustodial fathers were identified and surveys were sent to them. A noncustodial father was defined as that father who, after divorce, did not have legal custody of
any of their minor children and the day-to-day responsibility for raising the children rested with someone else (usually the mother). The number of surveys sent, the number not deliverable due to incorrect addresses, the number returned, and the percent of delivered surveys returned is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Number sent</th>
<th>Number not deliverable</th>
<th>Number returned</th>
<th>Survey return rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncustodial</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A letter was sent prior to the mailing of the survey which alerted all fathers to their selection as a participant in the survey, explained confidentiality procedures and provided the researcher's home telephone number (see Appendix B). The cover letter accompanying the survey again reminded participants of the confidentiality procedures and again provided the researcher's home telephone number (see Appendix A). Finally, a follow-up postcard was sent to all nonrespondents encouraging them to complete the survey. The telephone number was again provided.

A total of 16 individuals contacted the researcher
by telephone. Nine (9) identified themselves as single fathers, two (2) as noncustodial fathers, one (1) as the new spouse of a father who has custody of his children. Two (2) maintained their full confidentiality and did not reveal their father status. All 14 of these calls were very positive in nature. Two negative calls were received. One (1) was from the ex-spouse of an individual identified as a noncustodial father. The survey information was being sent to his former address and his ex-spouse was angry about information being sent to her address. The woman used the telephone number provided to demand that nothing else be sent to her address and stated that the survey would not be returned. One (1) almost incoherent call was received, but it was determined that the call was from someone who received a survey.

Fifty-three (53) single fathers and 111 noncustodial fathers did not respond to the survey. The confidential nature of the survey makes it difficult to assess the reasons for not responding or any particular characteristics of nonresponders, but some clues are provided in the returned surveys. The cover letter accompanying the survey (see Appendix A) instructs any father who receives the survey and chooses not to participate to write "Do not wish to participate" across the top of the survey and provide a brief reason for not wishing to participate.
Two (2) noncustodial fathers and one (1) single father returned surveys stating they did not wish to participate. One of the noncustodial fathers wrote that the information requested was not the business of the researcher. Three (3) individuals returning surveys late indicated that finding time to complete the survey was difficult. It could be concluded, therefore, that lack of time may also be a reason surveys were not returned.

The overall return rate was approximately what was expected and was considered satisfactory. There was a sufficient number of respondents in each group to allow for the analysis of data.

Hypotheses Testing Results

The reader is cautioned against over-interpreting or misinterpreting the statistical information reported here. All statistics were calculated using raw scores, but the reporting of the statistics is done in descriptive fashion. The researcher is aware of the limitations of using the chi square with small cell frequencies.

Research Hypothesis 1 related to which parent had the most responsibility for raising the father when he was a child. It was hypothesized that single fathers would more often report that their mothers had the main responsibility for raising them. Hypothesis 2 stated that single fathers would more often report a close
emotional attachment to their mothers than would noncustodial fathers.

To address these hypotheses, participants were given the following choices to the question: Thinking back to your own childhood, who had main responsibility for raising you? (a) mainly my mother, (b) mother and father together, (c) mainly father, and (d) other. The second question participants were asked to respond to was: Again think about your own childhood, which parent/adult responsible for your care, did you feel most emotionally attached to? Who did you feel closest to? (a) mother, (b) father, (c) other. Table 2 and Table 3 present the data as determined by the choices made by the fathers to the above two questions.

Table 2
Responsibility for Raising as Perceived by Each Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Single Fathers N = 105</th>
<th>Noncustodial Fathers N = 67</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainly mother</td>
<td>60.40%</td>
<td>52.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother and father</td>
<td>32.67%</td>
<td>41.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainly father</td>
<td>3.96%</td>
<td>4.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.99%</td>
<td>4.48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Chi square = 3.5001; degrees of freedom = 3; significance = .50.

No support was found for rejecting Null Hypothesis 1
that there is no difference in who had main responsibility for raising the fathers. Utilizing an alpha level of .05, there is not a significant difference in the responses. This means that the expected and observed frequencies are not beyond what would be expected by chance.

Table 3
Parental Emotional Attachment as Perceived by Each Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single Fathers N = 105</th>
<th>Noncustodial Fathers N = 67</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>75.25%</td>
<td>74.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother and father</td>
<td>6.93%</td>
<td>4.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>15.84%</td>
<td>16.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.98%</td>
<td>4.48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Chi square = 1.2499; degrees of freedom = 3; significance = .80.

No support was found for rejecting Null Hypothesis 2 that there is no difference in which parent the fathers felt most emotionally attached to. With three degrees of freedom, a chi-square value of 7.815 is needed for significance at the .05 level. The obtained value of 1.24996 is smaller than this value and was therefore not significant.

The third research hypothesis stated that single fathers had a higher degree of involvement with the child
care responsibilities of their children prior to marital separation than did noncustodial fathers. To answer this question, survey participants were asked: Prior to your separation from the children's mother how would you describe your involvement in caring for the children? (Circle most appropriate). Respondents were given the following nine categories to choose from: (1) none, I had no responsibility for the children's care; (2) less than 10%, most child-care responsibilities were my wife's or baby-sitter's; (3) 11-25%; (4) 26-49%; (5) 50%, I shared equally with my wife in caring for the children; (6) 51-75%; (7) 76-90%; (8) 91-99%; (9) 100%, I had total responsibility for the care of the children. Table 4 shows the responses to this question.

Null Hypothesis 3, that there is no difference in the amount of responsibility for care of the children that fathers held prior to their divorce, was rejected. The obtained chi-square value is greater than the value required for significance at the .05 level. A total of 81.35% of the single fathers reported that they had a 50% or greater share of the child-care responsibilities prior to the separation, compared to only 55.22% of the noncustodial fathers reporting a 50% or greater share. Conversely, 44.46% of the noncustodial fathers reported having less than a 50% share of the child-care responsibilities prior to separation, compared to only 18.62% of
the single fathers reporting less than a 50% share.

