A HOUSING POLICY FOR SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES: A PROPOSAL FOR GREATER VANCOUVER

By

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B.Sc., The State University of New York, 1964

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
The School of Community and Regional Planning

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 1984

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ABSTRACT

In 1981 there were 35,990 single parent families in the Greater Vancouver Regional District; 83.7% of these were headed by females. This study was undertaken to determine the nature and magnitude of the problems facing single parent families, and to offer recommendations which would alleviate these problems.

Housing is the focal point of the study because where and how one lives influences one's economic and social opportunities, sense of identity, and mental and physical health. The concept of access was selected as a framework through which housing for single parent families could be viewed. Access is defined in Chapter II as the ability to reach other persons, activities, resources, information, or places. Chapters III and IV provide a close examination of the single parent's limitations to access which stem from personal circumstances and the environment of the GVRD.

An analysis of the residential location of single parent families in the decade from 1971 to 1981 is conducted in Chapter V to see if residential patterns existed and if demographic trends were occurring. Chapter VI examines whether current government housing policies aid single parent families. Municipal, provincial, and federal government housing strategies to help single parent families overcome their limitations are recommended.

Information was gathered in a number of ways. Studies and reports from Canada, England, and the United States were examined to develop the complete picture of single parent families. Local information was obtained from census data, newspapers, and reports by agencies and government departments.
Personal contact was made with a wide range of professional persons and agencies connected with single parents. Finally, single mothers in the GVRD were contacted through the YWCA sponsored Single Mothers' Action Committee. Many of their views, statements and objectives are included in this report.

It was found that single parents in the GVRD have serious housing problems. Personal limitations which contribute to these problems include poverty, time constraints and exhaustion, and hampered mobility. Environmental limitations include high housing costs, low vacancy rates, discrimination, unsuitable environments, bylaws which limit access to suites in single family zones, and poor public transportation.

In both 1971 and 1981, the percentage of families that were headed by single parents was higher in Vancouver than in most of the peripheral communities. However, the percentage increase from 1971 to 1981 in the proportion of families headed by single parents was greater in the outer suburbs.

It was shown that most single parent families are not assisted by existing housing policies in the GVRD and a positive government response is now needed. This thesis makes recommendations to municipal, provincial, and federal governments concerning the interconnected accessibility issues of residential location, affordability, discrimination, building for families, housing information, and housing choice. It is the provincial government that ought to take responsibility for creating and coordinating a housing policy for single-parent families.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ii
List of Tables v
List of Figures vi
Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION 1
   Purpose of the study
   Issues, scope and methodology

II. THE CONCEPT OF ACCESS 8

III. PROFILE OF THE SINGLE MOTHER: DISPELLING SOME 19
    OF THE MYTHS
    Characteristics
    Implications -- Limitations to Access

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS 38
    A description of the GVRD
    Limitations for single parent families

V. RESIDENTIAL PATTERNS AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS 56
    The Wolch model and its application to the GVRD
    The case of Maple Ridge

VI. TOWARDS A HOUSING POLICY FOR SINGLE PARENT 80
    FAMILIES
    A housing policy as an appropriate Government
    response
    Present Housing Policies
    Guidelines and Recommendations

EPILOGUE: WHO IS RESPONSIBLE? 103
APPENDIX: CONCERNING METHODOLOGY 105
BIBLIOGRAPHY 108
LIST OF TABLES

1. Classification of Access According to Features, Users, and Distance Traveled 14
4. Total Population, Total Number of Families and Single Parent Families for Various Municipalities in the GVRD, Giving the Proportion of Single Parent Families as a Percentage of Total Families (1971) 64
5. Total Population, Total Number of Families and Single Parent Families for Various Municipalities in the GVRD, Giving the Proportion of Single Parent Families as a Percentage of Total Families, and the Percent Change Since 1971 (1976) 65
6. Total Population, Total Number of Families and Single Parent Families for Various Municipalities in the GVRD, Giving the Proportion of Single Parent Families as a Percentage of Total Families, and the Percent Change from 1976 66
7. The Percentage of the GVRD Total Population, Number of Families and Single Parent Families Living in the Various GVRD Municipalities 67
8. Total Population and Number of Single Parent Families in the GVRD Municipalities, Showing Percent Change from 1971-1981 69
LIST OF FIGURES

1. Map of Metropolitan Vancouver 5
2. Age Groups of Female Single Parents in the GVRD 20
3. Educational Level of Female Single Parents in the GVRD 20
4. The Core-Ring System Showing GVRD Neighbourhoods 39
5. Single Parent Families as a Percentage of All Families in GVRD Neighbourhoods 61
for my children
Chris and Laura.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to propose a housing strategy to improve the quality of life for single parent families in the Greater Vancouver Regional District. The underlying hypothesis is that because the absence of a male parent imposes various hardships and limitations on the day-to-day living patterns of these families, strategies must be implemented which ensure the physical, economic, and psychological well being of this group of people. Because these families seem to be caught in a downward spiral of hardship and deprivation for which no private or public solution exists, some sort of social policy must be developed specifically for them. A housing policy has been selected as an appropriate type of policy because it is hypothesized that adequate housing in accessible areas will alleviate many of the problems and constraints facing single parent families.

A cosmopolitan centre such as the GVRD is a complex entity whose components and operation are not clearly understood by laymen, politicians and professionals alike. As a result, planning which takes place is often confused and controversial, and plans which suit the most powerful groups of people are those most likely to be implemented. Disadvantaged groups like the old, handicapped, or the poor, who spend most of their energies on day-to-day survival, have not been well represented in the planning process. A large and growing group of disadvantaged people are the families consisting of a single mother and her children.
In 1981 there were 35,990 single parent families in the GVRD, 83.7% of which were headed by females.\(^1\) Single parent families constitute 11.7% of all families in the GVRD.\(^2\) These families contain not only adults who are struggling to pay the bills and nurture children, but also the large group of children (one out of six)\(^3\) who will be raised by one parent alone. The present quality of their lives and their future contributions as Canadian citizens are important issues. The formation of social policies, the construction now taking place in the region, and the allocation of municipal, provincial, and federal budgets should address the needs of these families.

Pinpointing the needs of a subgroup is inadequate as a planning procedure. An analysis of the needs and problems of a group leads to possible solutions, and therefore recommendations to be executed in order for the planning cycle to be complete. Policies regarding housing are set by various levels of government and all levels may contribute and cooperate in realizing various goals. It is hoped that this study will be useful to municipal, provincial and federal governments in planning for the future environments of single mothers and their children.

B. Issues, Scope and Methodology

Because 84% of single parent families in the GVRD are headed by females, this paper will focus on them. The target population will therefore be families composed of female single parents and children. The terms "single parent family" and "single mother" will both be used in this study. The first term is defined as a family in which "a natural mother or father is
bringing up children alone without the help of a parent substitute of the opposite sex living in the same household." The second term, "single mother", will mean a female single parent, whether she comes by this "single" status as a result of being unwed, separated, divorced, or widowed. The situation and problems of the male single parent is beyond the scope of this study. Although he may experience some of the same constraints and problems due to lack of time and energy, his financial circumstances differ markedly. He is apt to have an established job and a higher income. He probably owns a car. He may not suffer from the same types of discrimination in securing jobs and housing. Low income is the chief factor in creating a life of deprivation and struggle for the single mother, and it is this factor that chiefly sets her family apart from other families. A portrait of the average single mother in the GVRD will be drawn to show the various problems and limitation which arise from adverse personal circumstances.

However, this study will not concentrate on the single parent in isolation, but in relationship to the environment. The environment in this study will be the entire Greater Vancouver Regional District, since at first observation it seems that the district operates as a cultural and economic whole. The size and configuration of the land and water masses, the resource based economy, the existing laws, the intent of the present governments, the prevailing attitudes towards single mothers, and the operation of the housing market all contribute to the creation of a unique environment in which the single mother must manage.
Several terms will be used in this study to refer to the geographical area comprised of the City of Vancouver and the various municipalities and other populated areas which surround it. Officially, the GVRD is comprised of the municipalities of Burnaby, Coquitlam, Delta, New Westminster, North Vancouver, the District of North Vancouver, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Richmond, Surrey, Vancouver, West Vancouver, White Rock, and several other smaller population units such as Barnston Island, Belcarra, Lions Bay, the University Endowment Area and a few Indian Reserves, such as Musqueam. The total 1981 GVRD population was 1,169,831.\(^5\) The term "Lower Mainland" is an unofficial one that usually corresponds to the official "Census Metropolitan Area" which includes the GVRD plus Langley City, Langley Municipality, Pitt Meadows, Maple Ridge and many other smaller units. The 1981 Census Metro Area population was 1,268,183.\(^6\) Metropolitan Vancouver is also an unofficial term which usually refers to the area covered by the Census Metro Area. Because the GVRD is a census division for which statistics are readily available, the term "GVRD" will be the main one used in this study. Figure 1 shows the entire Census Metropolitan Area.

The study will compare the social and physical realities of the GVRD to a theoretically ideal environment for single mothers and their children -- one which would allow these people to maximize their social, economic and personal potential. While the author does not accept the idea that certain environments cause certain behaviours, it will be assumed that the features of the environment allow for certain behaviours and limit others. Some environments seem to be more conducive to the survival and
quality of life of the inhabitants than others. "The local community is a soil that can nourish and support human efforts or discourage and depress them." 7

Housing for single parent families has been chosen as the focal point of this study because it seems likely that the location and condition of the residential area influences or limits access to most of the other elements in the environment -- neighbours, transportation, jobs, stores, recreational and cultural facilities, schools and daycare, personal and medical care.

Because the wide variety in lifestyles, incomes and ages of single mothers makes it appear that they have nothing in common except their lack of a spouse, it would appear at first glance that it would be impossible to design a housing policy to address the needs of these families as a group. The study will show that there are general limitation arising from personal circumstances and the environment which must be addressed by housing guidelines and specific strategies in the GVRD.
ENDNOTES

CHAPTER I

1 Statistics Canada, Selected Population, Dwelling, Household and Census Family Characteristics, for Census Divisions and Subdivisions, 1981, Cat. E-568, Table 1.


3 Ibid., Microfiche # SDF 81A12, I 11, p. B-79. The total number of children 24 years and under in the GVRD is 337,095; 50,645 of these have a single parent.


CHAPTER II
THE CONCEPT OF ACCESS

Because the plight of the single parent family is so complex and because so little is known about their living patterns, to prescribe policy to help these people seems a hopeless task. The issue here is how to make decisions under conditions of uncertainty. Donald Schon, the author of *The Reflective Practitioner*, suggests that the best way to make sense of a unique and unknown situation is to devise a framework through which the situation can be viewed. The framework provides a way of naming those things and relationships to pay attention to and those to ignore. The problem is not to solve the problem but to define it.

The framework that will be used in this paper is the concept of access as defined by Kevin Lynch in *A Theory of Good City Form*. Access is one of the five dimensions used by Lynch as measuring devices to assess the quality of the environment as experienced by the users. The other four dimensions are vitality, sense, fit, and control. A "good city" to Lynch is one which provides a continuity of form and function while allowing for and encouraging change and growth. He sees the city as a huge ecological system encompassing all of the characteristics of the natural or physical ecosystem plus all of the human features such as "values, culture, consciousness, progressive or regressive change, invention, the ability to learn, and the connection of inner and outer action." The concept of "becoming" as developed by the psychologist Carl Rogers is evident in Lynch's description of the individuals' relationship to this "good city":

The good city is one in which the continuity of this complex ecology is maintained while progressive change is permitted. The fundamental good is the continuous development of the individual or the small group and their culture: a process of becoming more complex, more richly connected, more competent, acquiring and realizing new powers -- intellectual, emotional, social, and physical. If human life is a continued state of becoming, then its continuity is founded on growth and development... If development is a process of becoming more competent and more richly connected, then an increasing sense of connection to one's environment in space and in time is one aspect of growth. So that settlement is good which enhances the continuity of a culture and the survival of its people, increases a sense of connection in time and space and permits or spurs individual growth.

Lynch defines access as "the ability to reach other persons, activities, resources, services, information or places, including the quantity and diversity of the elements which can be reached." The quantity and diversity of people, jobs, and other elements in a metropolis is what makes it a stimulating and desirable place to live. Choice among the various elements provides the individual with the opportunity to create a lifestyle congenial to him or her and to grow and develop as a more competent and richly connected person. A diverse and rich environment is important for exploration and growth:

A good environment is a place which affords obvious and easy access to a moderate variety of people, goods, and settings, while this variety can be expanded if a person wishes to expend further energy -- an explorable world, whose vast diversities can be sought out or ignored at will.

Lynch classifies access "according to the features to which access is given and to whom it is afforded." His classification is as follows:
ACCESS TO OTHER PEOPLE

kin
friends
potential mates
casual acquaintances

ACCESS TO CERTAIN HUMAN ACTIVITIES

work
residence
services:
  financial
  medical
  recreational
  educational
  religious

ACCESS TO CERTAIN MATERIAL RESOURCES

food
water
energy
goods

ACCESS TO PLACES

shelters
open space
centres
symbolic places
fine natural environments

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

I have taken this list and expanded it in Table 1 to include specific people, places and things which are mentioned in various books and reports as being those features in the environment to which single parent families need access. Infants, children and teenagers, as well as female adults are included as users, because the target population is the entire family and not just the head of the household. It is easy to forget that children have needs which the community must meet, and to which they must have access. The developmental ages represented here
are composite categorizations suggested by various childhood and adolescent psychologists. The table has been so arranged as to reflect the increasing competency and mobility that people acquire as they mature.

The model presented here represents the wide range of choices which would ideally be possible for the adults, teenagers, and children in the single parent family. The model assumes unlimited access. The environment is assumed to be free of dangers and inefficiencies. Children as well as adults would be free to walk in their neighbourhoods without a threat from heavy traffic, and use public streets, parks, and buses without fear of assault by strangers. Homes are safe places of rest and retreat with enough space for each member of the family to enjoy privacy or some activity.

