

**An Address to the Social Sciences: Social Capital and Its Cyclical Impact on Single
Parents' Social and Political Trust**

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Abstract

Social conventions will indicate that single parenthood hurts communities and social welfare. Such conventions are not only restrictive but fail to address society's culpability in creating environments conducive to adversity among single parents. This paper aims to point out the cyclical nature that exists within the single-parent social capital paradigm. This paper posits that trust, the heart of social capital, is low amongst single parents, which lowers social capital. Using quantitative analysis, this researcher used two national social science surveys, the General Social Survey (GSS) and American National Election Studies (ANES), to compare the social and political trust levels of single parents and their households to the rest of the population. Results from the GSS showed that single parent-led households tend to lower social trust significantly, and single-parent households also have significantly lower confidence in the judiciary. Results from the ANES showed that single parents have significantly less interpersonal trust but do *not* have significantly less trust in the federal government. These results show that single parents tend to have a hard time trusting others, making them less likely to participate in the community or cultivate meaningful relationships. It also shows that single parents reserve animosity towards the judicial system, unlike their confidence in the federal government. Perhaps due to a negative experience navigating the family legal system at the local level. The main takeaway is that this paper indicates that low social capital may *cause* single parenthood.

Keywords: Single parent, social capital, social trust, political trust, family policy, welfare, confidence in the judiciary

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“I am among those who think that science has great beauty. A scientist in his laboratory is not only a technician: he is also a child placed before natural phenomena which impress him like a fairy tale. We should not allow it to be believed that all scientific progress can be reduced to mechanisms, machines, gearings, even though such machinery has its own beauty.”

- Marie Curie

Nobel Prize Recipient in Chemistry and Single Mother

Introduction

Similar to the process of policymaking, the tendencies of the social sciences rely on breaking individuals into bite-sized bits and forming assumptions based on these minor qualities. The conventional approach, taken on by most social scientists and political elites, addresses only the drawbacks of single parenthood on families and society. However, these approaches are not addressing the root of the problem, which is the cyclical culpability between society and single parents. Therefore, a concentrated effort toward reexamining single parents in the social sciences is greatly needed. To truly understand and address the misfortune of single parents, inquiry should go beyond economic stresses, domestic instability, and generational backsliding.

While it is well established that high rates of single parenthood are associated with low social capital (Portes, 1998), the notion that single parenthood *causes* diminished social capital appears overly simplistic and restricted. At the heart of social capital is the quality of interpersonal relationships and trust. Without quality relationships and trust in others, social capital tends to dissipate. Where there is low social capital, there is also a notable degree of single parenthood within that region—yet it is unclear whether single parenthood is causing low social capital *or* low social capital is causing single parenthood. Despite the uncertainty, the social science literature paints an undisputed picture: single parenthood is the culprit and society its victim. Based on this central assumption, a snowball of shaming, degrading, and discarding of the single parent is not only ever-present in the literature but in our daily interactions with them.

It is critical to this paper that I successfully explain the paradigmatic relationship between the adversity of single parenthood and how their community chooses to respond. On a basic level, I will be exploring the alternative explanation: low social capital is *causing* single parenthood. I will do so by allowing the single parent's perspective to take over and explore society through their lens. Then, I argue that at the root of declining social capital in communities with high rates of single parenthood is a lack of trust among single parents towards their community and their government. In doing so, I will have supplied evidence to the theory that the degradation of communities with high rates of single parenthood is cyclical, and culpability should undergo redistribution.

This research is invaluable because we know little about single parents beyond economic disposition. We know so little because the social sciences do not treat single parents as their own distinct demographic worthy of a separate investigation, which is particularly strange given their growing prevalence—1 in 4 families in the U.S. will grow up in a single-parent household (Livingston, 2018). We treat race, gender, age, and identity with such dignity and thorough investigation but have not afforded the same level of respect to unconventional family dynamics—this is a gap I intend to fill in my research.