Table 4
Percent of Child Care Responsibility Prior to Separation as Identified by Divorced Fathers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single Fathers</th>
<th>Noncustodial Fathers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N = 105</td>
<td>N = 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>1.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 10%</td>
<td>1.96%</td>
<td>2.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-25%</td>
<td>4.90%</td>
<td>10.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-49%</td>
<td>11.76%</td>
<td>29.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% equal</td>
<td>29.41%</td>
<td>26.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-75%</td>
<td>20.58%</td>
<td>11.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76-90%</td>
<td>13.72%</td>
<td>11.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91-99%</td>
<td>11.76%</td>
<td>4.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% total</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Chi square = 16.7126; degrees of freedom = 8; significance = .05.

The fourth and fifth research hypotheses related to the father's child-rearing abilities. It was hypothesized that single fathers when compared to noncustodial fathers would give a higher rating to their child-rearing abilities and would express more confidence in their abilities. Null Hypothesis 4 stated there is no difference in the level of child-rearing ability, as measured by a self-report survey, between the two father
populations. To address this hypothesis, fathers were asked to respond to the following question: Compared to other men, how would you rate your child-rearing skills? (a) much less than most, (b) less than most, (c) about average, (d) better than most, (e) much better than most. Table 5 presents the results of the father's responses to this question.

Table 5
Self Rating of Child-Rearing Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single Fathers N = 105</th>
<th>Noncustodial Fathers N = 67</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Much less than most</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than most</td>
<td>0.95%</td>
<td>7.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About average</td>
<td>21.90%</td>
<td>35.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better than most</td>
<td>43.80%</td>
<td>28.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much better than most</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>28.36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Chi square = 12.64297; degrees of freedom = 4; significance = .02.

Utilizing a .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis that there is no difference in rated level of child-rearing ability was rejected. The observed differences between rating categories could not easily have happened by chance: 77.13% of single fathers rate their child-rearing skill either better than or much better than most, compared to 56.72% of noncustodial fathers.
giving themselves these high ratings. Conversely, only 22.85% of single fathers rate their child-rearing skills as average or below, compared to 43.28% of the noncustodial fathers.

Hypothesis 5 is the second hypothesis relating to child-rearing skills. It was hypothesized that single fathers would express a higher level of confidence in their child-rearing skills than would noncustodial fathers. To address that question, fathers were asked to rate their level of confidence to raise children on the following scale: (a) not at all confident, (b) not very confident, (c) about average, OK; (d) confident; (e) very confident. Responses to this question are shown in Table 6.

Four degrees of freedom requires a chi-square value of 9.488 for significance at the .05 level. The obtained chi-square value is smaller than this needed value and therefore Null Hypothesis 5 was retained.

Research Hypothesis 6 related to the availability of role models for divorced fathers. It was hypothesized that single fathers would report less availability of role models than would noncustodial fathers. Fathers were asked to respond in the following categories: (a) no models exist, (b) models are very limited, (c) models are somewhat limited, (d) there are enough models, and (e) there are lots of models. The fathers were prompted
by the statement and question: We all look to others and to society in general to provide us with appropriate models and clear definitions of the roles we hold. As a divorced father, how would you describe the availability of models or definitions of the father role you now hold? The responses to this question are shown in Table 7. While it is clear that both groups of fathers perceive the availability of role models as limited, there is not reliable evidence that the differences between the observed and expected frequencies of response are beyond what would be expected by chance. Null Hypothesis 6, that there is no difference in the perception of the availability of role models, was therefore retained.

Table 6
Fathers' Confidence in Their Ability to Raise Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single Fathers N = 105</th>
<th>Noncustodial Fathers N = 67</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all confident</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very confident</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>2.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About average, OK</td>
<td>11.43%</td>
<td>10.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>39.05%</td>
<td>43.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very confident</td>
<td>49.52%</td>
<td>43.28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Chi square = 2.70606; degrees of freedom = 4; significance = .70.

Research Hypothesis 7 related to the employment
status of the divorced fathers. It was hypothesized that single fathers would more often be employed on a full-time basis than would noncustodial fathers. Fathers were asked to identify if they were currently employed full time, part time, or unemployed. Table 8 shows responses.

Table 7
Fathers' Perception of the Availability of Role Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single Fathers</th>
<th>Noncustodial Fathers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N = 102</td>
<td>N = 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No models exist</td>
<td>20.59%</td>
<td>22.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Models are very limited</td>
<td>48.04%</td>
<td>37.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Models are somewhat limited</td>
<td>18.63%</td>
<td>24.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are enough models</td>
<td>7.84%</td>
<td>12.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are lots of models</td>
<td>4.90%</td>
<td>3.03%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Chi square = 3.15; degrees of freedom = 4; significance = .70.

Null Hypothesis 7, that there is no difference between the two father populations concerning employment status, was retained. The obtained chi-square value is smaller than the value required for significance at the .05 level.

Research Hypothesis 8 related to the educational attainment of the fathers. It was hypothesized that
single fathers would have attained a higher level of education than would noncustodial fathers. The participants in the survey were asked to circle their highest level of educational attainment when presented with the following choices: (a) did not complete high school, (b) high school graduate, (c) associate's degree or 1-2 years of college or specialized training after high school, (d) bachelor's degree, (e) master's degree, and (f) graduate work beyond master's degree. Table 9 shows the educational attainment of the fathers responding to the survey.

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single Fathers</th>
<th>Noncustodial Fathers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N = 101</td>
<td>N = 67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed full time</td>
<td>95.04%</td>
<td>91.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed part time</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently unemployed</td>
<td>4.96%</td>
<td>8.96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Chi square = 1.67746; degrees of freedom = 2; significance = .50.

Utilizing an alpha level of .05, no reliable evidence exists that there is a relationship between the variable "father status," and the variable "educational attainment." Therefore, Null Hypothesis 8, that there is no difference in the level of educational attainment
between the two father populations, was retained.

Table 9
Educational Attainment of Divorced Fathers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single Fathers N = 105</th>
<th>Noncustodial Fathers N = 67</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not complete high school</td>
<td>10.48%</td>
<td>8.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>45.71%</td>
<td>35.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate's/ specialized</td>
<td>31.43%</td>
<td>37.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
<td>13.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>1.90%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond master's degree</td>
<td>0.95%</td>
<td>4.48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Chi square = 5.3706; degrees of freedom = 5; significance = .50.