Neighbourhoods would be populated by friendly people of varying ages and lifestyles. A mix of people, with their accompanying values, goals, and personal and artistic expression, would create a vital and vigorous social environment. A large and varied group of people permits a choice of friends and mates. Neighbours are friendly, and offer assistance in emergencies, lending items and exchanging information. Ideally, one's children and parents would live nearby to visit with, give or receive advice, and celebrate the important passages of life.

In ideal environment, the single mother would have the choice of staying at home to care for young children, or of taking a job and placing the child in a day care centre that would give the same kind of loving care as the mother herself. There would be a variety of jobs available, so that adults could
choose one that matched their talents and personal needs. Income would not be a problem, and all members of the family would have access to not only the necessities of life but also the goods and services they need to engage in private activities or participate in group activities.

In traveling to work, the single mother would be able to either drive a car or board public transit at a stop within minutes from her door, and be at her work place in less than fifteen minutes. Buses or trains would have facilities for the loading of prams and strollers. There would be storage facilities for these and other items such as packages on the cars. Buses and trains would run frequently (every ten minutes) and routes would cover every part of town. Teenagers and children as well as adults would be able to quickly get to the recreation and cultural centres, schools, libraries, stores and open spaces where they interact with others, developing their physical, mental and social skills.

Stores and vendors providing low order goods and services such as food, banking, cleaning, hair styling, general merchandise, etc., would be within walking distance from all homes, so that children as well as adults could shop. Higher order and specialty shops would be conveniently located at transit stops or near places of work. Daycare centres would be located right in the residential area so that young children could be dropped off before the journey to work.

The model assumes competent people functioning in an ideal environment. However, Lynch states that access is unequally distributed based on a number of factors: limitations which are
derived from the personal circumstances of the user such as physical impairment or inability to pay for transportation, and limitations which are generated by the environment such as discrimination, seasonal or nocturnal variances, man-made laws limiting access, inefficient transportation services and the absolute limit of the quantity and quality of the features that can be reached. In the next two chapters the limitations of the single parent family and the limitations imposed by the environment in the GVRD will be explored. A comparison of reality to the model will expose those gaps which should be addressed in a social policy for single parent families.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAMILY MEMBER</th>
<th>TRANSPORTATION</th>
<th>A JOB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INFANT aged 0 - 1</td>
<td>Must be taken everywhere by an adult</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRESCHOOLER aged 1 - 5</td>
<td>Walks or cycles to local places</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Must be taken to distant places by an adult</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOL CHILD aged 5 - 12</td>
<td>Walks and cycles to local places. Can ride public transit if mature enough</td>
<td>Jobs provided by neighbours -- gardening, household help, etc. Delivering papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEENAGER aged 13 - 18</td>
<td>Walks and cycles to local places. Uses public transit. May drive a car.</td>
<td>Jobs provided by neighbours -- babysitting, gardening, household help, etc. May hold a job outside of immediate neighbourhood if transit available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADULT FEMALE</td>
<td>Walks and cycles to local places. Uses public transit. May drive a car.</td>
<td>The adult seeks out a job within a reasonable commute to match her interest, job skills and salary desired.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 1-2</td>
<td>SHOPPING (MATERIAL GOODS)</td>
<td>SERVICES AND PROFESSIONAL AID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An adult provides these for infant</td>
<td>The infant is carried to these by the adult</td>
<td>The infant explores his/her own home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>See adult column for partial listing</td>
<td>Is taken by adult to back yards, local parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is taken by adult on family outings, vacations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An adult provides these for preschooler</td>
<td>The preschooler is taken to these by the adult</td>
<td>The preschooler plays in the back yard, and immediate neighbourhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is taken by an adult to other places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An adult provides the bulk of these. Children may do some of their own at neighbourhood stores. They may travel to distant specialty shops such as comic book shops if they can ride public transit.</td>
<td>The child is usually taken to these by the adult, but the child can walk to these if they are in the immediate neighbourhood, or can use public transit if mature enough</td>
<td>The child uses local parks, streets, friends' homes, local movies, shops, cafes, libraries, recreational centres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is usually taken by an adult to more distant places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An adult may provide some of these. Teenagers often shop for their own clothes, personal goods and gifts.</td>
<td>A teenager may be taken to these, but can walk, cycle or ride to them by her/himself.</td>
<td>Local places are used but so are distant ones -- skating rinks, movies, shopping malls used as meeting places, etc., ski slopes, beaches. Is taken by adult to more distant places and on family outings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping is done locally, at places of work, or at a distant shopping centre</td>
<td>Walks or cycles to local facilities. Uses car or public transit for distant facilities: doctors, dentists, counsellors, lawyers, hospitals, clinics, govt. agencies including Welfare, and unemployment office</td>
<td>Local places such as recreation centres are used but the adult seeks out places of interest all over town. A central downtown usually has restaurants, pubs and dance places that adults frequent. Adults travel far distances for weekend or annual vacations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAYCARE, SCHOOLS, EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES</td>
<td>NEIGHBOURS</td>
<td>FRIENDS AND POSSIBLE MATES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant is cared for in own home, a sitter's home or a day care facility</td>
<td>For all age groups neighbours will be defined as people within one block or within the same enclave.</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child may go to preschool, a day care centre or be cared for at home or in another home.</td>
<td>Other children in the neighbourhood or met at daycare, relatives if available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nearest elementary school</td>
<td>School friends, children met at local parks, recreation centres, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nearest high school or a school or his/her choice.</td>
<td>School friends, other teenagers met at entertainment centres, malls, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job training courses, colleges, universities, apprenticeship programs, self-help programs offered by the YWCA, various govt. agencies, etc.</td>
<td>Individuals met at church, workplace, special interest groups, bars, cafes, nightspots, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 1-4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELATIVES</th>
<th>INFORMATION</th>
<th>HOUSING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother, father, siblings, two sets of grandparents, perhaps a great grandparent, aunts, uncles, cousins, great aunts, second cousins, etc. — the entire extended family.</td>
<td>Verbal communication</td>
<td>Housing is used by all members of the family as safe places of rest and retreat with enough space for each member to enjoy privacy or some activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessed where they live or at another relative's home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verbal communication, TV, radio, movies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verbal communication, TV, radio, movies, books, magazines, telephone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verbal communication, TV, radio, movies, books, magazines, telephone, newspaper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verbal communication, TV, radio, movies, books, magazines, telephone, newspaper, the mail, door-to-door flyers, conferences, workshops, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ENDNOTES

CHAPTER II

1 Donald Schon, "Will the Professions Survive?: The Age of Uncertainty," a taped speech given at the Vancouver Institute, Nov. 17, 1979.


3 Ibid., p. 116.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., p. 118.

6 Ibid., p. 192.

7 Ibid., p. 188.

8 This figure is based on the Fox study "The Access of Women to Work and Community Facilities," discussed at length in Chapter III. The Fox study showed that the average round trip to work for women with children was 37 minutes.

9 This figure is partly arbitrary and partly based on the average length of the trip to work shown by the Fox study. If the trip is to last a total of about 15 minutes, less than 10 minutes should be devoted to waiting for a bus.
CHAPTER III

PROFILE OF THE SINGLE MOTHER
DISPELLING SOME OF THE MYTHS

For some people the term "single mother" may conjure up a particular image. It is likely to be that of a young mother on welfare, perhaps uneducated and inarticulate with some bad habits such as drinking, smoking or having a promiscuous sex life. She is not pictured as having a personality, talents, problems, or aspirations. In short, she may exist as a stereotype instead of a human being for those people who think about her at all. The children of such a mother may be regarded as being unloved or uncared for, perhaps even neglected or abused. The single parent family is often classed with the "undeserving poor" as opposed to the "deserving poor" who are so by reason of age or handicap. What are the facts behind these stereotypes? Because of the paucity of Vancouver studies on single mothers, her profile will have to be built from information generated from a variety of sources -- 1981 and 1976 census figure, studies from other countries, surveys conducted by various organizations and statements made by single mothers in the GVRD at the present time.

Age

The median age for single mothers in the GVRD is about 40 years old. Figure 2 shows the age distribution. Most single mothers are between 25 and 54 years of age with very few mothers in the under 25 age group. Only 1,470 out of a total of 24,695 mothers were aged 15-24 in 1976. Most single mothers are therefore not the young stereotype pictured above; she has in fact reached the mid-life stage.
FIGURE 2.

AGE GROUPS OF FEMALE SINGLE PARENTS
IN THE GVRD, 1976. SOURCE: TABLE 26-
LONE PARENTS BY SEX AND AGE FOR CENSUS

FIGURE 3.

EDUCATION LEVEL OF FEMALE SINGLE
PARENTS IN THE GVRD, 1976. SOURCE: TABLE
31-3 LONE PARENTS BY SEX AND LEVEL OF
SCHOOLING FOR CANADA, Y PROVINCES, URBAN
SIZED GROUPS, B.C. 500,000 AND OVER.
CAT. 93-925.
Marital Status

In the stereotype outlined above, the implication is that there is or was no man in the single mother's life, that somehow she alone is responsible for her circumstances. B.C. census figures show that in 1981, of the total of 30,125 single mothers living in the GVRD, 8% were never married, 26% were widowed, 33% were separated, and 33% were divorced. Most single mothers were once married and have arrived at their present status through the death of their husbands or through separation or divorce.

Family Size

The single mother in the GVRD has a slightly smaller family than the average husband-wife family with children. In 1981 single mothers had an average of 1.6 children, while husband-wife families who have children had an average of 1.96 children per family.

Income

While male single parents in British Columbia have an income of $32,410, female single parents have a median income of only $17,103 (52% of their male counterparts' income). Table 2 shows the average incomes for male and female single parent families and for husband-wife families for various GVRD municipalities. Contrary to the stereotyped myth, 59% of single mothers in Canada hold either a full time or part time job, 45% hold full time jobs, and 41% derive their income from social assistance alone. After separation or divorce, most single mothers are financially deserted by the fathers of their children. Figures from the United States show that in 1973 only 22% of
court ordered payments to AFDC families (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) were being met in full and in about half the cases there was no compliance at all. There was no relationship between a father's ability to pay and his delivery. Men from every socioeconomic strata do not support their former wives and children after a marital breakdown.

Educational Level

Single mothers in the GVRD are well educated. More than half of the single mothers are high school graduates or have additional post secondary and university training. 36% have had some post secondary education. Figure 3 shows this distribution.

Car Ownership

Most single parents do not own cars. According to the 1976 report of the National Council of Welfare only 19.3% of single parents in major cities were car owners. This figure is quite low when compared to the 75.6% of husband-wife families who own cars. This figure does not address the possibility that the one single parent in 5 who does own a car may be a male, since there is no gender breakdown for this statistic.

Residential Mobility

This factor can only be deduced from the general 1981 census data. Roughly two out of three people in B.C. were born either in another province or outside of Canada. If the mobility of single mothers corresponds to this figure, the single mother in the majority of cases has left her home town and family to come to the GVRD.
### TABLE 2

**AVERAGE INCOMES FOR HUSBAND-WIFE FAMILIES AND SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES IN VARIOUS MUNICIPALITIES IN THE LOWER MAINLAND**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Husband-Wife Families</th>
<th>Lone Male Parent</th>
<th>Lone Female Parent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burnaby</td>
<td>32,348</td>
<td>32,639</td>
<td>16,626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Van. C.</td>
<td>29,224</td>
<td>32,881</td>
<td>14,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Van. D.</td>
<td>42,107</td>
<td>34,440</td>
<td>18,862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Vancouver</td>
<td>55,491</td>
<td>48,024</td>
<td>18,801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>34,718</td>
<td>29,145</td>
<td>17,142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coquitlam</td>
<td>35,058</td>
<td>33,210</td>
<td>14,759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Westminster</td>
<td>28,128</td>
<td>27,227</td>
<td>14,756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Coquitlam</td>
<td>32,017</td>
<td>27,049</td>
<td>13,941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Moody</td>
<td>34,512</td>
<td>19,169</td>
<td>13,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>35,522</td>
<td>33,071</td>
<td>16,188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrey</td>
<td>29,787</td>
<td>25,111</td>
<td>12,774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Rock</td>
<td>25,574</td>
<td>22,544</td>
<td>14,054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver C.</td>
<td>32,182</td>
<td>26,537</td>
<td>16,912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maple Ridge</td>
<td>30,030</td>
<td>23,884</td>
<td>13,518</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Home Ownership

According to the 1976 report by the National Council of Welfare, in 1974, only 31.7% of female single parents owned their homes. For male single parents it was about 50% and for two-parent families it was 74.5%.

Implications -- Limitations to Access

Many of the problems which single mothers face arise from personal circumstances alone. Because she is a woman and a mother she experiences limitations which childless people and males do not face. Almost all reports and surveys conclude that low income is the chief problem of single mothers, followed closely by the loneliness and difficulty of raising children alone. The interaction of the above characteristics create a vicious cycle of entrapment for the single mother for which no corrective program or course of action exists. The basic problems will be discussed in the following section.

Poverty

Among children in two parent families across Canada, 21.2% were in poverty; among those in male headed single parent families 33.7% were in poverty; among those in female headed single parent families, an incredible 69.1% were in poverty.

The poverty under which the single parent family operates means that their access to community resources is severely restricted according to a very elementary criterion -- their inability to pay. Patricia Marchak, a sociologist at U.B.C. argues that the chief result of poverty in Canada is the inability of the poor to participate in the society. When there is only $395 a
month to support a family of three, excluding rent, there is little left over after fixed expenses have been taken care of. Most things in life including education are not free.

For example, gym shorts, books, trip expenses, etc. are out of reach for many poor people. To be poor is to not be able to interact in your society, not to be able to travel, to have no voice in your community. This has profound psychological effects. You are cut off from society and think of yourself as poor. Your horizons are limited.