I intend to narrow the gap simply yet succinctly by addressing the complex paradigm between single parents, society, and politics through the role of trust. Trust is an excellent proxy for measuring a single parent's outlook on society and politics; and it is a great starting point for inquiry since qualitative research in this area is underdeveloped. Trust research tends to be performed in broad strokes and focuses on the general population, but single parents do not fit into this mold, so the general implications are inapplicable. Based on cursory observation, the

experience of single parents is as unique as they are distinct from the general population.

Therefore, separate inquiry solely on single parents is justified.

I will pursue these objectives in two ways: first, I will look at households led by single parents and then the single parent as an individual and compare both to the rest of the population. Specifically, I am interested in looking at how single-parent households' "trust" compares to other household types; likewise, how single parents' "trust" compares to non-single parents. From these results, I could then argue in favor or against my theory: low social capital is *causing* single parenthood.

Finally, the paper elucidates a political impasse between society, politics, and single parents. Unlike political influencer Ben Shapiro, who says, "stop incentivizing single parenthood and inculcating a victim mentality" (2016), or President Reagan, who calls single parents on welfare "Welfare Queens," I believe that scientific research can still hold empathy toward its subjects while retaining its objectivity. In fact, a more empathetic approach may lead to a more precise picture in this case. While single parenthood comes with its hurdles, how society treats single parents constitutes a wholly different type of adversity.

Literature Review

WHY SINGLE PARENTS DISTRUST THE SYSTEM

The Social Capital, Teen Pregnancy, Single Parenthood and Trust Paradigm

This paper mirrors a similar paradigm that Holtgrave and Crosby investigated back in 2006. In their research, they studied the effect of social capital on teenage pregnancy and established a substantial inverse relationship between social capital and teen pregnancy. While poverty lost its statistical significance, it demonstrated that social capital retained a statistical significance of -0.672 (p.001) (pp. 558). In short, they purported that low social capital *causes* teen pregnancy. Holtgrave and Crosby innovatively went against the well-established convention that teen pregnancy *causes* low social capital and came out with evidence that introduced an

alternative explanation: the paradigm possesses a cyclical relationship. Before, the causal link between teen pregnancy and social capital was directional. Instead, they found that low social capital creates an environment conducive to teen pregnancy, and teen pregnancy was lowering social capital.

Many scholars of single parenthood also build their theories on similar conventions: single parenthood *causes* low social capital, thus incriminating the single parent in all respects. What this field of research lacks, however, is a model similar to Holtgrave and Crosby that shows a cyclical relationship between single parenthood and social capital. Fortunately, this provides enough evidence to justify a reiteration of Holtgrave and Crosby's model but with single parents as its central figure.

To do so, I should first provide the basic layout for all the game pieces in this paradigm: social capital, single parenthood, and trust. According to Robert D. Putnam (1993), social capital comprises networks, norms, and trust that enable coordination and collaboration for mutual gain and central to it is interpersonal trust—meaning the quality and intimacy of our personal relationships enables us to pursue strong ties within the community. The stronger the ties the community has, the more durable is its social safety net. A cursory overview of the treatment of single parents under public policy and by society leads one to believe that single parents should have poor trust in others and government. Without this evidence, it will be difficult to prove that the cyclical paradigm exists. However, we do not have prior research that empirically shows this, so that evidence will be provided in this paper.

Background: The History of Public Policy Affecting Single Parents

Before it became a derogatory epithet for a single parent on welfare, the "Welfare Queen" was a genuine person. During one of Ronald Reagan's campaign addresses in Chicago, the name acquired popularity and at the time, his campaign's central promise was to fix the

failing welfare system. Linda Taylor, the woman notorious for abusing the welfare system by committing 80 separate acts of fraud and countless acts of perjury and receiving over \$150,000 in welfare aid was the original "welfare queen," became the poster girl for the botched system. However, the persecution of Taylor did not stop there, soon all single parents were vulnerable to accusation of welfare abuse. At its peak, the phrase "Welfare Queen" referred to single parents of color, who account for a substantial proportion of the welfare population as system abusers (Kohler-Hausmann, 2015).

The label "Welfare Queen" is not just derogatory. According to Carly Foster, the "Welfare Queen" is a rhetorical construct that exists in the minds of politicians and welfare policymakers, and these preconceptions find their way into legislation (2008, pp. 163). Bureaucratic discrimination developed within welfare offices, thus increasing the difficulty of obtaining aid ; and recipients of aid were now more restricted from "double-dipping" in different welfare programs (Duncan, 2015).