Research Hypothesis 9 logically follows from Research Hypotheses 7 and 8. It was hypothesized that single fathers would more likely be employed full time and would report a higher level of educational attainment. Logically, then, it was hypothesized that single fathers would report a higher mean monthly income. Participants in the survey were asked to respond to the following question regarding income: What is your current average monthly take home income? Table 10 shows the results of the responses to this question.

The observed t ratio of -2.36923 is greater than the
t ratio required to reject Null Hypothesis 9 at the .05 level of significance. The evidence is significant enough according to the previously set criteria to conclude that the observed relationship is not just a chance occurrence. It must be noted, however, that the direction of the relationship is opposite what was hypothesized.

Table 10
Average Monthly Take Home Income of Divorced Fathers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single fathers</td>
<td>$1497.13</td>
<td>$1400.00</td>
<td>$200 - 5500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncustodial fathers</td>
<td>$1852.43</td>
<td>$1500.00</td>
<td>$0 - 5500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: \( t = -2.36923 \); degrees of freedom = 159; significance = .05.

Research Hypothesis 10 related to the amount of time it takes for the fathers to adjust to their marital separation. It was hypothesized that single fathers would report shorter periods of recovery time. Fathers were presented with the following to respond to: Marital separation is a very emotional ordeal and it is doubtful that anyone could go through the process without being emotionally affected. It takes time to "heal" from such a stressful experience. In your judgment how long did it
take for you to completely adjust after your divorce?
(a) 0-6 months, (b) 6-9 months, (c) 9 months - 1 year,
(d) 1 - 1 1/2 years, (e) 1 1/2 - 2 years, (f) 2-3 years,
(g) 3 or more years, and (h) I have not completely ad-
justed. Table 11 shows the results of the responses to
this question.

Null Hypothesis 10, that there is no difference in
recovery time after marital separation between the two
father populations, was rejected. The difference between
the observed and expected frequencies are beyond what
would be expected by chance. Single fathers report a
more rapid recovery after marital separation than do non-
custodial fathers. 73.32% of the single fathers report
being completely adjusted from the stressful experience
of marital separation in 1 1/2 to 2 years, or less, com-
pared to only 56.72% of noncustodial fathers reporting
being completely recovered in that length of time. Con-
versely, only 26.65% of the single fathers report recov-
ery taking two years or longer, compared to 43.28% of
noncustodial fathers.

Research Hypothesis 11 related to general life sat-
isfaction. It was hypothesized that single fathers would
report feeling more satisfied with life as a whole than
would noncustodial fathers. Fathers were asked to re-
spond to the following question in the categories listed:
Thinking about your life and life-style currently, how
satisfied do you feel as a whole? (a) very dissatisfied, (b) somewhat dissatisfied, (c) feel OK, (d) satisfied, and (e) very satisfied. Table 12 reports the results of the fathers' responses to this question.

Table 11
Fathers' Adjustment Time to Marital Separation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single Fathers N = 105</th>
<th>Noncustodial Fathers N = 67</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 6 months</td>
<td>24.76%</td>
<td>11.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 9 months</td>
<td>3.80%</td>
<td>8.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 months - 1 year</td>
<td>15.24%</td>
<td>14.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 1 1/2 years</td>
<td>16.19%</td>
<td>7.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 1/2 - 2 years</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
<td>13.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 3 years</td>
<td>15.23%</td>
<td>7.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or more years</td>
<td>1.90%</td>
<td>4.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not yet completely</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
<td>31.34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Chi square = 20.451; degrees of freedom = 7; significance > .01.

A much greater percent (64.76) of the single fathers report feeling satisfied or very satisfied with their life than do noncustodial fathers (40.30). Only 1.9% of single fathers reported feeling very dissatisfied compared to 14.93% of the noncustodial fathers. Null Hypothesis 11, that there is no difference in felt satisfaction about life as a whole between the two father
populations, was rejected.

Research Hypothesis 12 related to the life-style description the fathers would provide. It was hypothesized that single fathers would more often report leading a conservative life-style than would noncustodial fathers. Fathers were asked to describe themselves on the following scale: (a) very conservative, (b) somewhat conservative, (c) middle of the road, (d) somewhat liberal, and (e) very liberal. The results of the fathers' responses to this question are reported in Table 13.

Table 12
Fathers' Reported Satisfaction Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single Fathers N = 105</th>
<th>Noncustodial Fathers N = 67</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very dissatisfied</td>
<td>1.90%</td>
<td>14.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat dissatisfied</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
<td>19.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel OK</td>
<td>19.05%</td>
<td>25.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>23.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
<td>24.76%</td>
<td>16.42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Chi square = 14.7366; degrees of freedom = 4; significance > .01.

Null Hypothesis 12, that there is no difference in life-style description between the two father populations, was retained. The observed chi-square value is smaller than the required value for significance at the
.05 level.

Table 13
Fathers' Self-Assigned Life-style Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single Fathers N = 101</th>
<th>Noncustodial Fathers N = 67</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very conservative</td>
<td>3.96%</td>
<td>4.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat conservative</td>
<td>36.63%</td>
<td>29.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle of the road</td>
<td>42.57%</td>
<td>38.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat liberal</td>
<td>15.84%</td>
<td>17.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very liberal</td>
<td>0.99%</td>
<td>2.99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Chi square = 6.29613; degrees of freedom = 4; significance = .20.

Research Hypotheses 13 and 14 related to divorced fathers' marital status. It was hypothesized that single fathers would be less likely to remarry than would non-custodial fathers and that single fathers would be less likely to be currently married. Two questions addressed marital status. Fathers were asked to respond yes or no to the questions: Since your divorce from the children's mother, have you remarried and are you currently married? Results of the responses to these two questions are shown in Table 14 and Table 15.

Reliable evidence that there is a relationship between father status and likelihood to remarry was not obtained and therefore Null Hypothesis 13 was retained.
With one degree of freedom, a chi-square value of 3.841 is needed for significance at the .05 level. The obtained value is smaller than the necessary value and therefore was not significant.

Table 14
Remarriage of Divorced Fathers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you remarried?</th>
<th>Single Fathers N = 103</th>
<th>Noncustodial Fathers N = 67</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>37.86%</td>
<td>26.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>62.13%</td>
<td>73.13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Chi square = 1.7753; degrees of freedom = 1; significance = .20.