Basic necessities are a constant source of anxiety for the single mother. A Vancouver mother on welfare says, "What the single mother must do is choose between food and adequate lodging -- things that other people take for granted." The 41% of single mothers whose only income is welfare exist well below the poverty line. The Canadian Council on Social Development established the poverty line for a family of two at $13,292 and a family of three at $15,950. This figure is based on 50% of the average family income in metropolitan areas. British Columbia's welfare rates under the Guaranteed Available Income for Need Act (GAIN) are $8,100 a year for a family of two and $9,660 a year for a family of three.

The issue of income is further complicated in British Columbia by extremely restrictive welfare laws. Unearned income such as interest, pensions, widows' or orphans' allowances, money gifts, etc. are completely deducted from the GAIN monthly cheque. Earned income is also taken off after a paltry $100 a month deduction. The single mothers' group which has arisen from the annual Vancouver YWCA Single Mothers' Symposium wants the allowable earning under the GAIN Act raised so that the total of
earning will reach at least the poverty level. Otherwise it is not worth while for a mother on GAIN to get a job. One Vancouver mother says, "You lose money when you go back to work. There are more expenses starting with the money you have to pay the sitter. You can't spend all day in the kitchen making cheap meals from scratch. And you need bus fare, clothing and makeup for work."¹⁸

It could be argued that with adequate income the problems of the single mother could be overcome. She could buy a house in a desirable part of town, buy a car, hire a housekeeper and a governess. It is obvious that this solution requires a lot of money, more money than the average husband-wife family has.

**Lack of Job Skills and Experience**

A corollary to the above problem is the fact that most women do not have the job skills necessary to obtain a job with a salary high enough to maintain a family at an acceptable standard of living. Women in general lack access to high paying jobs because of poor training and guidance as youngsters. The National Council of Welfare maintains that our educational system perpetuates the notion that women do not have to train for high paying jobs because it is assumed that they will always be financially taken care of by a male.

Because it is still taken for granted that women will assume the bulk of the responsibility for raising the children and maintaining the home, they are improperly trained for paid jobs and are denied access to better positions with advancement opportunities. When the male provider fails to materialize, or leaves, or dies, women are suddenly told it is up to them to find ways to support themselves and their families.¹⁹
The 1981 Census shows that in the GVRD, 109,855 out of a total of 269,850 women in the labour force worked at clerical and related occupations -- some of the lowest paid work there is.  

Another National Council of Welfare report gives the following figures:

... there is an increasing job segregation by sex, with women clustered in low-paying positions. More than 62% of all women workers in 1972 were in administrative support, sales and service occupations and that proportion is increasing. Only 17% of all employed women in Canada are in professional or technical occupations and 27% of these are in teaching and nursing.

If the single mother wants a better paying job, going back to school or retraining might be the only route. This means maintaining a family on a currently inadequate income with perhaps some part time work, continuing to perform all of the tasks related to the home and mothering, and undertaking job training all at the same time.

**Aloneness and Exhaustion**

Perhaps the most devastating aspect of single motherhood is the state of being physically and mentally alone. Not only is there no other adult in the house to talk to, there is often no other adult in the single mother's life to give aid, comfort and advice. There may be no one to visit and no one to come to the mother's home in times of sickness or emergency. She must plan and do everything herself.

In more stable societies the extended family formed a peer group which provided mutual support and aid for two or more generations. In a study done in East London, Young and Willmont...
showed that the mother-daughter link was vital to the well being of each generation. Adult daughters did the shopping for their "mums" and took care of them in times of sickness. Mothers looked after their daughters' children, gave them advice on childbirth and childcare, and helped with domestic chores at the time of childbirth. Mother and daughter shopped together and chatted over tea. They borrowed items and food from each other and were a source of aid in times of trouble or emergency. Mums also found a nearby flat for their newly married daughters through their influence with the rent collector. Mum's place provided the opportunity to see siblings, participate in the holidays, ceremonies and rituals that mark turning points in people's lives or reaffirm religious and civic values.

There is no institution in modern society to take the place of family support. Without family ties, the single mother is isolated in many respects. Most people living in Vancouver were not born here and are unlikely to have parents living here. The single mother, often moving from apartment to apartment, is likely to be surrounded by strangers, and hostile ones at that. The problem of having no close relatives to call on for companionship and aid in times of trouble, although created by a mobile society, is borne mainly by the single parent. There is often no sense of community or peer support group which forms part of the single mother's world. She often feels quite alone.

And because she is alone, the single mother must do all the tasks and play all the roles which other members of the traditional or extended family played. She must perform the duties of both mother and father and be the bread winner at the same time.
Any input that grandparents or aunts or uncles give must be taken on by her also. As a result, most of her time is devoted to childcare, household tasks and securing an income. There is little time left for self maintenance or development and exhaustion is usually the end result. Being creative or pursuing dreams is just about out of reach. The problem of lack of time is so acute that single mothers often do not know what is happening in their environment. Judy Lindsay, coordinator of the annual YWCA sponsored Single Mothers' Symposium says that reaching single mothers to let them know about the symposium is a major problem:

Single mothers do not have the time, energy, and money to keep on top of the news. Even the mothers who organized this symposium were not aware of key personalities in the media and government. Single mothers do not listen to the news and read newspapers. They are not aware of self help groups. A door to door campaign might be needed to reach this audience.

Many single mothers do not know their legal rights, and are unaware of customary practices. One Vancouver single mother said, "I didn't know about the three months' eviction notice. When they ask me to move, I just move." During the last year she was given a one day notice, and moved out the next day with a baby in hand. One of the major demands being made by the Action Group that has grown out of the symposium is the right to be informed of their legal rights, and become educated concerning the law.

**Hampered Mobility**

In order to leave the confines of her home, the single mother is faced with several difficulties which restrict her freedom to travel to the services, opportunities and people she
needs. The first and most obvious problem is the lack of a car. Immediate, door to door service with room to carry parcels and children are forgone advantages. Instead, the single mother has to rely on public transportation with all the attendant difficulties and problems. Some of these problems stem from the inadequacy of the bus service itself and some stem from the single mother's identity as woman and parent.

Because no one else is available to mind the children in either a non-paid or spontaneous condition, the young single mother often takes her child with her. There is then, no longer a quick and flexible adult able to go anywhere at a chosen pace, but a parent burdened down with one or two children, one of whom may be squirming and needing to be led everywhere, and one who may need to be carried. There are also daypacks and equipment to be taken, and a stroller to get up and down stairs and into buses. A photo-essay was done of a mother and child travelling from the Jane-Finch area of Toronto to the Eaton Centre.

The mother waited 45 minutes for the bus. She got no assistance when she had difficulty getting the stroller on the bus. Subway station escalators were steep and long, and the stroller was tipped at a dangerous angle; the ramps in the Eaton Centre were few and far apart, escalators and stairs numerous; the stores were too crowded with merchandise to manoeuvre the stroller or prevent the child from grabbing things. Access to washrooms was poor, with no place to change the child; the mother changed the child on her knees in the Finch subway station on her way home. The whole trip took several hours; she bought a present and was exhausted.

As any mother knows, taking small children by any other means of transportation except a 20 minute car ride is an exhausting endeavour.
Furthermore, the mobility of women of any age or status is restricted because of their vulnerability as the weaker sex. They cannot run as fast as a male from an attacker and when caught are not able to fight back with much force. Females therefore avoid places where they know they may be a target for rape or robbery. Women with cars understand their vulnerability and drive with their windows up and their doors locked. Women waiting for buses have no such protection. Yet, most single mothers do not have a car and have to ride the bus. The fear of standing on streetcorners in questionable places like Granville Street in Vancouver, a place where disheveled transient men gather, restricts the female's freedom to travel at any time of day. Some jobs like waitressing end at late hours, and these women are subject to the harassment that is often imposed on them. While waiting for a bus one night on Granville Street, the author witnessed an uncouth man offer a proposition to a woman who was standing there minding her own business. She refused him and said, "What an idiot! I've been dealing with the public all day and I don't need this." She had just finished her downtown waitressing job at 8:00 p.m. and was going home. Night travel for some women is not even considered as a possibility.

Lastly, the single mother's mobility is restricted by lack of time due to her dual role as mother and breadwinner. There is no time for long rides to work or any other activity. A recent study showed that employed women with children had significantly lower time durations for trips than employed men with children for weekday and weekend work and leisure trips; they also had significantly lower time allocation than nonemployed women for
weekday and weekend trips. Fox argues that because employed women with children must use their finite stock of time for both the salaried job and household and childcare tasks, she must cut down on the amount of time allocated for trips. Because there is little choice about the time to be spent on travel, job opportunities are narrowed. Women who work full time and also take care of children operate with a very narrow time margin. The Fox study gives the following figures:

For employed women, obligatory activities constitutes over eleven hours or 47 percent of the day. This is in contrast to obligatory time durations of 39 percent for men and 33 percent for nonemployed women.

When time for personal care, which includes eating, sleeping, personal hygiene is added, only 13 percent (188 minutes) of the day was left for leisure and travel time. Moreover, for working women, household tasks not done during the week are deferred to the weekend using up 28 percent of weekend days.

For the single mother, with no spouse to share the childcare and household tasks, time allocated to these activities would be even greater, cutting down on the 13 percent of the day supposedly devoted to leisure and travel. It may be no surprise to anyone, then, that the single mother may not want to devote two hours a day to the trip to work. The Fox study showed that the average round trip time to work for women with children and a spouse was 37 minutes as compared to 53 minutes for men. The single mother, with more responsibilities than the working woman with a spouse could probably afford less time for the trip to work.
Conclusion

The portrait that can be drawn, then, of the single mother is a very different one from the stereotype presented at the beginning of this chapter. The single mother is likely to be a hard working, often exhausted parent whose main job in life is to establish a stable life for herself and her children. If she had been part of a middle class couple, she now finds herself as a lower income single as a result of separation, divorce or the death of her husband. She probably has a low paying, non-professional job as a clerical or service worker such as a waitress. She probably does not own a car and relies on the bus system for transportation. At the age of 40, her children are probably in school until 3:30, after which daycare of some type must be provided unless the children take care of themselves. The single mother has very little money left over after paying for rent, clothing and food, and has to distribute the money between herself and the children.

To go out into the community and find friends, possible mates, and participate in group activities, up-grade her skills, or find a job takes time, money and energy -- things the single mother does not possess in abundance. When you are poor, the new dress, the entrance fee, the cab fare, and the babysitting fee are all expenses which can hardly be afforded. The single mother usually finishes the day exhausted anyway, too tired to go out. When you have awakened at six to feed a small child, drop the child off at a sitter's home, work eight hours, do the grocery shopping, lugging the bags on the bus, coming home to cook supper, listen to the child's account of the day's adventures, clean up, get clothing
ready for the next day, pack lunches and daybags, there is no energy left. Mothering in itself is a full time, twenty-four hour a day job, especially when young children are involved. When the burden of a salaried job is added, the total responsibility is often far too heavy for the single mother to carry alone. A study of single parents in England summarizes the situation:

The picture we have drawn so far of the parents in our study depicts a group of mothers and fathers bombarded with problems of providing both the material and emotional needs of their families. Insufficient income, housing problems, difficulty in coordinating work and domestic responsibilities and of ensuring that their children were properly cared for -- these were the chief sources of potential stress which family breakdown brought to parents, and at a time when the grief and shock of their loss had left them least well equipped to cope.

Being on their own had meant for most parents a life preoccupied with making ends meet, keeping a job, running a home and meeting the needs of their children. What time, energy and inclination did this leave them for renewing their own social life, or building up a different one in the light of their changed situations?

The plight of the single mother is much the same as that of any lower income group -- "to develop a stable routine in the midst of poverty and deprivation." Because of her new status in the community, the task of the single mother is to order life for herself and her children; to move from dependency, chaos, and alienation to financial independence, order, and integration. Because of the circumstances described in this chapter, the single mother is likely to be trapped in a situation in which she cannot respond to the opportunities life has to offer and take part in the richness and choice that is available in North American society.
ENDNOTES

CHAPTER III


3 Statistics Canada, Census Families in Private Households by Family Structure, Showing Number of Children at Home, 1981. Microfiche # SDF 81A12, H 11 p. A-79, I 11, p. B-79. Although there is a total of 266,995 husband-wife families, 115,605 families have no children. The remaining couples -- 151,390 -- have a total of 296,995 children or 1.96 children per family.


6 Ross and Sawhill, p. 175.

7 Statistics Canada, Lone Parents by Sex and Level of Schooling for Canada and Provinces, Urban Size Groups, Rural Non-Farm and Rural Farm, 1976. Table 31-3, B.C. 500000 and over.


9 Statistics Canada, B.C. Selected Social and Economic Characteristics, 1981, Cat. E-580, Table 1 "Selected Population, Dwelling, Household and Family Distribution, Showing Selected Social and Economic Characteristics, For Census Divisions and Subdivisions, 1981." p. 1-177. Of 1,169,831 people in the GVRD only 485,170 were born in B.C. 353,445 people were born outside of Canada, leaving 331,216 who were born elsewhere in Canada.


11 One such study is a survey of Canadian member of "Parents without Partners" as reported in Benjamin Schlesinger (ed.), One in Ten: The Single Parent in Canada (Toronto: Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, Univ. of Toronto, 1979), pp. 107-111.
ENDNOTES CONTINUED

CHAPTER III


13 Lecture given at University of British Columbia, September 22, 1981.

14 Statement made during a group discussion, Housing Committee of Single Mothers' Action Committee, a Vancouver YWCA sponsored group, Nov. 5, 1983.

15 David Ross, Canadian Fact Book on Poverty (Toronto: The Canadian Council on Social Development, 1983), Table on Metro Areas.


17 Ibid., p. 15.

18 Statement made during a group discussion, Housing Committee of the Single Mothers' Action Committee, Vancouver, Nov. 5, 1983.


