

The Single Parent Project NEWS

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From the Project Director

Welcome to this first issue of the Single Parent Project News. This newsletter is produced to keep you informed of how the family research project that you are involved in is progressing. I hope that you find here some useful information about what is happening with last year's visit materials, when we will visit again, and a few of the things we found.

I am delighted that each of your families participated in the single parent project last year. We had an astounding success in our initial sample. Nearly ninety-eight percent of the families that we asked to join the study agreed to do so.

However, the really important findings from a study like this one are dependent on your family returning for another year of visits. To be sure we get reliable information we must follow families over time.

Jay Beaman,
Project Director

When will you be contacted?

You will receive a letter from us about the end of February, followed by a phone call within about a week. We wish to return to all families we interviewed last year, but we need to know in advance of any changes in living arrangements so we can bring the appropriate questionnaires to our visit.

New toll-free number

For your convenience we now have a free phone number you can call in Ames. If you have any important changes since last year, a new address, a new phone, a change in family structure, or other concerns; call us at no charge to you.

Call 1-800-428-9599 and mention you are part of the Single Parent Project (SPP).

Why this Study?

The Single Parent Project you are participating in is unique for three reasons. First, it is a study of single parents in rural America. Most previous studies are in urban areas. It is the first major study of its kind to contact and follow the noncustodial fathers in a parallel phone interview.

This study is also unique in the attempt to reach families in a relatively short time after the separation or divorce. Your participation in this study has been crucial. Most studies rely on a small sample of the total population being studied.

Those of you who are in this study constitute the majority of families in Iowa who are recently separated and divorced, with 9th and 10th grade children. We had 210 families in our first wave of data collection. Of these, 208 families completed both interview visits.

What's next?

We completed our last interviews in late June, and immediately the questionnaires were processed through a questionnaire coding unit. All personal identification was removed and numerical equivalents replaced all answers. The questionnaires were then keypunched into computers for data analysis. The data was then carefully searched for any errors. This process is only now initially complete.

The family videos have been analyzed by professional coders, only after all personal identification has been removed. This process, which is quite time consuming, is not yet complete. The next step with the videos will be converting the coders' analysis to numerical equivalents and keypunching these into the computers. Of course all of this is done in carefully guarded rooms to protect these valuable and personal stories.

At the Center For Family Research in Rural Mental Health, where the Single Parent Study is housed at Iowa State University, we thought you might like to know some of the first things we are able to share from our study about this single parent family group.

Fathers in the study.

The Single Parent Project is unique in making a concerted effort to contact the non-custodial fathers in our study. We were able to find two-thirds of these fathers. Contrary to previous research reports, almost all the fathers we could find were quite willing to be a part of the study. This year we had 138 fathers in the study.

- We asked 138 fathers how often they were able to be in contact with their children.

Face to Face Contacts

6.5%	never
21.0%	once/ month
22.5%	2-4/ month
50.0%	once/ week

Phone Contacts

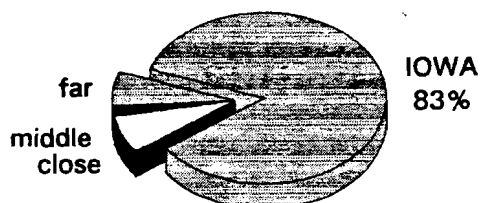
5.1%	never
13.0%	once/ month
18.1%	2-4/ month
63.8%	once/ week

- Of the 209 fathers that we know about, most are living in Iowa.

Residence of fathers

Iowa	174
Neighboring states.....	15
Two states removed	4
More distant.....	13

Fathers' State



MOTHER FOCUS

Who are the mothers in our study?

- What is the age of the mothers in our study?

Age Group

- 17.6% 29 to 34 yrs.
- 45.7% 35 to 39 yrs.
- 31.0% 40 to 44 yrs.
- 5.7% 45 to 50 yrs.

Special Thanks

Dear Moms,

I have read your notes at the end of the questionnaires. They are quite helpful. I know many of you are exceptionally busy with parenting, jobs, and (as you can see on this page) schooling. We do appreciate your organizing your family to make our visits possible. I hope that in years to come your investment in this study will help us understand the special situation of single mothers just like you!