Table 15
Divorced Fathers' Current Marital Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you currently married?</th>
<th>Single Fathers N = 103</th>
<th>Noncustodial Fathers N = 67</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>33.01%</td>
<td>26.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>66.99%</td>
<td>73.13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Chi square = .46643; degrees of freedom = 1; significance = .50.

Null Hypothesis 14, that there is no difference between the two father populations concerning current marital status, was also retained. The obtained chi-square value was smaller than the value necessary for
significance at the .05 level.

Hypothesis 15 related to the fathers' romantic relationships with women. The fathers were asked to respond to the following question: If you are not currently married, how would you describe your romantic relationships with women? Respondents were given the following choices and asked to circle one: (a) have a live-in companion, (b) have a close intimate relationship with only one person, (c) have several intimate relationships, (d) date often, (e) date occasionally, and (f) have close friends but not romantically involved. Table 16 shows the results of the fathers' responses to this question.

Null Hypothesis 15, that there is no difference between the two father populations concerning romantic relationships, was retained. With five degrees of freedom, a chi-square value of 11.07 is needed for significance at the .05 level. The obtained value is smaller than the necessary value.

Research Hypothesis 16 related to the role that women involved in the fathers' lives were allowed to take with the fathers' children. It was hypothesized that single fathers would not allow the women involved in their lives as active a role with the children as would noncustodial fathers. To address this question, fathers were asked to respond to the following: Are/do the women (not relatives, sitters, or ex-wife) involved in your
life (a) take an active part in rearing your children, (b) at special times participate with you in child rearing, (c) sometimes with you when the children are around but do not become involved in child-rearing responsibilities, and (d) never or seldom with you when the children are around. Table 17 presents the results of responses to this question.

Table 16

Fathers' Description of Romantic Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single Fathers N = 70</th>
<th>Noncustodial Fathers N = 49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Live-in companion</td>
<td>17.14%</td>
<td>30.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close with 1 person</td>
<td>35.71%</td>
<td>18.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several intimate</td>
<td>4.29%</td>
<td>4.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date often</td>
<td>4.29%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date occasionally</td>
<td>8.57%</td>
<td>12.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends, not romantically</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>34.69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Chi square = 7.5694; degrees of freedom = 5; significance = .20.

Null Hypothesis 16 stated there is no difference between the two father populations concerning allowed involvement in child rearing by the women involved in the father's lives. With three degrees of freedom, a chi-square value of 7.815 is needed for significance at the
.05 level. The obtained value is smaller than this needed value and therefore was not significant. The differences between the expected and observed frequencies are not beyond what would be expected by chance and therefore Null Hypothesis 16 was retained.

Table 17
Allowed Involvement in Child Rearing by Women Involved in Divorced Fathers' Lives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single Fathers N = 96</th>
<th>Noncustodial Fathers N = 60</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active part</td>
<td>42.71%</td>
<td>28.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special times</td>
<td>10.42%</td>
<td>21.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Around/not involved</td>
<td>21.88%</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom/never</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>35.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Chi square = 7.5137; degrees of freedom = 3; significance = .10.

Research Hypothesis 17 concerned the length of time the fathers had been married prior to their divorce. It was hypothesized that single fathers would have, on the average, been married longer. Fathers were asked to respond to the question: Prior to your divorce, how many years were you married to the children's mother? Results of the responses to this question are presented in Table 18.

Null Hypothesis 17 stated there is no difference
between the two father populations in the mean number of years married. A $t$ value of plus or minus 1.960 is required for significance at the .05 level. The obtained $t$ value is smaller than this and therefore Null Hypothesis 17 was retained.

Table 18
Length of Fathers' Marriages Prior to Divorce (in years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single fathers N = 103</td>
<td>8.89</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 to 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncustodial fathers N=67</td>
<td>9.87</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5 to 26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $t = -1.08482$; degrees of freedom = 168; significance $< .10$.

Research Hypothesis 18 concerned the age of the fathers at the time of divorce. It was hypothesized that single fathers would have a higher average age at the time of their divorce than would noncustodial fathers. Survey participants were asked to list their age at the time of their divorce. Table 19 presents the results of the responses.

Null Hypothesis 18 stated there is no difference in the mean age of the fathers at the time of divorce between the two father populations. The obtained $t$ value is smaller than the $t$ value required for significance at
the .05 level and therefore Null Hypothesis 18 was retained.

Table 19

Divorced Fathers' Age at Time of Divorce (in years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single fathers</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19 to 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 104</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncustodial fathers</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>20 to 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $t = -1.93488$; degrees of freedom = 169; significance = .10.

Research Hypotheses 19 and 20 related to the age and sex of the children of divorced fathers. It was hypothesized that the children of single fathers would have a higher average age and would more likely be male when compared to the children of noncustodial fathers. Survey participants were asked to list the ages and sex of their children. Table 20 presents the results of responses regarding the ages of the children.

Null Hypothesis 19, that there is no difference in the mean age of the minor children belonging to the families of the two father populations, was retained. A $t$ value of plus or minus 1.960 is required for significance at the .05 level. The obtained $t$ value is smaller than the required value and was therefore not significant.
Table 20
Ages of Minor Children of Divorced Fathers
(in years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single fathers</td>
<td>8.68</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 to 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 194</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncustodial fathers</td>
<td>8.72</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1 to 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 114</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $t = -0.0878$; degrees of freedom = 306; Significance < .10.

The final hypothesis tested related to the gender distribution of the children belonging to the families of the two father populations. It was hypothesized that the children of single fathers would more often be male than the children of noncustodial fathers. Table 21 presents the results of responses to the survey question regarding sex of the children.

Null Hypothesis 20, that there is no difference in gender distribution of the children belonging in the families of the two father populations, was retained. The obtained chi-square value is smaller than the value required for the significance at the .05 level.
Table 21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Children of Single Fathers N = 193</th>
<th>Children of Noncustodial Fathers N = 118</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>55.44%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>44.56%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Chi square = .377969; degrees of freedom = 1; significance = .50.

Summary

A presentation of the data collected through the survey was presented in this chapter.

A summary and report on the conclusions of the study are presented in Chapter V. Also presented in Chapter V are recommendations for future investigation.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Introduction

Chapter V is divided into three sections. The beginning section provides a review of the work accomplished in the first four chapters. The findings, a conclusion, and a discussion of each hypothesis comprise Section 2. Section 3 of this chapter includes recommendations for further research.