23 Interview with Judy Lindsay, coordinator and facilitator of the 1983 Single Mothers' Symposium, downtown Vancouver YWCA, Nov. 2, 1983.
ENDNOTES CONTINUED

CHAPTER III


27 Ibid., p. 162.

28 Ibid.


CHAPTER IV
ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Lynch has suggested that access may be limited by factors and circumstances stemming from the environment. Some of these are: discrimination, the time of day and seasons, laws which limit access, inefficiencies in the transportation systems, and the sheer quantity and quality of things that can be reached.¹ In order to obtain an overview of the specific environment featured in this study, a brief description of the Greater Vancouver Regional District will be presented here. Historic, geographic, political, economic, and social factors will be included.

Greater Vancouver, now the third largest urban complex in Canada, originated as a frontier town providing labour for the forest, fishing, and mining industries in the nineteenth century. The political decision to locate the Western terminal of the Canadian Pacific Railway at the Burrard Inlet determined the fate of the area as Canada's western port, which received and shipped grain from the prairies and timber and coal from the surrounding areas.

Walter G. Hardwick, an urban geographer at the University of British Columbia uses the term "core-ring" to describe the GVRD as an urban system comprised of downtown Vancouver and the radially-organized suburbs that surround it.² (Figure 4.) The core-ring system grew around the initial frontier settlement centred on the waterfront and railroad facilities along Burrard Inlet and False Creek. The core, with a radius of about two miles, includes the business district, old industrial and warehouse districts currently being razed for residential and commercial
FIGURE 4
GREATER VANCOUVER
REGIONAL DISTRICT

CORE RING SYSTEM
SHOWING NEIGHBORHOODS

REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM
UNITED WAY: SOCIAL POLICY AND
RESEARCH DEPT. MICHELE LIIOY
SOCIAL TRENDS IN GREATER VANCOUVER
1976, p. XIV MAP ADAPTED TO SHOW
CORE-RING SYSTEM
redevelopment, the high density West End, and the old single family
neighbourhoods rapidly becoming apartment districts -- Kitsilano,
Fairview, Mount Pleasant. Soon after Vancouver was incorporated
in 1886, an electric street railway system was extended into the
surrounding land in a radial pattern, making it easy for workers
to develop their own housing on private plots of land. This first
concentric ring of development containing the old suburbs was
segmented from the onset into socially segregated neighbourhoods,
with the large parcels of land to the south (Shaughnessy and
Kerrisdale) being occupied by the well-to-do, medium sized parcels
to the west (Dunbar and West Point Grey) by the middle class, and
small parcels to the east (Renfrew, Grandview, Hastings) by the
working class and various ethnic groups. North and West Vancouver
rapidly became part of the inner suburb system after the completion
of the Lions Gate Bridge across the Burrard Inlet in 1938. This
initial pattern of accessible, distinct neighbourhoods surrounding
a vital central business district continues today, despite years
of development.

The second or "peripheral ring" at a distance of five to
fifteen miles from the core is composed of pre-existing centres
that are being drawn into the growing Vancouver-centred region.
Among these are Bridgeport, Richmond, Ladner, Delta and Surrey to
the south on delta lands; and Burnaby, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam,
Port Moody, and New Westminster to the east. The outermost ring
is comprised of farmland and wilderness areas which are desirable
for recreational and speculative opportunities -- the mountain areas
to the north for winter sports, the Gulf Islands and the Sunshine
Coast to the west for boating and fishing, and the Fraser Valley
to the east.

The GVRD is officially comprised of the central city of Vancouver with a population of 417,965, and 12 other municipalities with an additional population of 751,865. Right now there is a political controversy concerning the role and legal power of the GVRD as a planning agent. Recent legislation (Bill Nine) initiated by the Social Credit Party, the British Columbian party now in power, eliminates the planning function of the regional government, although its administrative functions are still intact. The municipalities involved, however, have agreed to unofficially participate in cooperative planning for the region.

Founded by the provincial government in 1967, by early 1972 the GVRD possessed the following functions:

- capital financing
- regional planning
- community planning
- contractual services
- building regulation
- public housing
- hospital construction
- water supply
- sewage disposal
- regional parks
- air pollution

However, the GVRD does not have powers of taxation but relies on the municipalities which benefit from the various services to bear the costs.

In 1976 the GVRD designated sites within some of the major municipalities -- Burnaby, New Westminster, Surrey, and Coquitlam -- as regional town centres. The goal of the Livable Region Plan was to encourage population growth in outlying regions to relieve some of the housing and traffic pressures within Vancouver. Each town centre was to be an organized, self-sufficient core providing jobs, housing, shopping, and entertainment in a compact, easily accessed area. However, since this plan was adopted, the town centres have experienced difficulty attracting
"anchors" -- major institutions or businesses -- which would act as nuclei around which mini-downtowns would form. Big businesses continue to locate in downtown Vancouver and the CBD still has a high development capacity.

City planners estimate that an additional 55 million square feet of office development is possible in the core area. Downtown Vancouver still retains the advantages of agglomeration and concentration economies, high prestige, opportunities of face-to-face contact, and nearness to the airport. Tertiary and quaternary industries including managerial and administrative activities, banking, insurance, finance, head and regional headquarters, the stock exchange, trade and shipping organizations, and all related services including printing, accounting, advertising, and legal services; as well as cultural and entertainment facilities such as the symphony, concerts, clubs, the new art museum, and the new domed sport stadium are all to be found in the core area.

Vancouver continues to be the central city around which the other cities grow. Although the other municipalities have their shopping malls and office building which serve local needs, Vancouver remains the economic and symbolic seat of power for British Columbia on a provincial, national and international level:

The role of the downtown in the region is changing because it is no longer the location of the majority of jobs. Those jobs that stay downtown have special roles to play and take on a specialized character. The vision of downtown a total radial city, therefore, should be dead. The idea of downtown as a centre of power (economic and political) and the services to power is real. It remains the primate centre in an increasingly dispersed urban region.
The proposed light rapid transit system which was originally intended by the GVRD to be a decentralizing agent might in fact enhance the dominance of downtown Vancouver. Since the Advanced Light Rapid Transit (ALRT) is planned as a line running through several of the outlying municipalities into downtown Vancouver, it will probably serve to bring workers into downtown offices and back to their homes at night, thereby reinforcing the status of Vancouver's CBD as the heart of the district.

The High Cost of Inner City Land

Central Vancouver has not followed the pattern of deterioration which afflicts many other North American cities. The inner suburbs are all in good repair and downtown properties continue to command the highest rents. Average rents for office space in prime locations are around $20.00 per square foot while similar spaces in Coquitlam are $10.00 per square foot. B.C. Place Ltd., the provincial corporation responsible for the redevelopment of a 300 acre tract of land in the False Creek basin, credits its land holdings as having the highest potential value of any land in the province:

... B.C. Place is the largest urban-redevelopment project underway in North America, and our site has the potential to become one of the most valuable landholdings in the Western world.

Residential rent differentials parallel commercial rates. The beaches, harbour and mountain views, parks, shopping districts, theatres and clubs make the central core and surrounding suburbs desirable places to live. As a result the inner suburbs are expensive places to live whether one is buying or renting a home.
As of April 1, 1984, average prices for a bungalow in various inner suburban areas are as follows: East Vancouver: $129,000, North Vancouver: $127,000, West Vancouver: $168,000, Kerrisdale: $193,000. A family with one wage earner can hardly afford a home in the inner suburbs. Even in 1975, before the huge 1979-1980 housing booms, United Way issued the following statement:

Potential home owners earning an average industrial wage ($9,000 in 1973) have been forced further out from the urban core, until they could barely afford to purchase anywhere in Metropolitan Vancouver, or more likely, have been forced out of the house ownership market altogether.

During the boom, housing and land prices doubled, and in some cases tripled, so that what had once been a $150,000 home in the prestigious neighbourhoods of the British Properties and Shaughnessy became $350,000 homes. The average price of a single family home in the GVRD doubled from $87,500 to $179,000 in 1980. High mortgage rates in the seventies and eighties (at one time up to 19% for a three year term, now about 12%) made these already expensive homes extremely expensive to finance. Families with equity from a previous home or couples with two high salaries were in the best position to buy houses.

The Rental Market

Without equity for a down payment or a high enough wage to carry the mortgage, the rental market is the other chief alternative for low income people. Here however, market forces have not only produced an extremely low vacancy rate (1.7% as of Oct. 1, 1983), they have also reduced the number and size of apartments now being constructed. Economic factors make investment
in apartments less profitable than condominiums, which are at present the main type of housing construction in the core area. Housing for B.C. Place, the major redevelopment project in the core, will have 70% of its units designated for singles and couples, and 15% for the elderly, leaving only 15% of the units for families with children. Smaller units are being planned and built for the core area in general. Families looking for larger units to house one or more children are hard pressed to find any suitable accommodation, much less affordable, suitable accommodation. Suites with more than one bedroom are hard to find:

In the region as a whole in 1972, 13.6 percent of the apartment dwellings were bachelor suites, 62.3 percent were one bedroom, 20.4 percent were two bedroom and only 3.7 percent were three bedroom.

Single mothers looking for an apartment would probably consult the newspapers to see what was available and the rents discussed below are presented as one would find them in a Sunday newspaper. Even though they are taken from a day picked at random, the rents match the average rents published by the United Way. These figures are presented in Table 3.

An examination of the classified ads in the Province or The Sun, Vancouver's main newspapers reveals that rents for available apartments are extremely high. In the Jan. 8th Province in the West End, the downtown apartment area, there were three bachelor suites listed at an average rent of $315, six one bedroom suites at an average of $465, two two bedroom at an average of $1,175, and one three bedroom at $750. In Vancouver's West Side (west of Main St.) there were fifty-three apartments listed. Of these six (11.3%) were bachelor suites at about $341, twenty (37.7%)
### TABLE 3

**AVERAGE MONTHLY RENTS FOR SUITES IN VARIOUS LOWER MAINLAND MUNICIPALITIES, 1981**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Bach</th>
<th>1 Bdm</th>
<th>2 Bdm</th>
<th>3+ Bdm</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Burnaby</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Vancouver</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Vancouver</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coquitlam</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Westminster</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Coquitlam</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Moody</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>275</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>500</td>
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<td>185</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>477</td>
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<tr>
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<td>336</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>601</td>
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<tr>
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<td>285</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>708</td>
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<tr>
<td>Langley</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maple Ridge</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Mainland</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>540</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

were one bedroom suites at about $460. There were twenty-four two bedroom suites (45.2%) at an average rent of $694. There were only two three bedroom suites (3.7%) at $650 and $939, and one four bedroom suite (1.8%) at $850.

Rents are cheaper in the peripheral ring of suburbs. In the New Westminster area there were thirty apartments listed with averages of $282 for bachelor suites, and $350 for one bedroom suites. There were only six two bedroom suites at an average of $394 and two three bedroom suites at around $500. In the Coquitlam, Port Moody area the averages were $366, $451, and $561 for one, two and three bedroom suites respectively. Vancouver's East Side is also cheaper with more suites to choose from, although 27% of the 85 suites listed in the Sunday, January 15 Province were "basement suites". The averages were $245, $359, $437, and $519 for bachelor, one-bedroom, two bedroom and three bedroom suites respectively. It seems much cheaper to house a larger family in these areas since the price of the larger units does not rise as fast as in the West End or the West Side.

Having to live in a neighbourhood specifically zoned for apartments clearly cuts down on the range of locations the single mother may choose from. One might not be able to find an apartment near a chosen job because of the segregation of neighbourhoods according to tenure type:

Whether one wants to or has to rent will also influence greatly where one will live. In North Vancouver City, New Westminster and Vancouver City, more than half of the occupied dwellings are rentals. Within Vancouver City, there are several areas where rentals are concentrated. In another group of municipalities, Delta, Surrey, Port Coquitlam, North Vancouver District, and Coquitlam, 75 percent or more of the dwellings are owned.
Rental units were heavily concentrated around False Creek where they accounted for more than 80 percent of all the units.

**Discrimination**

One important environmental factor limiting access to the apartment stock is discrimination against single mothers and children. Many of the ads in the Province specified "no children" or "adults only." About 20% of the ads in the West Side section and 33% of the ads in the New Westminster section had these clauses. Moreover, although landlords may not overtly specify "no children" in their ads, they may ultimately choose the working couple, career singles, or students as preferable tenants to the single mother with children. Although there are no statistics in Vancouver on reason for discrimination, it can be assumed that single mothers are viewed as the type of person who will not keep up the property, and may not have enough money to pay the rent; children may be seen as destructive forces.

This type of discrimination is legal, since the B.C. Human Rights Act does not specifically include age or source of income as characteristics to be included along with those of race, sex, marital status, religion, colour, ancestry, or places of origin in its anti-discrimination chapter. (Chap. 119, S.P.C. 1973.) Children are not regarded by the law as individuals who have the right to a place to live. They may be turned away from shelter on the grounds that they are children. Single mothers may be turned away from shelter on the grounds that they are not working or on any other stereotyped idea that may exist in the minds of landlords. Landlords apparently do not put much faith in the ability of former spouses or the government to provide the necessary
The law in this case condones discrimination and is by default allowing landlords the option of withholding a huge percentage of the rental units from single parent families. For families with children, and particularly for single-parent families headed by a woman on welfare, discrimination can be a major barrier to obtaining housing. As the rental vacancy drops, discrimination rises; landlords have the opportunities to choose the tenants they would like to have. There are limited legal resources against discrimination in the housing field (discrimination against children, people on welfare, and the handicapped is legal). This raises the question of whether the B.C. Human Rights Code should be expanded to include the rights of children, the handicapped, and people on welfare. An equally key problem is that people (particularly single parent families) often do not have the resources (time, energy, money, knowledge, confidence) to be persistent in dealing with cases of discrimination.