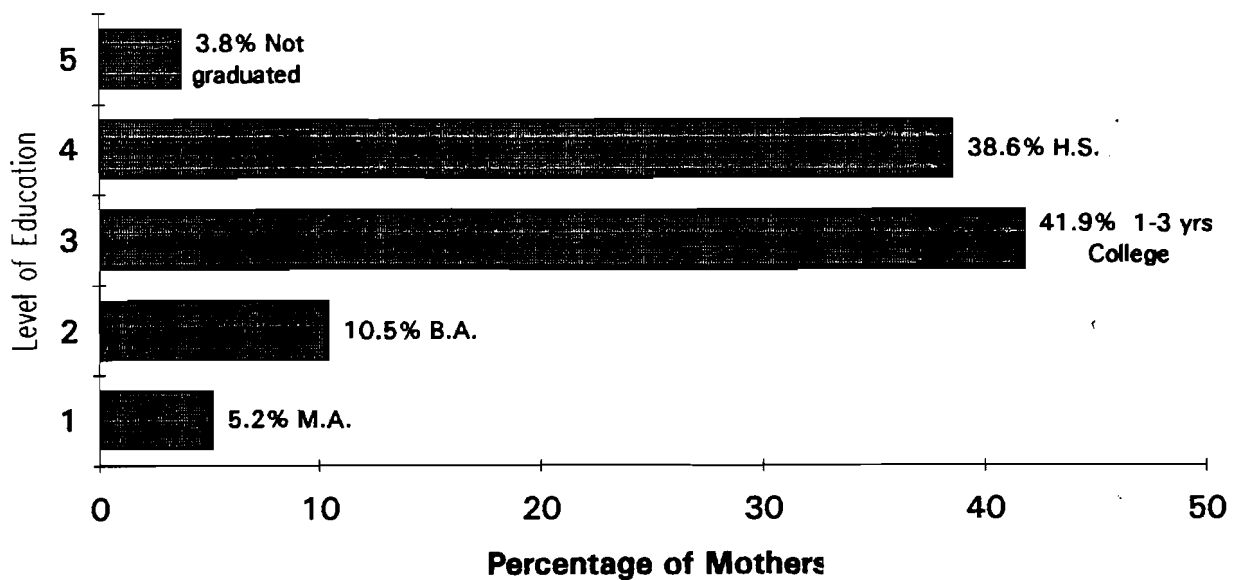
If the winter blahs threaten to give you the blues this week, take heart, somebody is listening. What your families have to tell us is important!!!

Continuing Education

We thought mothers might be interested in what others in similar circumstances have done concerning education since their separation or divorce.

- Sixty mothers (about 30%) went back to school.
 - 1 finished high school
 - 18 attended vocational or Junior College
 - 25 completed college credits
 - 5 completed B.A.
 - 9 work beyond B.A.
 - 2 completed Master's

Mothers' Education



Children of the Great

Depression

Did you know you are a part of a study of more than a thousand children in Iowa that is like a famous study earlier in this century. In the 1930s a researcher in California studied children and their parents, much like you are a part of this study. Those children were studied during the great depression of the 1930s. In fact, when those children grew up and married, their children were also studied. The study followed the same people for generations. The single parent project and the Iowa Youth and Families Study are also following families during difficult economic times to see how they are doing.

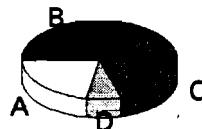
YOUTH FOCUS

Since each family member answered questions, we thought the "target" and "sibling" might like some information about how their group answered some questions from the study.

- What percentage of the youth in this study reported getting A's, B's, C's, and D's?

	<u>Ave. GPA</u>
22%	A
39%	B
32%	C
7%	D

Target & Siblings' Average GPA

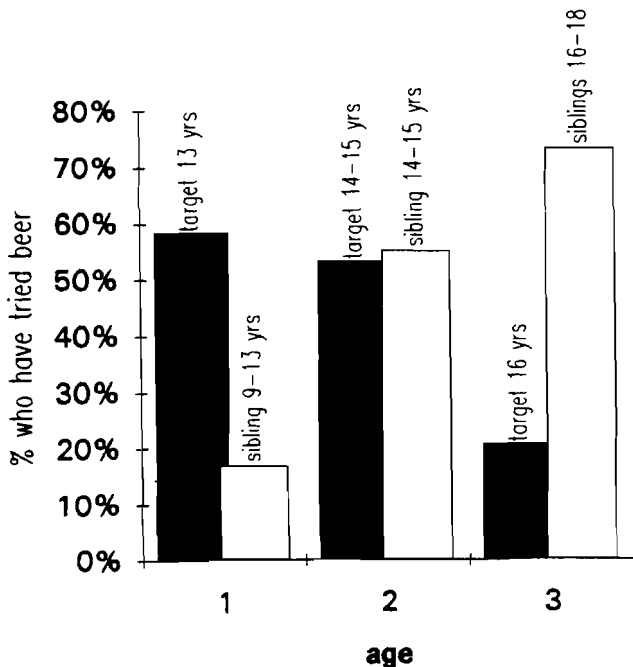


- How much do the youth in our study help out around the house?

"How often do you usually or always help with the following chores?"

8%	help grocery shop
10%	help prepare meals
15%	help with laundry
24%	set the table
24%	fix things
26%	childcare
37%	take out garbage
39%	do dishes
39%	care for pets
43%	vacuuming
46%	do yard work
79%	clean their room

Targets and Siblings who have tried drinking beer and their age



- What percentage of study youth have ever tried drinking beer?

52% targets have tried drinking beer.

37% of siblings have tried drinking beer.

- The youth in our study were asked to answer yes or no to the following question:

"Have you ever tried drinking beer?"

TARGET

AGE	YES	NO
13	58%	42%
14-15	53%	47%
16	20%	80%

SIBLING

AGE	YES	NO
9-13	17%	83%
14-15	55%	45%
16-18	73%	27%