Review

The purpose of this study was to determine what differences, if any, exist in the sociological and demographic factors that are observed to be characteristics of fathers who have custody of their children, as opposed to fathers who do not have custody of their children. A review of the literature revealed that a large amount of information has been collected dealing with the situation of single mothers, but that nothing comparable exists regarding single fathers. The evidence from the literature also indicated that the increase in single fathering is at least paralleling the increase in single parenting in
general. It was felt that information regarding this growing population would hold valuable significance for the solution of practical educational, social, and community problems.

The review of the literature helped generate 20 research hypotheses. To address these research hypotheses, it was decided to survey a group of fathers who have custody of their children and a group of fathers who do not have custody of their children and compare the responses obtained. The conclusions drawn from the responses of the divorced fathers who answered the survey are discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Conclusions and Discussion

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis dealt with who had the main responsibility for raising the fathers when they were children. The responses indicate that both single and noncustodial fathers identify their mothers most often as the person who had main responsibility for raising them. A chi-square analysis showed there was not a significant difference among the response frequencies.

These data do not support at a significant level the hypothesis that single fathers would more often identify their mother as having main responsibility for raising them when compared to a group of noncustodial fathers.

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The data do, however, reveal a slight tendency for non-custodial fathers to name mainly father or other (8.96%) as having main responsibility for raising them when compared to single fathers (4.95%). This tendency may be an indication of some differences between the two groups of fathers. More research will be needed in order to determine if the tendency represents a real difference or only a chance occurrence.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 examined the differences in responses of the two groups of fathers when asked to identify, as a child, which parent they felt most emotionally attached to or closest to. A chi-square analysis showed there was not a significant difference among the response frequencies. The differences that are observed are not beyond what would be expected by chance.

These data do not support the findings of Gersink (1979) that single fathers tended to be more emotionally attached to their mothers and more distant from their fathers when compared to a group of noncustodial fathers. Gersink's (1979) information was gathered through extensive interviews and the data in this study is self-reported which may account for the different findings.
Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 examined the differences in responses of the two groups of fathers regarding the amount of responsibility for the care of the children that the fathers held prior to their divorces. The chi-square analysis showed that there was a significant difference among the two groups of fathers in the percent of child care responsibility they reported they held prior to their divorce. A total of 81.35% of the single fathers reported that they had a 50% greater share of the child-care responsibilities prior to the separation.

These data support earlier research (Bartz & Witcher, 1978; Gasser & Taylor, 1976; Smith & Smith, 1981) indicating that single fathers report having a very active role in child rearing prior to their divorces. In addition, this study compared the responses from single fathers to the responses from noncustodial fathers. By comparison, only 55.22% of noncustodial fathers report having a 50% or greater share of the child-rearing responsibilities.

It seems clear that those men who accept the single-father role have, in comparison to other divorced men, more child-rearing experience. A fact worth noting is that in this study 68.28% of all the men responding (both groups) reported having a 50% or greater role in child rearing prior to their divorces. This fact does not seem
consistent with our culture where the female tradition­ally accepts the primary child caretaker role in the fam­ily and therefore it would be expected that most men would report having less than 50% of the child-care responsibilities. There are two apparent possible expla­nations. First, the fathers participating in this study overestimated or inflated their percent of child-care responsibility. Second, the traditional balance of child-care responsibility where the mother is the primary caretaker was not the balance that existed in these fami­lies prior to the divorce.

**Hypothesis 4**

Hypothesis 4 examined the child-rearing ability of the two groups of fathers. Fathers were asked to rate their child-rearing skills compared to other men. 77.13% of single fathers rated their child-rearing skill better or much better than most, compared to 56.72% of noncustodial fathers giving themselves these high ratings. Conversely, only 22.85% of single fathers rate their child-rearing skill as average or below, compared to 43.28% of the noncustodial fathers. A chi-square analy­sis indicated that the observed differences between rat­ing categories could not easily have happened by chance.

Although it is clear that single fathers provide higher ratings to their child-rearing skill than do
noncustodial fathers, it should be noted that most fathers in both groups feel their skills are better or much better than the average man. Discussion of this finding is included with the discussion of the findings of Hypothesis 5.

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 is the second hypothesis relating to child-rearing skills. Hypothesis 5 compared the level of confidence in ability to raise children of the two groups of fathers. No reliable evidence was obtained that differences between the expected and observed frequencies of responses can be attributed to anything other than chance. The fathers' ratings of their confidence in their ability to raise children are approximately equal. Only 11.43% of the single fathers rated their confidence level as average or below, and only 13.44% of the noncustodial fathers rated their confidence level as average or below. The great majority of fathers from both groups responded "confident," or "very confident" when asked "How confident are you in your ability to raise children?" 88.57% of single fathers responded in these two categories and 86.56% of noncustodial fathers responded in these two categories.

Orthner et al. (1976) found that the 20 single fathers in their study felt capable and successful in
taking on their single-parenting role. The data relating to Hypothesis 4 and Hypothesis 5 confirm this feeling of confidence and capability expressed by single fathers. This same conclusion, however, might have been drawn if the data had been collected only from noncustodial fathers. Both groups of fathers rate their skills and confidence level well above average. The difficulty that many agencies who sponsor parent education classes have in drawing participants may well be attributable in part to this high level of confidence and high skill rating individuals assign themselves.

Hypothesis 6

Hypothesis 6 related to the fathers' perceptions of the availability of role models for the fathering role they hold. While the data clearly indicate that both groups of fathers perceive the availability of role models as limited, the differences between the perceptions of the groups was not significant. It was expected that single fathers would more often report the availability of models as "very limited" compared to noncustodial fathers. While the data reflect a tendency in that direction, a chi-square analysis showed that the difference was not significant. 87.26% of single fathers reported that models were limited, and 62.12% of noncustodial fathers reported the same limited availability of role
models. There appears to be a need on the part of both
groups of fathers to have knowledge and information about
other fathers who are successfully functioning in roles
similar to theirs.