(United Way p. 18)

**Unsuitable Environments**

Another environmental factor which has been touched on briefly in the previous section is that of the hostile environment into which the single parent families are forced because of economic constraints, but into which they do not fit. The West End, ideal in being within walking distance of the CBD, suffers from a myriad of street problems including drugs, homosexuality and prostitution. Recent newspaper articles highlight the fear and horror many West End residents experience daily. A resident is quoted as saying:

I looked out my window and there below in the parking lot was a young girl hooker giving oral sex to a male adult. People going by in a steady flow of cars could see the proceedings. Hundreds of apartment windows looked down on
that well-lit parkinglot... A young child, an elderly person, someone's daughter, someone's wife, would have seen (and perhaps did) exactly what I saw... The youngsters view it in amazement, the elderly view it in horror and many people, like myself, view it with utter disgust.

The columnist goes on to say that "All women on the streets, including nurses from St. Paul's, are considered fair game. So are young kids on their way from school." Although this is one of the main apartment areas in Vancouver, it is not a neighbourhood that a family would feel comfortable or safe in.

Moreover, most apartment areas were planned and built without the features that are required by families. Lack of inside and outside play space, narrow and dark stairs, lack of communication between mothers who may be inside and children who go out to play are all classic faults of apartment buildings. Neighbours are also part of the unsuitable environment. One single mother talks about her "environment" in a West End apartment. "Part of my environment is my huge picture window covered with almost transparent blinds. In the morning, we can see the man across the way parading around in the nude, and at any time of day, we may see homosexual lovemaking between him and his friends. This is the environment where I am raising my child." Another single mother says that her male downstairs neighbour deliberately turns his stereo up full volume during her baby's nap time in retaliation for the baby crying at night, despite her attempts to come to some sort of agreement. When she meets them in the halls, these types of neighbours stare in a leering manner instead of offering a friendly greeting. She has since moved into a house with two other single mothers.
Illegal Suites

Moving into a quiet apartment in a home might be the best solution for the single mother except for the fact that in most of the municipalities in the GVRD subdividing a single family house into several suites is illegal. Zoning laws prohibiting subdivision carry a double edged blade. On the one hand, they prevent the woman who owns a house in the suburbs to supplement her income by renting out a portion of her home. Netter and Price calls this group of women the "nouveau poor" because the loss of a husband and his income has resulted in a sudden and dramatic shift from middle to low income status.  

The heavy mortgage, often too much for the single mother to carry alone forces her to sell the home and move to a brand new location, usually as a renter.

On the other hand single mothers who would find a rented suite in a single family home with its private back garden an ideal place to raise children are denied access to these suitable suites. Letting out "basement suites" (converted suites on the ground floor or basement of a two storey home) is a common practice in the GVRD. An estimated 16,000 exist in Vancouver alone. However, it is a very risky business for the tenant, who faces possible landlord neglect or abuse, high rents for substandard units, uncertain tenure, and absolutely no protection under the law. In some areas neighbours do not look kindly on neighbours who are offering basement suites and will complain to the city. In the Dunbar area a single mother was visited by a city inspector because a neighbour suspected that there were three or four illegal suites on his block. His suspicions were unfounded as the other questionable suites were occupied by non-traditional families such as three
young siblings without parents in the house. The single mother's apartment was found to be the only one on the block; the landlord soon received a written notice from city hall giving him one month to evict her.

**Poor Public Transportation**

In the foregoing discussion, the issue of transportation has not been introduced. It is one thing to shop for an apartment knowing that you can leave each morning in your car. It is quite another thing to realize that you must find an apartment near a bus line. One of the chief factors limiting access according to Lynch is inefficiencies in the transportation systems. Buses are sometimes too crowded to pick up new passengers, runs are often too infrequent and some areas of the GVRD are not served at all. Moreover, information about the bus service is hard to get. Bus routes have been changed in the last year but the "Transit Guide" put out by the Metro Transit Operating Co. has not been brought up to date since December, 1982. Moreover, the main office does not even keep any on hand, and one must buy one from the bookstore or a few department stores. To analyze the effectiveness of the transportation system and make recommendations as to its improvement is beyond the scope of this paper. For the single mother, what matters is that her home be within a few blocks of a bus stop which is well lit so that would-be muggers or rapists are discouraged from waiting for passengers to disembark at night. The basic importance of safety features such as well lit stops, corridors and stairs is well highlighted by the series of rapes by the "bus-stop rapist" who stalks women riding buses in Vancouver.
The Quantity and Quality of Things That Can Be Reached

The final type of limitation that will be discussed in this chapter stems from the "sheer quantity and quality of things that can be reached." Although every service and good could be discussed here separately, for the single mother, the most important service the community provides is some kind of care for her children while she is away from the home. For women with small children and no relatives to take them, this means daycare. There are now 77,125 children under four in the Lower Mainland, and 19,610 children under four in Vancouver. According to a 1982 survey there are only 1,600 total group day care spaces in Vancouver with a 10% vacancy rate. At any one time, then, there are only 160 available spaces in all of Vancouver for the child who needs to be placed. Clearly there are not enough day care facilities. For most single mothers in Vancouver this vital service simply does not exist.
ENDNOTES

CHAPTER IV


4 Hardwick, p. 174.


7 Hardwick, p. 54.

8 The Province (Vancouver), "Office Space Rent Market Tightening," January 22, 1984, p. 31. Last year's average rates in first class buildings were $18 to $20 a square foot: rates for new buildings under construction are being quoted at $22 to $27.

9 Figure quoted over the phone, Feb. 1984, by Al Bergen of MacCaulay, Nicolls, Maitland and Co., Ltd. The figure is an industry quoted norm.


11 Figures quoted over the phone by the Vancouver Real Estate Board, April 13, 1984. Their source was a Royal Trust survey.


ENDNOTES CONTINUED

CHAPTER IV

14 Figure quoted over the phone by Rental Housing Council of B.C., January, 1984. Vacancy rates for previous years are 3.0 in Oct. 81, 0.2 in Oct. 81 and 0.1 for Oct. 80. These figures are for Metropolitan Vancouver.

15 City of Vancouver, "B.C. Place Issues Paper." A joint presentation by the City of Vancouver and B.C. Place Ltd., June 16, 1982, p. 5.

16 Michele Lioy, p. 70.

17 Ibid.


19 Statement made by Vancouver single mother in a group discussion, Housing Committee of the Single Mothers' Action Committee, a Vancouver YWCA sponsored group, Dec. 3, 1983.


21 Michele Lioy, p. 70.


23 Information obtained over the phone from Elizabeth Aird, Vancouver Social Planning Department. Source: A November 1, 1982 Survey.
The previous chapter described the environment the single parent is faced with. Somewhere in this huge metropolis the single mother must find a home, a job or source of income, some friends, a mate, schools, daycare centres and other services which are part of normal North American life. If she does find an area where the above features exist, she must have a way of getting to them -- either a car or public transit. Finding such a place is no small job. Many of the neighbourhoods in the GVRD are socially or economically unsuitable. Many good neighbourhoods such as Dunbar, Kerrisdale, Shaughnessy are either predominantly zoned for single family housing which eliminates the single parent renters, or offer suites in appropriately zoned areas at a price far beyond that which most single mothers can afford. Some neighbourhoods with excellent access to services and transportation such as the West End or Kitsilano contain some undesirable neighbours. Obviously, the single mother must consider a wide range of factors -- economic, social, physical, psychological -- before she makes a choice of residential location.

The Wolch Model

In an attempt to discover a pattern to the residential location of single parent families in the GVRD, a model developed by Jennifer Wolch, an urban planner conducting research in Philadelphia, will be used. Wolch used a regression analysis to show that there are clear spatial linkages between human service facilities and the residential location of the poor, non-working households who used them. Subjects include the needy elderly,
the disabled, the chronically unemployed, and needy females with children. The facilities provided physical and mental health support, vocational rehabilitation, day care and social guidance. Single parent families in the GVRD resemble the subjects in the Wolch study since they generally have a low income and need a wide range of services, especially counselling services and day care.

The Wolch model explains why the poor concentrate in the urban core:

The model states that service dependents and their support facilities are attracted to each other, and to zones of low residential property value.

Spatial linkages arise because clients need to be close to support facilities. Service providers seek to locate facilities in areas most accessible to potential users. Minimal cash incomes of service-dependent households and budget limitations of service agencies constrain service-dependents and facilities to Philadelphia's oldest and most deteriorating neighbourhoods.

In the Wolch model, services are provided at public facilities clustered in or near the CBD. Although Wolch does not thoroughly discuss the causes of inner city decay, her article makes it clear that there are pockets of deteriorating neighbourhoods that attract both low income residents and also the provider of services because the rents are cheap. These neighbourhoods have declining property values relative to other neighbourhoods.

The distinction of one inner city neighbourhood from another according to socio-economic factors make it difficult for the reader to follow Wolch's analysis of the trade off between transportation and housing costs. She states:
Since human services are provided at public facilities clustered in or near Central Business Districts (CBDs), service-dependent households trade off housing costs (which on a per-unit basis decline with distance from the CBD) against transportation costs to services they need in the CBD.

Wolch shows a classic declining rent curve to illustrate the point. The reader must assume, therefore, that within a certain distance from the CBD, both service dependent people and service providers locate on the cheapest land available. The existence of both a concentric ring pattern and a sectoral pattern of land value in Philadelphia make it difficult for the reader to discern the central argument of the article.

The argument may be summarized as follows: services are provided at public facilities clustered in or near the CBD. Because of income and transportation constraints, clients have to be near these facilities and trade off housing costs against transportation costs. Wolch points out that even though housing costs decline with distance from the CBD, housing in remote areas is not chosen by service dependents because many of them have "physical, mental, or perceptual handicaps which increases the effective cost of traveling to service facilities."

Application of the Wolch Model to the GVRD

When one tries to fit the Wolch model to Greater Vancouver, difficulties arise. Vancouver does not have what may be called a declining central city. There are no pockets of deteriorating and impoverished residential areas with all of the characteristics Wolch mentions: "decaying housing stocks, inferior neighbourhood services and personal and property victimi-
zation common to such ghetto areas." To the contrary, as was discussed in the previous chapter, core areas command the highest rents in the region and undeveloped or underutilized land has the potential of becoming some of the most valuable land in North America. Continued office development, provincial interest in False Creek redevelopment, the coming of Expo 86, and the parallel demand for housing, make inner city land desirable and expensive. Core neighbourhoods including the West End, Strathcona, Kitsilano offer a variety of shops, restaurants and parks which make these places attractive to live in or visit, in contrast to the dreary neighbourhoods which Wolch refers to.

The only exception to this general pattern of vital inner city neighbourhoods occurs in which can be called the skid road sections of Vancouver -- Downtown North, Downtown South, and Downtown Eastside -- little neighbourhoods directly east of the CBD. These neighbourhoods are composed of a mixture of rundown lodging houses, private dwellings, retail stores, beer parlours, restaurants and coffee shops. Lodging houses which house 76% of the households have an average rent of $172 for a housekeeping unit, single occupancy and $224 double occupancy. The residents are predominantly single male Caucasians over 35 years of age. Redevelopment has even taken its toll on these neighbourhoods where twenty lodging houses a year are either closed, demolished or converted to non-residential uses.

Although the Wolch model itself and its application to the GVRD pose conceptual difficulties, some parallels may be drawn between the residential locations of service dependents in Philadelphia and the residential locations of single parent families.
in the GVRD. In 1971 the heaviest concentration of single parent families occurred in Vancouver's core and inner suburbs and in New Westminster, an old established city offering well developed parks and streets, low rents and taxes, diverse city services and an excellent after school day care program. The Vancouver neighbourhoods having a higher than average concentration of single parent families are the core neighbourhoods of Kitsilano, Fairview, Mount Pleasant, Strathcona, plus the adjoining inner suburban neighbourhoods of Grandview-Woodland, Kensington-Cedar Cottage, Riley Park and Sunset. Figure 5 shows the location of these neighbourhoods and the percentage of families that are single parent families in each neighbourhood. This pattern of single parent families continued in much the same form through 1981 with some modification which will be discussed later.

Although the economic and social structures of Philadelphia and Vancouver are not the same, the Wolch model has been used in this study to emphasize the concept of accessibility. As in the Wolch model, service dependents, in this case, single parent families, are clustered near the CBD in areas of concentrated shopping and service facilities, good public transportation and rental housing stock. Although no conclusive proof can be offered to show that accessibility is the key determiner of residential choice for many single parents, I am suggesting that it offers a likely explanation of why single parents continue to occupy inner city apartments despite exorbitant rents -- if they can afford them. Single mothers are paying an average of 46% of their income for a two bedroom apartment in Vancouver. Their average income was $16,912 and the average two bedroom apartment
FIGURE 5
Single Parent Families as Percentage of Total Number of Families

GVRD 1971: 10.3
was $537^{12} in 1981. The CMHC standard of income devoted to rents is 25-30%.

Several planners and social workers interviewed for this study made the casual observation that the best place for single mothers to live may be the downtown core.\textsuperscript{13} Gil Evans, of the Greater Vancouver Information and Referral Service, says that the real centre of the GVRD is the intersection of Broadway and Granville which has the highest volume of traffic apart from the downtown intersection of Georgia and Granville. He indicated that the Broadway corridor running east and west through the neighbourhoods listed above had the highest concentration of services and the best transportation in the GVRD (see Figure 5).

In choosing an apartment in an inner city neighbourhood, single mothers must weigh the accessibility factor against other factors such as high rents and a neighbourhood atmosphere which may not be suitable for children. Without conducting a survey, it is impossible to conclusively identify the decision making process that single mothers go through when selecting a residential location.

The alternative to the inner city is choosing a residential location in the outer suburbs which lack the concentration of services, shops, job opportunities and transportation that the core area has, even though costs of homes and rents are cheaper. The problems that low income single mothers face in these communities will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

A decision to locate in the outer suburbs is one which some single parents are making. In the decade from 1971 to 1981 there has been an increase in the concentration of single parent
families in some of the outer suburbs. In both 1971 and 1981, the percentage of families that were headed by single parents was higher in Vancouver than in most of the peripheral communities. However, the percentage increase from 1971 to 1981 in the proportion of families headed by single parents was greater in the outer suburbs. Tables 4 to 9 present the relevant data in several different ways so that a more complete picture of possible trends can be shown. All of my calculations have been presented so that further analysis can be pursued by interested readers.

Analysis of Data

Table 7 shows that Vancouver City which had 41.5% of the total GVRD population in 1971 had only 35.4% of the population in 1981. This is a decrease of 14.7%. In 1971 Vancouver City housed 48.1% of the GVRD total of single parent families. In 1981 it housed only 37.9% of the region's single parent families. This is a decrease of 21.3%. Some peripheral areas, however, gained a larger share of the total GVRD population and a still larger share of the region's single parent families. These areas are Delta, Richmond, and Surrey. For example, Surrey housed 9.6% of the GVRD population in 1971 and 12.6% in 1981. This is an increase of 31.3%. It housed 8.2% of the GVRD single parent families in 1971 and 12.6% in 1981. This is an increase of 53.7%.

Table 8 shows the total population and the number of single parents in each of the municipalities in 1971 and 1981, and the percent change from 1971 to 1981. The data presented in this manner suggests the same trends that have been discussed above. Although the total population in Richmond, Delta, and Surrey grew
## TABLE 4
TOTAL POPULATION, TOTAL NUMBER OF FAMILIES AND SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES FOR VARIOUS MUNICIPALITIES IN THE GVRD, GIVING THE PROPORTION OF SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL FAMILIES

### 1981

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Total No. Families</th>
<th>Single Parent Families</th>
<th>% SPF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burnaby</td>
<td>125,660</td>
<td>32,855</td>
<td>3,335</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Van. C.</td>
<td>31,847</td>
<td>8,580</td>
<td>995</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Van. D.</td>
<td>57,861</td>
<td>14,645</td>
<td>1,010</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Van.</td>
<td>36,440</td>
<td>9,510</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>62,121</td>
<td>15,665</td>
<td>1,260</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coquitlam</td>
<td>53,230</td>
<td>12,280</td>
<td>1,030</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New West.</td>
<td>42,835</td>
<td>10,450</td>
<td>1,465</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Coq.</td>
<td>19,560</td>
<td>4,840</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Moody</td>
<td>10,778</td>
<td>2,710</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>45,860</td>
<td>11,345</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrey</td>
<td>98,661</td>
<td>24,295</td>
<td>2,140</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Rock</td>
<td>10,349</td>
<td>2,920</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van. City</td>
<td>426,298</td>
<td>101,650</td>
<td>12,610</td>
<td>12.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>GVRD</td>
<td>1,028,334</td>
<td>253,510</td>
<td>126,200*</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This figure appears to be absent from the 1976 census and was estimated by adding up the figures for the municipalities and adding about 150 to account for the smaller population units in the GVRD.

TOTAL POPULATION, TOTAL NUMBER OF FAMILIES AND SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES FOR VARIOUS MUNICIPALITIES IN THE GVRD, GIVING THE PROPORTION OF SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL FAMILIES, AND THE PERCENT CHANGE FROM 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Pop.</th>
<th>% Change from 1971</th>
<th>Total No. Families</th>
<th>% Change from 1971</th>
<th>Single Parent Families</th>
<th>% SPF from 1971</th>
<th>% Change from 1971</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burnaby</td>
<td>131,599</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>34,812</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>3,700</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Van. City</td>
<td>31,934</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>8,484</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
<td>1,080</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>8.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>N. Van. D.</td>
<td>63,760*</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>16,824</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>1,475</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>46.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Van.</td>
<td>35,754*</td>
<td>-1.9</td>
<td>9,907</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>80,034</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>21,446</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>1,865</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>48.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coquitlam</td>
<td>55,464</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>13,880</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>1,290</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New West.</td>
<td>38,393</td>
<td>-10.4</td>
<td>9,651</td>
<td>-7.6</td>
<td>1,245</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>-15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Coq.</td>
<td>23,926</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>6,200</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Moody</td>
<td>11,649</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>3,099</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>73.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta</td>
<td>64,492</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>16,643</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>1,105</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>84.2</td>
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* Adjusted figures due to boundary changes


### Table 6

TOTAL POPULATION, TOTAL NUMBER OF FAMILIES AND SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES FOR VARIOUS MUNICIPALITIES IN THE GVRD, GIVING THE PROPORTION OF SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL FAMILIES, AND THE PERCENT CHANGE FROM 1976

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**Sources:**
**TABLE 7-1**
THE PERCENTAGE OF THE GVRD TOTAL POPULATION, NO. OF FAMILIES, AND SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES LIVING IN THE VARIOUS GVRD MUNICIPALITIES

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### TABLE 8

TOTAL POPULATION AND NUMBER OF SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES IN GVRD MUNICIPALITIES, SHOWING PERCENT CHANGE FROM 1971-1981

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Source: Figures derived from Tables 4, 5, 6
at high rates, the number of single parent families grew at even
gerher rates. The total population of Richmond increased 54.8% in
the decade, but the number of single parent families increased by
112.7%. The total population of Delta increased 62.7% but the
number of single parent families increased 150%. Surrey has
figures of 49.1% and 112.7%. These communities are mentioned first
because they experienced an increase in their share of the total
GVRD population. Other communities which did not significantly
experience an increase in their share of the total GVRD population,
but did experience a high increase in the proportion of families
headed by single parents were: North Vancouver District (86.6%
increase), Port Coquitlam (140.6% increase), and Port Moody (175.5%
increase). (See Table 8.)

As a result of the demographic shifts discussed above,
the concentration of single parent families in the various GVRD
municipalities relative to the GVRD average has changed only
slightly from 1971 to 1981. (Table 9) Single parent families as
a percentage of total families in the GVRD is now 11.9%. Vancouver,
New Westminster, and North Vancouver City still have an above
average concentration of single parent families with percentages
of 13.9, 13.5 and 14.6 respectively. However, some of the outer
areas experienced an increase in the proportion of families headed
by single parents. Port Moody now has one of the highest
concentrations of single parent families in the region with 16% of
its families headed by a single parent. Port Coquitlam (11.1%)
and Surrey (11.1%) are about average, whereas in 1971 they were
well below average.
As a result of this analysis, it cannot be said that there is now a major demographic shift of single parent families from Vancouver to peripheral areas. What is apparent, however, is that the proportion of families headed by a single parent in peripheral communities is increasing at a faster rate than the rate of increase of these families in Vancouver. Table 9 shows the rates of increase for various municipalities in the GVRD.

It is clear that the decision to choose a home in the outer suburbs is being made by many single parents. Whereas Vancouver gained only 1,054 single parent families in the ten year period, Richmond gained 1,420, Surrey gained 2,410, Delta gained 905, Port Moody gained 400. A decision to live in the peripheral ring may or may not be a wise one, depending on the personal circumstances of the family. Whether or not the mother has a job, owns a car, has friends or relatives nearby are some of the factors which influence the family's ability to function well in the community. Without a car, access to a wide range of opportunities may be severely restricted.

The Maple Ridge Case

If unskilled, low income single parents take up residence in peripheral areas they may find themselves in a community which offers just enough services for physical survival, but little opportunity for self improvement and growth. One such community is Maple Ridge, lying just outside the eastern edge of the peripheral ring. There the number of single parents increased from 565 in 1971 to 925 in 1981. Susanne Stacey, a program facilitator at the Community Services Council, the only service
agency in Maple Ridge, paints a very startling and depressing picture of life for some single mothers in Maple Ridge. The following report is Ms. Stacey's perception of the women in her client group.

Ms. Stacey reports that all of the single mothers she deals with are in the low income group. Only 15% of the women have jobs. Some are professionals such as nurses or teachers with part time jobs, some are clerical workers, or clerks, maids, babysitters, Avon or Tupperware representatives, and telephone solicitors. The average salary of these working single mothers is $12,000. Those who are on social assistance collect about $9,000.

The major dilemma that these women experience is going to work for slightly more money than they would have received from social assistance and finding that they have more expenses in terms of travel and babysitting. Technically they are taking home less money for more effort. Some women attempt to upgrade their skills with Ministry of Human Resources assistance, only to find no jobs available after their courses are completed. The result is a defeatist attitude toward work.

Most of these women and children form an isolated nuclear family -- only 2% have family support or relatives in the area. Most have come from other areas in the Lower Mainland running from bad experiences. Ms. Stacey says that many of them come to Maple Ridge to escape the big city pressures of Vancouver. A small percentage are established Maple Ridge residents from broken marriages or are single parents due to ignorance as teenagers.

Most of them live in one of three separate areas in town where single mothers cluster. Ms. Stacey calls one of these areas
"skid road" -- a run down area of two and three storey walk-ups between the highway and the Fraser River. These unattractive apartments have surprisingly high rents -- $350 to $523 for two bedroom accommodations. (The average two bedroom apartment in Maple Ridge is $357 compared to $537 in Vancouver. See Table 3.) Ms. Stacey thinks that landlords know that these women need a place to live and take advantage of them, knowing that MHR will supply the rent. Instead of being havens of mutual support, these ghettos of single women are depressing places to live. When one mother tries to get ahead, the others pull them down. These women seem to be constantly on the move trying to get away from financial and personal problems.

One of their main problems is transportation. A shockingly low 2% of them own cars. The Maple Ridge bus system runs two buses a day -- one in the morning and one at night. It goes up the Dewdney Trunk Road and back into the commercial part of town. However, it does not go into the low income apartment area. Buses into Vancouver run only every three or four hours. There is a school in the area for upgrading skills -- the Pacific Vocational Institute, but no bus service to it. "Aware," a course teaching job hunting skills is offered in Port Coquitlam, but there is only one bus a day.

However, these mothers can get to vital services, since the apartment areas are all within walking distance of main street where stores, day care centres, medical facilities provide the goods and services they need to survive.

There is little formal dating, but many of these women form relationships with men they meet at local bars. There they
meet men with little education, low incomes, and no ambition. These types of liaisons do not contribute to their sense of self esteem. In general, these women have low expectations for themselves. Their aspirations include getting a job, winning the lottery, or getting a boyfriend or husband in order to be taken care of.

Their problems include lack of budgeting skills, low self esteem, resentment, and anxiety about their present circumstances. Those that have moved from a rural community experience an identity crisis as they face an uncertain future. Some of them are chronic complainers and feel that someone owes them something. When they talk to doctors or psychiatrists about their problems, these professionals prescribe drugs first instead of asking them to deal with their problems.

Maple Ridge is apparently not a place in which to stay, once a single mother establishes some self esteem. Ms. Stacey says that as soon as these women get back on their feet, they move to Vancouver where more opportunities lie in jobs, housing, transportation and meeting suitable men. The best place for single mothers to be is in a community which offers a variety of goods, services and people from which to choose, as in the Lynch model. Choice implies that the item exists, that the individual knows about it and can get to it. In a community like Maple Ridge, not only is variety severely limited, poor transportation creates a situation in which the low income single mother finds it difficult to leave her immediate neighbourhood.

There, low income single mothers have little chance of becoming self sufficient adults in charge of their own lives; instead they become fully dependent on government agencies which
give them an income adequate for physical survival and help in emergency situations, but no real way of changing the basic circumstances of their lives.

**Conclusion**

In a sense, the premise that service dependent people are relegated to the most undesirable land in a metropolis is true for the GVRD. In this case, the most undesirable land lies at the edge of the peripheral ring -- the outer suburbs that have the poorest transportation and the least number of opportunities in terms of jobs, housing, and finding congenial friends and potential mates. A place like Maple Ridge may be the last stopping point for the most desperate and the least skilled -- the new "skid road" for a growing number of single mothers.

Most single mothers in Maple Ridge are poor. The average income for single mothers in Maple Ridge is $13,518, which is well below the poverty line of $15,950 for a family of three set by the Canadian Council on Social Development. In fact, 83.9% of single mothers in Maple Ridge have an income under $15,000. Table 2 in Chapter III showed that single mothers in most outer municipalities have lower incomes than single parents in Vancouver who have an average income of $16,912.

Single parents appear to prefer the inner city because they are service dependent and poorer than other families. The analysis presented in this chapter showed that the percentage of families that is headed by a single parent was greater in Vancouver than in the outer suburbs. Several hypotheses could be advanced to explain this. The two most likely seem to be: (1) location
preference because of access, and (2) cheaper housing in the city of Vancouver. However, it has been shown that housing is more expensive in Vancouver. Therefore I believe that access to Vancouver's jobs, services, people, and attractions is the key determiner of residential location for single parent families. But for the really poor single parent family, central city housing may be unaffordable. They may be forced to move out to areas where rents are cheaper and access to a wide range of opportunities is limited. It seems increasingly difficult for many single parent families to find housing in inner city areas where it appears they would like to be.
ENDNOTES

CHAPTER V


2 Ibid., p. 330.

3 Ibid., p. 331.

4 Ibid., p. 41.


6 Ibid., p. 32.

7 Ibid., p. 19.

8 Ibid., p. 38.

9 Robson and Queen Elizabeth Schools have a day care centre on the premises, while Lord Tweedsmuir cooperates with one a block away. The day care centre at Queen Elizabeth operates from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and takes children aged three and up. The cost is $88 a month for before and after school care and $235 a month for full time care.

10 Michele Lioy, Social Trends in Greater Vancouver, a study prepared for the Social Policy and Research Department, United Way of Greater Vancouver (Vancouver: Gordon Soules Economic and Marketing Research, March 1975), p. 54, Fig. 5.10.

11 See Table 2.

12 See Table 3.

13 The casual remarks cited here were made during interviews conducted by the author to obtain information on possible studies or reports on single parents in the GVRD. The comments were in no way part of a formal interview setting. Flora MacCleod and Gavin Perryman of the United Way were among those interviewed.