Hypothesis 7

Hypothesis 7 concerned the employment status of the
fathers. It was hypothesized that single fathers would
more likely be employed than noncustodial fathers. The
data did not support this hypothesis. Only 4 of 103 sin­
gle fathers reported being currently unemployed and only
6 of 67 noncustodial fathers reported being currently un­
employed. All others reported being employed full time.
It was thought that lack of employment might have been a
factor in the decision process which resulted in the non­
custodial fathers not having custody of their children.
These data indicate that employment status does not seem
to be an influencing factor in the custody decision.

Hypothesis 8

It was hypothesized that single fathers have, on the
average, a higher level of educational attainment than
noncustodial fathers. Analysis of the data demonstrated
that no significant differences were found in the re­
sponses of the two groups when asked to identify their
highest level of educational attainment. These results
do not support the information gained by Orthner et al. (1976) who concluded that the single fathers in their interview sample had a higher level of education than would normally be expected.

**Hypothesis 9**

This hypothesis logically relates to the previous two. The literature indicated that single fathers would more often be employed and would have a higher level of education than noncustodial fathers. Following this indication, Hypothesis 9 stated that single fathers would have a higher average income than would noncustodial fathers. Analysis of the data did not support the previous two hypotheses regarding employment status and education level and also does not support this hypothesis regarding income level. In fact, it was found that the mean income of the noncustodial fathers exceeded that of the single fathers.

The mean monthly income for the noncustodial fathers was $1852.43 and the mean monthly income for the single fathers was $1497.13. This difference is significant but in the opposite direction than was predicted. An explanation for the results of the data analyses relating to Hypotheses 7, 8, and 9 may lie in the method by which the single fathers identified for participation in this study were selected. All single fathers in this study were
identified by court records as receiving child support payments. The reader is referred to the section on Design and General Procedures in Chapter III for details.

**Hypothesis 10**

Marital separation is a very emotional ordeal and it is doubtful that anyone could go through the process without being emotionally affected. It takes time to "heal" from such a stressful experience. Hypothesis 10 examined the differences in responses of the two groups of fathers when asked how long it took them to completely adjust after their divorce. Analysis of the data demonstrated that there is a significant difference in the responses provided by the two groups of fathers. It was hypothesized that single fathers would report a more rapid adjustment to the marital separation. The data support this hypothesis. 73.32% of the single fathers report being completely adjusted from the stressful experience of marital separation in 1 1/2 to 2 years, or less, compared to only 56.72% of the noncustodial fathers reporting being completely recovered in that length of time. The data from this study support the observation of Gasser and Taylor (1976) that the father's emotional adjustment seems to be enhanced when he is granted custody of the children. The responses of several noncustodial fathers to the survey's open-ended question indicated
that the removal of an active role with their children has been the most devastating experience of their lives. This is similar to the information reported by Weiss (1975) that not being a member of the children's household is the most important distinguishing emotional characteristic of the separated, noncustodial father.

Hypothesis 11

Hypothesis 11 examined the divorced fathers' ratings of their satisfaction with life as a whole. Analysis of the data showed a significant difference in the ratings provided by the two groups of fathers. A much greater percent (54.76%) of the single fathers report feeling satisfied or very satisfied with their lives than do noncustodial fathers (40.30%). A study by Stewart, Schwebel, and Pine (1981) reported several findings that indicate that divorced fathers with custody of their children exhibit less depression and anxiety and fewer problems in general adjustment than those without custody. Although information about and services for the single father are very scarce, it is apparent the noncustodial father suffers a greater feeling of loss over a longer period of time than does the single father. The single father's adjustment to his role certainly has its problems and emotional difficulties, but having custody of the children may be a prime determining factor in the
more rapid and healthier adjustment the single father makes to his new situation than does the noncustodial father.

Hypothesis 12

Hypothesis 12 related to the life-style description provided by the fathers. It was hypothesized that single fathers lead a more conservative life-style than do noncustodial fathers. Analysis of the data showed that the majority of both single fathers and noncustodial fathers responding to this survey view themselves as being from the middle to the conservative end of a conservative to liberal continuum. No significant differences in the responses of the two groups were revealed. The community from which the participants in this survey were selected is considered a conservative community and that fact may contribute to the distribution of responses toward the conservative end of the continuum.

Hypothesis 13

Hypothesis 13 related to the likelihood of the fathers to remarry. It was predicted that fathers with custody of their children would be less likely to remarry. This prediction was based on the expected social restrictions encountered in the life of the single father. The data showed that there was no significant
difference in the responses of the two groups when asked if they had remarried since their divorce from the children's mother. Of those fathers identified as having custody of their children, 37.86% had remarried compared to 26.87% of the fathers who did not have custody of their children. This tendency is in the opposite direction of what was predicted.

**Hypothesis 14**

This hypothesis relates to the current marital status of the fathers and is closely associated with Hypothesis 13. The data showed that there was no significant difference in the responses of the fathers to the question, "Are you currently married?" None of the noncustodial fathers who responded "yes" to having remarried (Hypothesis 13) responded "no" to the question, "Are you currently married?" Five of the fathers who were identified as having custody of their children responded "yes" to the initial question and "no" to the second question. This indicates that five of the fathers with custody of their children had remarried and subsequently divorced since their divorce from the children's mother.

**Hypothesis 15**

Hypothesis 15 concerned the romantic relationships of fathers in the two groups. It was hypothesized that
single fathers would be more restrictive in their relationship with women than would noncustodial fathers. The data, however, do not support this hypothesis. The single fathers' and noncustodial fathers' distribution of responses among the possible categories for describing their relationships with women are very similar. The fathers' responses in two categories do, however, appear noteworthy. Single fathers reported a live-in companion 17.14% of the time and a close intimate relationship with only one person 35.71% of the time. For noncustodial fathers, the total percent in these two categories was very similar but the distribution was reversed. Noncustodial fathers reported a live-in companion 30.61% of the time and a close intimate relationship with only one person 18.37% of the time. It appears that while there is no significant difference in the total responses, those fathers who do develop a close relationship with someone are more likely to share a residence if the father does not have custody of his children. The 17.14% of single fathers who reported living with a companion is very close to the 15% reported by Keshet and Rosenthal (1978).