14 Interview with Gil Evans, executive director of the Greater Vancouver Information and Referral Service, a private non-profit society, Nov. 28, 1983.
All of the information about Maple Ridge was obtained in two interviews (Dec. 6, 1983, Feb. 6, 1984) with Susanne Stacey, Program Facilitator at the Community Services Council, a registered non-profit society partly funded by MHR and the United Way. The agency is open as a drop in centre for single mothers, runs some programs concerning parenting and intervenes in crisis situations in the home.
The complex problems and limitations constricting single parent families in Canada require profound and social reform. Basic flaws in the educational and vocational training of young women and the continuation of traditional child-rearing roles that women have played in the past are the root causes of the income and time constraints facing single mothers. All of our attitudes about intrinsic abilities, responsibilities and opportunities of both men and women will have to be completely examined and revised before women have any chance of being able to pursue the types of careers that men do. In an enlightened society, females would not have to single handedly raise children and reap the lowest of incomes for their many years of service in the home.

In some countries comprehensive social policies ensure the well being of working mothers and children. In Sweden, a mother is entitled by law to a year's paid leave at 90% of her salary, plus an additional six months of job-protected but unpaid leave when children are born. Mothers of children under eight are entitled to work a thirty hour week and both parents are permitted a total of sixty days per year at 90% pay to stay home to care for a sick child. Children are taken care of in subsidized nursery programs with income adjusted fee schedules, and facilities are located in apartment complexes where they may be open from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.¹

What is needed to bring about these types of programs in our society is either strong decisive action from government
leaders, or years of struggle from the ranks of those who want reform. Given the political realities of the current provincial and national governments, however, it is doubtful that comprehensive policies concerning single parent families will be initiated by elected leaders in the next few years. Social reform will probably have to originate from the "grass roots" -- in this case the single mothers themselves. At the present moment they have no spokesman and are politically invisible. However, their numbers are growing, and the blatant discrimination in the housing and job markets and the dire conditions under which some of these women and their children live cannot be forever hidden.

While women's groups are waiting for a propitious political climate and working to organize themselves and make themselves heard, practical strategies can be put in place immediately to help single mothers overcome the limitations that stem from their personal circumstances and the environment. A housing policy addressing the needs of the single parent family is an appropriate response to the problems facing these families, because housing is a prime factor in the social, psychological, and economic well-being of a family. To a large extent, where and how you live determines your opportunities, sense of identity, and mental and physical health. Although environmental determinists have not proven their case, it seems clear to the single mothers quoted in this study that living in a clean, friendly, accessible, vital, and secure neighbourhood is preferable to living in a deteriorating, hostile, impoverished, remote or dangerous one. Housing is therefore more than just a roof over your head -- it includes social and psychological services and
locational advantages or disadvantages. A housing policy that establishes strategies for a more equitable allocation of housing is one way of redistributing a host of social and economic services and opportunities.

Obviously, a housing policy will not solve all the problems of the single parent family. A traditional extended family cannot be created by an act of legislation for those single mothers who have no kin in the area. Daycare facilities and funding will not automatically appear as a result of a housing policy, although the provision of facilities by apartment developers is a possibility. Moreover, a housing policy will not correct the basic socio-economic reasons why single mothers find themselves in such desperate financial need.

Nevertheless, a housing policy agreed upon and managed by various levels of government in the GVRD would be the best way of alleviating the plight of the single parent family at this time. This conclusion is based on several considerations: In the first place a comprehensive housing policy would not only be effective in providing decent housing in suitable environments but could also partially correct the financial problems of most single parents; secondly, a housing policy could be initiated and administered through present government departments without the creation of more bureaucracy; lastly, housing policies and land regulations are matters which are familiar to most people and therefore possibly more acceptable than a complicated and unique social package.

The formation and execution of a housing policy for single parent families at this time would be a vast improvement
over current policies which afford very little assistance to single parent families. Present policies concerning single parent families exist mainly in memos or the minutes of meetings. When asked about policy concerning these families, many staff members at all levels of governments do not know if any written policy exists and have to check their files or ask colleagues. I am not implying that there are no housing policies which guide land use in the GVRD since all levels of governments have both written and unwritten housing guidelines which affect single parents. The point is that single parent families have no housing policies written especially for them. The following sections will summarize the main housing policies of the various levels of governments and describe some of the programs or strategies pursued.

B. The City of Vancouver

As stated in the 1983 Core Plan, the City has decided to accept continued office development and employment growth as a means of preserving its international status as a major trading centre. In addition to the present twenty million square feet of core office space, there is a development capacity of fifty million square feet, thirty million of which could be built in downtown alone. As a result of continued office growth and the need for office workers, the City of Vancouver is experiencing a serious mismatch between core employment and its capacity to house this work force. The potential for housing is almost all used up. As three-quarters of city land is zoned for single family housing, there is little opportunity to increase housing
potential in the city.

As of 1980, the City planning department estimated that for every 100 jobs in the city, there were only 60 housing units available, and that this ratio will continue to drop if the job-housing imbalance is not addressed. To this end the planning department recommends expanding the housing stock by increasing densities within the city rather than encouraging commuting to the outer suburbs. This will be accomplished by rezoning selected low density areas with high existing amenities and services to medium density status. The Core plan states that the zoned potential for housing would increase by 50,000 units over the next decade bringing the total zoned potential to 260,000 units.

Some of this stock would probably be designated for low income groups. One of the City's long standing housing policies is to:

Minimize hardships caused by increased housing costs through providing city lands for non market housing (1972), bonus private developers to provide modest income housing (Kitsilano 1976), require new developments to include a portion of housing for modest income users (False Creek, D.T.E.S. 1982).

In the past few decades the City has acted as facilitator in providing suitably zoned land for non market housing and soliciting senior levels of government for funding. The design and management of social housing is carried out by various non-profit sponsors and cooperative groups. The Social Planning Department has recently compiled a list of 48 coops with a total of 2,044 units that have been built within Vancouver since 1979. Of these, 1,153 were built on city land. Rental units and special purpose projects totaled 1,360 units, 610 of these built
on city land. Sponsors for public and private rental accommodations include the YWCA, various churches, ethnic groups, social clubs such as Kiwanis and Odd Fellows, the Greater Vancouver Housing Corporation, the B.C. Housing Foundation and the B.C. Housing and Mortgage Corporation.

The City proposes that part of the provincially owned 300 acre tract of land on the north shore of False Creek be devoted to non market housing. Since the City believes that many low income families will want to work in the core area, it proposes that at least 2,000 housing units -- about 25% of the total -- be built for families with young children. Of these, 1,600 should be non-market. 5

B. The Province of British Columbia

As stated in the brochure "A Housing Policy for British Columbia in the 1980's," the first housing goal of the Province is "to ensure an adequate supply and mix of housing with a wide range of tenure options." 6 The Province recognizes the fact that most people prefer to find accommodations close to developed areas:

The high cost of energy will provide an incentive for more people to seek higher density forms of housing closer to where they work and shop, so that fewer households are likely to locate in the outer suburbs.

Despite the stated goal to ensure a wide range of tenure options, emphasis is placed on maximizing home ownership. The annual report shows that in 1981 most of the Province's housing funds were used to help people buy homes. 8 A total of $10,334,100 was spent on home purchase assistance, serving 4,878 people in the Lower Mainland. In contrast, only eight loans for rental
Conversions were approved during the same time period. Capital Grants for senior citizen housing totaled $6,922,000 for 408 units in the Lower Mainland. There were also 109 disabled persons who received assistance with rental housing. There was no specific program to help single parent families.

The redevelopment project in False Creek B.C. Place provides an opportunity for the Province to cooperate with the City of Vancouver in meeting some of its goals to house low income families downtown. However, the project was designed by B.C. politicians to put Vancouver on the map as one of the world's great international cities. B.C. Place Ltd., the Crown Corporation in charge of this enterprise, is acting as a private developer in creating a spectacular urban environment which will invite international acclaim and earn a profit at the same time. To this end, high paying uses are sought, including 7.7 million square feet of office space and market housing for mainly couples and singles.

The residential units will be designated for the following groups: 15% family (market housing), 70% singles and couples, 15% elderly (partly subsidized). Although a later brochure discusses an innovative plan to make it possible for working British Columbians of below average or middle incomes to live at B.C. Place, the housing will still be market housing afforded by those who can qualify for mortgage loans and deliver a down-payment. No non-market housing will be proposed for single parent families. In an issues paper B.C. Place presents the following points as reasons for not developing much family housing, especially non-market family housing at B.C. Place.
It would be wrong, unfair and expensive to displace three other potential households for each family with children;

Most families with children can be accommodated, and would likely choose to live elsewhere -- especially in the suburbs;

Families with children requiring subsidized units can be housed less expensively in other areas, as B.C. Place is amongst the most valuable residential land in the Region; and

Other areas, particularly the suburbs, already have the schools and amenities required by families with children.

The argument is summed up this way:

Everytime land is written down to a less than fair market value, this write down becomes a direct subsidy and reduces the revenue that would otherwise flow to all taxpayers. This high level of subsidy would be unfair to other working people seeking housing at B.C. Place, would burden the taxpayer, and could threaten the financial viability of the project.

Although this argument speaks for itself, the author finds the phrases "burdening the taxpayer" so laden with emotional overtones as to be unacceptable in a public document. To suggest that people who need inner city subsidized housing are somehow jeopardizing the welfare of the "taxpayers", is a way of creating divisions and jealousies among people. The B.C. argument in essence is that it is fair to provide housing only for those who are able to purchase it on the free market. The Province is in fact violating its own policy to ensure an adequate supply and mix of housing with a range of tenure options.

C. The Federal Government

The federal government makes a contribution to housing in the GVRD through CMHC funding programs. Two programs which
help create new housing in the region are The Cooperative Housing Program and the Private Non-profit Housing Program. In both programs CMHC offers financial assistance to subsidize mortgage payment from the going market interest rate to as low as 2%. Funds are also made available under the Start-up Program for the planning and design stages of project development.

Housing cooperatives are initiated, designed and run by a group of people who wish to provide housing for themselves on a collective, not an individual basis. Each member owns a share of the total project and contributes to its upkeep and mortgage payments. However members do not own their individual units and may not sell them for a profit when they leave. Ownership and decision making capacities remain with the entire membership. CMHC rules stipulate that the housing be modest (the mortgage is limited to a maximum unit price), and that a certain portion of the units be earmarked for low income occupants who pay a certain percentage of their incomes toward costs. Most of the units would be occupied by average or above average occupants in order to provide the internal subsidization needed to meet the collective monthly mortgage payment. Coops are sometimes organized around the needs of special groups such as senior citizens, and sometimes organized around a life style or theme. Cooperatives seem to please those who enjoy making group decisions and living communally.

Non-profit rental housing is developed and operated by private, non-profit corporations for the benefit of tenants who have low incomes or special housing needs. As in the coop program, the housing must be modest and have an income mix to ensure the financial viability of the project. The sponsor retains ownership
of the project and is responsible for maintenance costs and operating the project.

D. The GVRD

Although the GVRD has no written housing policy, the Housing Committee reviews policies and new proposals on a monthly basis. The organization that actually administers the housing program is the Greater Vancouver Housing Corporation, created by the B.C. cabinet in 1974. Under section 56.1 of the National Housing Act the GVHC acts as a public non-profit corporation in planning and administering social housing. CMHC loans have been used to subsidize the capital costs and mortgages of about 3,000 units that will have been built by the end of 1984 in the GVRD. These units represent about 4% of the housing starts since 1976. It is the opinion of the director of the corporation, Bill Lane, that the program was designed to help the working poor, not the unemployed. The underlying philosophy is that if new accommodations are provided for employed people, some of the existing apartments would be freed up for occupancy by those with the lowest incomes -- the unemployed. Unemployed people are not able to take advantage of the GVHC program because the criterion for acceptance into the projects is the ability to pay the rent, and most unemployed people do not have sufficient money to make these payments. It is Mr. Lane's opinion that if such a program were extended to everyone with low incomes, the amount of money needed to subsidize payments would be greater than the respective levels of government could find.

Most single parent families are not assisted in any way
by the existing housing programs in the GVRD. In the first place, at all levels of government there are absolutely no policies directed toward the problems that single mothers face in obtaining housing. Secondly, city, provincial and federal programs designed to promote non-market housing create neither a sufficient absolute number of units for low income groups, nor are most of the units specifically designated for single parent families. In Vancouver proper, the total number of social housing units is about 3,300, many of them for senior citizens and disabled groups. There are about 14,000 single parents in Vancouver alone and it is obvious that the majority of these will have to find their housing in the open market.

There is very little market rental housing suitable for families consisting of an adult female and one or two children, and what does exist is either high priced or off limits due to discrimination, or both. Although Vancouver's efforts to create non-market housing for low income people has provided relief for some single mothers, the vast majority have a very difficult task in finding and affording suitable housing for their families. For single mothers in the GVRD there is a definite housing crisis.

Since single mothers have been publicly and politically invisible, it may seem to the various levels of government that the problems do not exist and that perhaps these women are satisfied with their lot. There is one group, however, that is starting to take action and express dissatisfaction with the present social and legal barriers which single mothers face in establishing a stable life for themselves and their children. This group is the Single Mothers' Action Committee (S.M.A.C.), an
organization that grew out of the annual Single Mothers' Symposium sponsored by the Vancouver YWCA.

Although these women are outstanding in displaying the dedication and stamina it takes to regularly attend and support this organization, they do represent a cross section of single women. Some of them have low incomes and take in sewing or typing to supplement social assistance. Some of them have a full time job. One woman with a baby walked all the way from Kitsilano to the downtown YWCA where the meetings are held because she did not have the bus fare. Most of the mothers live in inadequate housing -- one lived in an inaccessible east side location in a basement suite with a staircase with no railing and a constantly malfunctioning and leaking water heater and furnace. Women in apartments move frequently because of incompatibility with male neighbours.

The S.M.A.C. organization is about a year old. There is a general steering committee to which four independent committees report -- Childcare, Housing, Welfare Rights and Income, and Women and the Law. In December, 1983, the housing committee established the following objectives:

1. To ensure that all single mothers and their children have decent, safe, affordable, accessible and secure homes.

2. To ensure that all single mothers and their children are considered as individuals with varying needs and are provided with choices as to geographic area, type of accommodation, and suitable environment.

3. To ensure that all single mothers and their children are not discriminated against on the basis of age, or source of income, as well as other characteristics already included in the Canadian and B.C. Human Rights Acts.
4. To educate single mothers as to their lawful rights and sources of information and assistance in securing satisfactory accommodation.

5. To make the public aware of the housing problems confronting the single mother in her task of providing suitable housing for her family.

The basic ideas here are:

- Shelter is a basic human right;
- Choice of housing location and suitability are important;
- Discrimination must be ended;
- Single mothers need information and help;
- Support from the general community is needed.

How to realize these objectives is a complicated issue.

One way of approaching the problem is to list the limitations examined in the first few chapters of this paper and speculate on the possible impacts of various programs. The table below shows that many of the limitations stemming from personal circumstances and from the environment can be countered by programs involving housing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIMITATION</th>
<th>POSSIBLE PROGRAM</th>
<th>IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>Rent Control</td>
<td>Although rents are held down in the short run, the supply of housing goes down in the long run, because people are reluctant to invest in an enterprise which loses money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shelter Allowance</td>
<td>Since many single mothers pay over 50% of their income on shelter, a shelter allowance would help pay the rent, freeing up other income for other things. Shelter allowances also allow for freedom in housing choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of job skills and experience</td>
<td>A co-op project</td>
<td>Organizing, building and running a co-op would enable the members to develop organizational, interpersonal, and financial skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aloneness and lack of time</td>
<td>(a) Co-operative types of living arrangements</td>
<td>Single mothers living together could share cooking and child raising chores, cutting down on the work required by each individual. A substitute family is also created in which the individual gets emotional support and an opportunity to interact socially. Children have surrogate aunts and cousins. If the coop includes other types of families men are also present in the community to act as role models.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) A housing agency to assist single parents with their housing problems</td>
<td>A government can take the place of family members in giving advice, finding vacancies and advertising for shared accommodations. Single parents would have some place to turn when problems arise.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIMITATION</td>
<td>POSSIBLE PROGRAM</td>
<td>IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hampered mobility</td>
<td>CMHC rules should stipulate that subsidized housing be built in accessible locations, not skid road areas.</td>
<td>Single mothers and their children would have access to the goods, services, and people they need without wasting time, money and energy. Women and children could come and go without fear of harassment or violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough family rental units</td>
<td>Government tax incentives to build rental units. The creation of bylaws to ensure that a certain percentage of units in new developments be large enough for families.</td>
<td>The total number of units would increase. Because rental units would be built throughout the GVRD, families would have a choice of location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>The immediate revision of the B.C. Human Rights Act to include prohibitions against discrimination because of age or source of income.</td>
<td>The number of available apartments would probably double.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile environment</td>
<td>Provision of family housing by government</td>
<td>A secure but segregated environment would be created for those who need group support. There is a danger of the withdrawal of single parent families into a closed circle and a tendency of these tenants to view this solution as a permanent one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal suites</td>
<td>Revision of zoning bylaws allowing single mothers access to these suites</td>
<td>Sharing the cost of a home is possible for those who own homes. Renters have a wide choice of location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor public transportation</td>
<td>Rules making it mandatory to locate non-market rental units on transportation lines.</td>
<td>The 80% of single mothers who do not own cars would be able to more easily ride public transit. Children and teenagers would be able to travel outside their immediate neighbourhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIMITATION</td>
<td>POSSIBLE PROGRAM</td>
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<tr>
<td>The sheer quantity and quality of things that can be reached</td>
<td>This has traditionally depended on the public sector. However, a program might make it mandatory for a developer to provide certain amenities -- laundry, play space, community rooms, facilities for day care, etc., on the premises. CMHC regulations should cover such amenities.</td>
<td>The family would have immediate access to these facilities. Children would be able to reach them without going into a hostile environment. Mothers would be able to drop off children at day care before leaving for work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipalities can zone for mixed land use, so that services can be more easily reached by those who do not drive</td>
<td>Daycare, and low order services and shops such as food stores could be located in residential areas where they are easily reached by children, teenagers and women who have no cars.</td>
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The guidelines and recommendations that are derived from this table are organized around basic issues. These issues are clearly stated in the "Housing Objectives" of the S.M.A.C. Housing Committee. These issues address the fundamental limitations single mothers face in finding and affording housing in the GVRD. The recommendations which follow the guidelines are addressed to the three levels of government, since it is postulated that positive government action is necessary to alleviate the housing problems of single parent families.

The recommendations are not all equal in scope or importance. Some of the recommendations suggest short term solutions, some propose long term strategies. The recommendation concerning discrimination serves a twofold purpose: to increase the number of units available to single parent families and to bring the issue of discrimination before the public. An amended anti-discrimination chapter would act as a psychological brace to single mothers who would be reassured that the provincial government was safeguarding their right to shelter. All of the recommendations, with the possible exception of the one concerning illegal suites are in accord with present government housing policies; for the most part they reflect and expand upon present policy at all three levels. The recommendations are made, however, with the prime purpose of designating the single parent family as a group that needs special attention.

Guidelines and Recommendations

A. Accessibility

Single parent families need to be housed in areas of maximum accessibility because of time and income constraints.
This means housing in central locations — around Vancouver's core primarily and around town centres secondarily. Under no circumstances should they be housed in either peripheral areas with poor transportation, or in areas in the city that are dangerous and inhospitable to women and children.

Recommendation

Federal
CMHC should stipulate that housing financed under the non-profit rental and coop programs be built on prime land — areas of excellent transportation, jobs and services.

Provincial
Having a central location, B.C. Place is an ideal location for single parent families. At least 15% of the proposed residential units should be designated for them.

Municipal
Present policies regarding densification and zoning for mixed land use should be continued. Vancouver should also create a bylaw giving single mothers access to illegal suites.

B. Affordability

Single mothers need help paying the rent. Rents throughout the GVRD are much too high for the majority of single parent families. If the average two bedroom apartment is $500\textsuperscript{18} a month and the average monthly take home pay is $1,150\textsuperscript{19}, then
rent alone is 43\% of the budget. For a family needing a three bedroom apartment at $700^{20}$, this figure goes up to 60\%. These percentages must be lowered to the 25 - 30\% range.

Recommendation

**Federal and Provincial**

Implementation of a joint shelter allowance program. Welfare recipients would receive their allowances in the usual way; taxpayers would receive tax credits on their rental or mortgage payments.

C. Shelter as a Basic Right

Shelter is a basic right, especially for children who have no say as to where and how they will be housed. In a civilized society children are not turned away from shelter simply because they are children. Not only must discrimination against children be made illegal, stiff punishments must also be rigorously enforced against offenders.

Recommendation

**Provincial**

The new B.C. Human Rights Act should specifically include age and source of income along with race, sex, marital status, religion, colour, ancestry, or places of origin in its anti-discrimination chapter. Since the Act is currently undergoing revision this change could be accomplished with a few strokes of the pen.
D. Building for Families

More family housing is needed in Vancouver's core and in other town centres. Because of time and income constraints most single parent families will want to be near developed areas where there is the highest concentration of jobs, shops, services and other people.

Recommendation

Federal
Family housing should receive at least 50% of the funds CMHC budgets for non-profit rental and coop housing. Builders need tax credits for the construction of family rental units on the open market.

Provincial
As stated above, the provision of family housing at B.C. Place.

Municipal
Cities are urged to create bylaws requiring builders to provide family housing in new developments.

E. Housing Information

Single mothers need help in obtaining information about the housing situation in the GVRD and their legal rights. Some mothers are ignorant about basic legal procedures and do not know where to turn for help in times of crisis.
. Recommendation

**Provincial**

An agency must be established to provide information about housing in the GVRD. Areas of concern include vacancies, shared accommodations, available government programs, and legal rights.

**F. Housing Choice**

Single parent families are unique with respect to their composition, income, life style, resources, and needs. Housing type, tenure, and location are all matters for the individual family to decide.

. Recommendation

At each level of government a variety of programs should be maintained so that there is the right type of assistance for each family. No particular housing arrangement should be thought of as the final solution for single parent families and governments should be open to innovative proposals.
ENDNOTES

CHAPTER VI


3 Taken from a list of housing policies mailed to me by Ann McAfee, Planner at Vancouver's Planning Department. January, 1984.

4 These are unpublished figures compiled by the Social Planning Department in the last few months.

5 City of Vancouver, "B.C. Place Issues Paper," a joint presentation by the City of Vancouver and B.C. Place Ltd., June 16, 1982, p. 5.


7 Ibid.


9 British Columbia Place Ltd., B.C. Place Reports 1, 2 and 3: "The B.C. Concept Plan," Vancouver, 1982-1983. These are one sheet flyers circulated with Vancouver newspapers.

10 British Columbia Place Ltd., "B.C. Place Report #2."

11 British Columbia Place Ltd., "B.C. Place Report #3."


13 Ibid., p. 6.

ENDNOTES CONTINUED

CHAPTER VI

15 *Ibid.* Assistance available is explained on page 2 of both brochures.

16 Information about the housing activities of the GVRD obtained by phone from Fred Minty, House Proposal Call Officer at the GVRD office, January 25, 1984.

17 Interview with Bill Lane, manager of the Greater Vancouver Housing Corporation, February 2, 1984.


19 Figure is based on the average single mother's income of $17,000. After taxes this would roughly be $1,150 a month.

20 *United Way of the Lower Mainland,* p. 11. This figure represents the average rent for a decontrolled unit in Vancouver.
WHO IS RESPONSIBLE

In order to make suitable housing available to single parent families some level of government must take the responsibility of creating a comprehensive housing policy and coordinating the various government departments. The government most able to take up this responsibility is the provincial government, since it manages a huge budget and can create agencies and programs for those who need help. Moreover, the province is currently writing a new human rights act and can make the necessary revisions to safeguard the rights of single mothers and their children. It also has control over the massive piece of land in False Creek, and as the chief determiner of what will be built there, can make sure that some of the housing will be designated for single parent families. A housing policy for single parent families could be initiated and managed by the Ministry of Lands, Parks, and Housing.

Single mothers in Greater Vancouver are asking for the necessities of life -- an affordable, safe home, and an opportunity to participate in the society and establish a stable and satisfactory life for themselves and their children. Because they face so many personal and environmental limitations, they have very little chance of altering the circumstances of their lives by themselves. They need help, and in the absence of family assistance, a positive government response is necessary.

However, the present provincial government is not only avoiding the responsibility of helping these families through the creation of new policies, it is also cutting back on the few services that poor people now have. In the name of economic
"restraint" budgets of service agencies are being cut and workers fired. Even emergency help for single mothers in remote areas like Maple Ridge will be affected. Single parent families in a sense form a new lower class, lacking the job skills and personal resources needed to earn an adequate income and establish a stable life. Moreover, they are limited on all sides by discrimination and indifference from the general public -- landlords, creditors and employers alike. Without government help this new lower class, like those before it, will continue to cling to the lowest rungs of the economic ladder. For the majority of single parents this may mean constant deprivation and insecurity; the least fortunate will become the outcasts of society living meager lives in the worst housing in the region.

The citizens of British Columbia have a choice about the quality of life in the province and are responsible for the policies their representatives create. Hopefully in the next few years major changes in government housing policies will allow single parent families access to the opportunities a cosmopolitan centre such as Greater Vancouver has to offer.

In the meantime, single mothers in S.M.A.C. continue their efforts to realize practical solutions to their housing problems while demonstrating that single parents can coordinate their efforts to help themselves. The Single Mothers' Action Committee has decided to channel most of its efforts toward the creation of a pilot housing project. On April 10, 1984, only a few days before the submission of this study, the Board of Directors of the YWCA approved a motion which allows S.M.A.C. to undertake a feasibility study for a housing project and apply for
CMHC funding. If the project is completed, it will be the first project in Canada organized and built by single parents. Much credit should be given to the YWCA for its continued support of single mothers in these times of "restraint" and budget cut backs.
Writing this paper was difficult and frustrating at times for two different reasons. In the first place, writing this paper was almost an exercise in self examination, since I am a single parent. In researching the topic I tried to be objective, but decided that I fit into the role of participant observer. I could understand the anxieties and problems of these women because I was having similar ones. I could also attend the Single Mothers' Action Committee as a member of the group and also as an outside observer. At first I thought that inclusion in the target population might serve as a disadvantage by biasing the report, but I finally decided that I was advantaged in being able to view the issues in the light of my own personal experiences.

Secondly, it became apparent very early in the study that there was almost a total lack of material concerning single mothers in the GVRD. Most government agencies had practically no information to offer. The Ministry of Human Resources had only one study based on data from British Columbia and that was a comparison of two communities in Victoria as suitable environments for single parents. In looking for material for the GVRD, I was led in a round about way to Maple Ridge. As I went from one agency to another, someone said that a study of community facilities in Maple Ridge had been done at Douglas College. The program coordinator did not remember the study but said to call Susanne Stacey at the Maple Ridge Community Services Council. Susanne said, "Oh, there is no written study. They must mean the map that's on my wall." Desperate for material, I said, "Well,
maybe I'd better come out and take a look at your map." Fortunately this led to the interviews concerning the conditions there.

Obviously this topic needs further research. Possible areas of investigation are the differences between working mothers and welfare recipients, the decision making process in residential selection and the importance of illegal suites in the housing of single parent families.


Single Mothers' Action Committee, A Vancouver YWCA sponsored group. "Housing Objectives." From the minutes of the Housing Committee, December 3, 1983.


Greater Vancouver Housing Corporation. Personal interview with Bill Lane, Director. February 2, 1984.


Single Mothers' Symposium, sponsored by the Vancouver YWCA. Personal interview with Judy Lindsay, coordinator and facilitator of the 1983 symposium. November 2, 1983.