Hypothesis 16

This is the final of five related hypotheses centering on the expected conservative nature of single fathers. Hypothesis 16 examined the role that the divorced
fathers permitted women (excluding relatives, sitters, or ex-wife) involved in their lives to take regarding the care and raising of the children. It was hypothesized that the women involved in the lives of single fathers would be permitted a less active role with the children than would the women involved in the lives of noncustodial fathers. Analysis of the data show that the differences in the responses provided by the two father groups could be attributed to chance. The data do not support the hypothesis. In fact, the data reflect a tendency in the opposite direction. 42.71% of single fathers report that the women involved in their life take an active part in rearing the children compared to only 28.33% of the noncustodial fathers reporting an active part in child rearing by the women involved in their lives. Conversely, 35% of noncustodial fathers report that the women involved in their lives are never or seldom with them when the children are around, compared to only 25% of single fathers reporting this. It is quite possible that the limited amount of time that noncustodial fathers have with their children accounts for this tendency.

Hypothesis 17

Hypothesis 17 addressed the number of years the fathers were married prior to their divorces. It was hypothesized that single fathers would, on the average,
report being married longer. The means of the responses of the two groups were similar. Data analysis showed no significant difference in the mean number of years married. The mean years married for the single fathers was 8.9 and for the noncustodial father 9.9.

Hypothesis 18

Hypothesis 18 is closely related to the previous hypothesis. Hypothesis 18 examined the average age of the fathers at the time of their divorces. Data analysis showed a significant difference in the mean age of the fathers at the time of divorce but in the opposite direction of what was hypothesized. It was hypothesized that single fathers would have a higher mean age. The data show the mean age of single fathers to be 32 and the mean age of noncustodial fathers to be 34.2. Age at time of divorce is the only one of the common demographic descriptors analyzed that was found to be significantly different, and it is opposite of what was hypothesized. Employment status, educational attainment, income, and length of marriage are other descriptors all found to be similar between the two groups of fathers.

Hypothesis 19

Hypothesis 19 examined the age of the children of the fathers in the two groups. The data demonstrated
that the mean of the responses of the two groups was similar and a t test showed no significant difference in the mean age of the children. This does not support the research hypothesis that the children of single fathers would have a higher mean age.

**Hypothesis 20**

The final hypothesis tested related to the gender distribution of the children belonging to the families of the two father populations. Exactly one half of the children of noncustodial fathers are female and one half male. In single father families, 55.44% of the children are male and 44.56% are female. Although this tendency toward more of the children of single fathers being male is in the direction hypothesized, the analysis of the data revealed that the differences observed were not significant. The data analyzed in this study regarding the ages and sex of the children of single fathers do not support the data reported in earlier studies (Orthner et al., 1976; Smith & Smith, 1981). Contrary to what Smith and Smith (1981) stated, it would appear from this study that the historical assumption of the very young needing a mother and the sanctions regarding daughters being raised solely by the father have lost influence.
Summary of the Conclusions

A total of 20 hypotheses relating to possible differences in sociological and demographic factors of single fathers and noncustodial fathers were addressed in this study. Analyses of the data generated suggest that single fathers differ from noncustodial fathers in several important sociological characteristics. First, single fathers took a more active role in the care and raising of the children prior to divorce than did noncustodial fathers. Second, single fathers rate their child-rearing skills at a higher level than do noncustodial fathers. Third, single fathers make a quicker recovery from the emotional stress caused by the breakup of the marriage than do noncustodial fathers. Fourth, single fathers feel more satisfied with their lives as a whole than do noncustodial fathers.

The data analyzed, however, do not support many differences between single fathers and noncustodial fathers suggested in the available literature. The study highlights concerns of both single and noncustodial fathers and points toward areas for future human services program development and research. Recommendations for future research are addressed in the following section.

Recommendations for Future Research

The recommendations for future studies outlined in
this section are presented in two areas. The first area focuses on studies designed to gather additional data that describes the single father or distinguishes the single father from others holding a parent role. Information of this type is needed before effective programs, policies, and procedures can be enacted or altered to better meet the needs of the single father population. The second area for future study focuses on the evaluation of those programs, policies, and procedures that this study indicates may be needed. Possible research questions in each of these two areas are listed.

**Data Gathering Research Questions**

What factors contribute to the single fathers' high level of involvement in child care prior to divorce?

What factors contribute to the single fathers' high rate of child-rearing skills?

Do all parents express a higher than average level of confidence in their parenting skills?

Do factors such as length of marriage or nature of present relationships relate to the length of time required to heal from the stress of a divorce? If so, in what manner?

What factors, in addition to custody of the children, contribute to the divorced fathers' overall feeling of satisfaction?
Program Evaluation Research Questions

Would divorced fathers attend a parent education program designed specifically to address their needs?

What program components would be most effective in drawing participation?

Would separate programs for single fathers and non-custodial fathers be more attractive than a combined program?

What types of programs would be effective in broadening the availability of role models for both single and noncustodial fathers?

What types of programs would be effective in lessening the impact of the stress of divorce for single fathers and for noncustodial fathers?
APPENDICES
Appendix A

Survey
To: Survey Participant  
From: Dan Patterson  

Enclosed is the survey you received information about last week. Please complete it immediately and return it in the enclosed envelope. If you are like me, putting it off for later may mean it doesn’t get done; and your help is very valuable.

The study you will participate in by completing and returning this survey involves research to gain information about fathers who hold non-traditional roles. The research is sponsored by Western Michigan University. Your participation in the study will end when you have completed and returned the survey. Please read the survey carefully and answer all questions. To eliminate any risk to you, the research is designed so that your name can not be associated with your survey responses. These letters were addressed by professional staff at M-Print Recording and as you can see your completed surveys are to be returned to me. Do not put your return address on the envelope. You should note that the surveys are numbered. That is so I may ask that a follow-up letter be sent if someone forgets to return the survey. For example, I might need to ask M-Print Recording to send a reminder letter to person number 999 because I did not get survey number 999 back but I would not know the name or address of that individual.

If you do not wish to participate simply write “do not wish to participate” across the top of the survey. Write a brief description of why you prefer not to participate and return the survey in the enclosed envelope. I would encourage you not to do that, however. The information you provide will be of benefit to many fathers and to the people from schools, courts, and other agencies who meet fathers that hold roles like the one you do.

Again, completing and returning the survey immediately will be of great help. If you have any questions you may call me collect at my home at (616) 843- . Thank you for your participation.

Please complete the survey now and return it in the enclosed envelope. Your help is very important.
1. Do you currently have legal custody of at least one of your minor children?  
   Yes _____ No _____

2. Do you and at least one of your minor children live in the same household?  
   Yes _____ No _____

3. Do you currently have primary responsibility for the care and raising of at least one of your minor children?  
   Yes _____ No _____

4. What is your current age? ________

5. What was your age at the time of your divorce? ________

6. Please list the age and sex of your children and indicate if they live with you.  
   Child’s age Child’s sex Live with you (yes or no)
   __________________ __________________ ____________
   __________________ __________________ ____________
   __________________ __________________ ____________
   __________________ __________________ ____________
   __________________ __________________ ____________
   __________________ __________________ ____________

7. Please circle your highest level of educational attainment.  
   (a) did not complete high school  
   (b) high school graduate  
   (c) associates degree or 1-2 years of college or specialized training after high school  
   (d) bachelors degree  
   (e) masters degree  
   (f) graduate work beyond masters degree

8. Are you currently (circle the most appropriate).  
   (a) employed full time  
   (b) employed part time  
   (c) currently unemployed

9. What is your current average monthly take home income? ________________

10. How would you describe yourself on the following scale? (circle most appropriate)  
    1 very conservative  2 somewhat conservative  3 middle of the road  4 somewhat liberal  5 very liberal

11. We all look to others and to society in general to provide us with appropriate models and clear definitions of the roles we hold. As a divorced father, how would you describe the availability of models or definitions of the father role you now hold?  
   (a) no models exist  
   (b) models are very limited  
   (c) models are somewhat limited  
   (d) there are enough models  
   (e) there are lots of models

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12. Marital separation is a very emotional ordeal and it is doubtful that anyone could go through the process without being emotionally effected. It takes time to "heal" from such a stressful experience. In your judgement how long did it take for you to completely adjust after your divorce? (circle most appropriate)
(a) 0 - 6 months
(b) 6 - 9 months
(c) 9 months - 1 year
(d) 1 - 1-1/2 years
(e) 1-1/2 - 2 years
(f) 2 - 3 years
(g) 3 or more years
(h) I have not completely adjusted to my new life style. I was divorced ________ months/years ago.

13. Prior to your divorce, how many years were you married to the children’s mother? ________

14. Since your divorce from the children’s mother, have you remarried? Yes ___ No ___

15. Are you currently married? Yes _____ No _____

16. If you are not currently married, how would you describe your romantic relationships with women? (Circle one.)
(a) have a live-in companion
(b) have a close intimate relationship with only one person
(c) have several intimate relationships
(d) date often
(e) date occasionally
(f) have close friends but not romantically involved

17. Are/do the women (not relatives, sitters or ex-wife) involved in your life
(a) take an active part in rearing your children
(b) at special times participate with you in child rearing
(c) sometimes with you when the children are around but do not become involved in child rearing responsibilities
(d) never or seldom with you when the children are around

18. Prior to your separation from the children’s mother how would you describe your involvement in caring for the children? (Circle the most appropriate)
(a) none, I had no responsibility for the children's care
(b) less than 10%. Most child care responsibilities were my wife’s or baby sitters
(c) 11 - 25%
(d) 26 - 49%
(e) 50 percent. I shared equally with my wife in caring for the children
(f) 51 - 75%
(g) 76 - 90%
(h) 91 - 99%. Most of the child care responsibilities were mine
(i) 100%. I had total responsibility for the care of the children

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19. Compared to other men, how would you rate your child rearing skills?
   (a) much less than most
   (b) less than most
   (c) about average
   (d) better than most
   (e) much better than most

20. How confident are you of your ability to raise children?
   (a) not at all confident
   (b) not very confident
   (c) about average, OK
   (d) confident
   (c) very confident

21. Thinking back to your own childhood, who had the main responsibility for raising you?
   (a) mainly my mother
   (b) mother and father together
   (c) mainly father
   (d) other

22. Again think about your own childhood, which parent/adult responsible for your care, did you feel the most emotionally attached to? Who did you feel closest to?
   (a) mother
   (b) father
   (c) other

23. Thinking about your life and life-style currently, how satisfied do you feel as a whole?
   (a) very dissatisfied
   (b) somewhat dissatisfied
   (c) feel OK
   (d) satisfied
   (e) very satisfied

24. Did you find anything difficult about doing this survey? If so, what?

25. Please feel free to write any comments you wish to make.

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Appendix B

Letter to Survey Recipients Which Preceded the Survey
To concerned fathers:

My name is Dan Petterson and I live in Ludington. I need your help. I am conducting some research under the guidance of Western Michigan University related to divorced fathers and their children. Your answering and returning a survey is the help you can provide.

Information is the basis for understanding. I am sure that almost all of you have had contact with someone from an agency or organization who did not understand the fathering role you have. Very little information is known about fathers who hold non-traditional roles. Your participation in this research, by completing the survey, will provide valuable information for future use by schools, courts, and social service agencies.

I wish I could address this letter differently but I do not know your name or address and never will. The addressing of this letter was completed by M-Print Recording, a confidential court recording service. Your name was randomly selected from Kent County court records. The research is designed so that your identity (name and address) will be kept separate from your answers to the survey questions. Only the staff of M-Print Recording will know to whom the surveys are sent. The surveys will be returned to me without your return address. With this method your name will never be associated with your responses. M-Print Recording will only have the names and I will have the survey results with no names. When compiled, the responses from everyone will provide important information that will further our understanding of fathers like yourself.

More information will be provided in a letter included with the survey. If you have questions you may call me collect at my home at 616-843- . Please plan now to help. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dan Petterson

Charles C. Warfield

Doctoral Advisor

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Appendix C

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board Approval
Date: January 8, 1990
To: Daniel D. Petterson
From: Mary Anne Bunda, Chair

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research protocol, "A Comparison of Sociological and Demographic Factors of Custodial and Noncustodial Single Fathers", has been granted final approval as amended in the 12-28-89 memo under the exempt category of review by the HSIRB. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the approval application. You must seek reapproval for any changes in this design.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

C. Warfield, Educational Leadership

HSIRB Project Number ________________ 89-02-10

End Date of Approval ________________ January 8, 1991

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