In 1984, Congress repealed much of what was the Aid to Families with Dependent Children Act on President Reagan's strong request. The AFDC program assisted families particularly susceptible to poverty. With the subsequent rollbacks, the state acquired enormous discretion over who would be eligible for subsidies. Under the AFDC amendments, the state's discretion decreased welfare provision for single parents, owing to the subjective aspect of

eligibility. According to a study conducted by the Ford Foundation of 207 Georgia welfare moms, the number of families living below the poverty line increased by 9% due to the AFDC adjustments. Second, the same people in this research had lost 10% of their monthly assistance and were no longer eligible for Medicaid (Rich, 1984).

After eight years, the AFDC was terminated, and the Bush administration adopted the Child Support Recovery Act of 1992. This new state-run system would punish individuals who refused to pay child support. Gordan and Batlan (2011) point out that the CSRA featured problematic qualifying restrictions. Women applying for financial assistance under CSRA were expected to engage in "Family Reconciliation" programs, which placed the applicant's paternal parent and father in a position where they were expected to reconcile their financial and parenting duties before they could qualify for state money. According to one legal expert, the CSRA proposal fundamentally punishes women; one apparent worry is that the Family Reconciliation Program is intrusive and constitutes a genuine threat to women and children who are forced to participate (Wimberly, 2000)—and in some cases, may force women to avoid seeking out child support altogether.

CSRA was altogether an inefficient program as it did not feasibly help low-income single parents in their pursuit of seeking child support. Legal restitution was attainable only after a full year of deliberate non-payment of child support or when the unpaid total exceeds \$5,000¹. If the average single parent brings home only \$40,000 a year (Mathur, 2015), that means if she is entitled to receive \$600 a month in child support, a generously low amount, approximately 10% of her available income will be withheld for a full calendar year before she is able to begin seeking out restitution and back-payment.

¹ *Child Support Recovery Act of 1992 18 U.S.C. § 228*

Finally, the 2010 Affordable Care Act (ACA) harmed working single parents. The ACA's purpose was to reduce the number of uninsured individuals to minimize the cost per capita on insured people by providing healthcare incentives to the unemployed. Indeed, the ACA did just that (Erikson, 2021); it increased insurance coverage and reduced expenditures per capita in some circumstances. As Pohls (2018) notes, while the ACA encouraged more people to enter the labor field, many single parents were driven out of work due to their inability to compete with others with more flexible work schedules. Since the ACA's implementation, the rate of single parents on unemployment benefits has also increased (pp. 1311). Iverson and Rosenbluth (2010) explain that programs like ACA hurt single moms because employers were less likely to hire women because of fear that they would prioritize their maternal obligations overwork and that they had the tendency to take advantage of work incentives. Thus single parents were pushed further down the professional chain.

Since public policy is intended to maximize the amount of people it helps, its general strokes often undermine the conditions that harm single parents, leaving them in poorer situations than before; and such evidence serves as a precursor for my own analysis.

Consequences of Policy Choices

To understand how inefficient these policy initiatives were, this section provides a bleak overview of how single parents fared at the turn of the century. To begin, 30% of single-mother homes are impoverished (Winship and Jenks, 2004), with African American and Latinx single mothers being the majority (Elliot et al., 2015). While wealth has no influence on a mother's objectives beyond the home, recent research (Bernhard et al., 2021) discovered that moms who were the household's "breadwinners" saw a considerable decline in ambition. Single women struggle with their double-shift as caretaker and sole provider (McCreary and Dancy, 2004). Trying to balance both job and family adequately is still not a legitimate choice. As one study

points out, splitting the time between job and family demands inconsistent work patterns and a marked tendency to chronic depression and stress (Son and Bauer, 2010).

Most policy initiatives attempted to eradicate single parenthood, not protect single parents. From AFDC and CSRA policies forward, there was a concerted effort on the government's side to reduce single parenthood, whether through family reconciliation programs

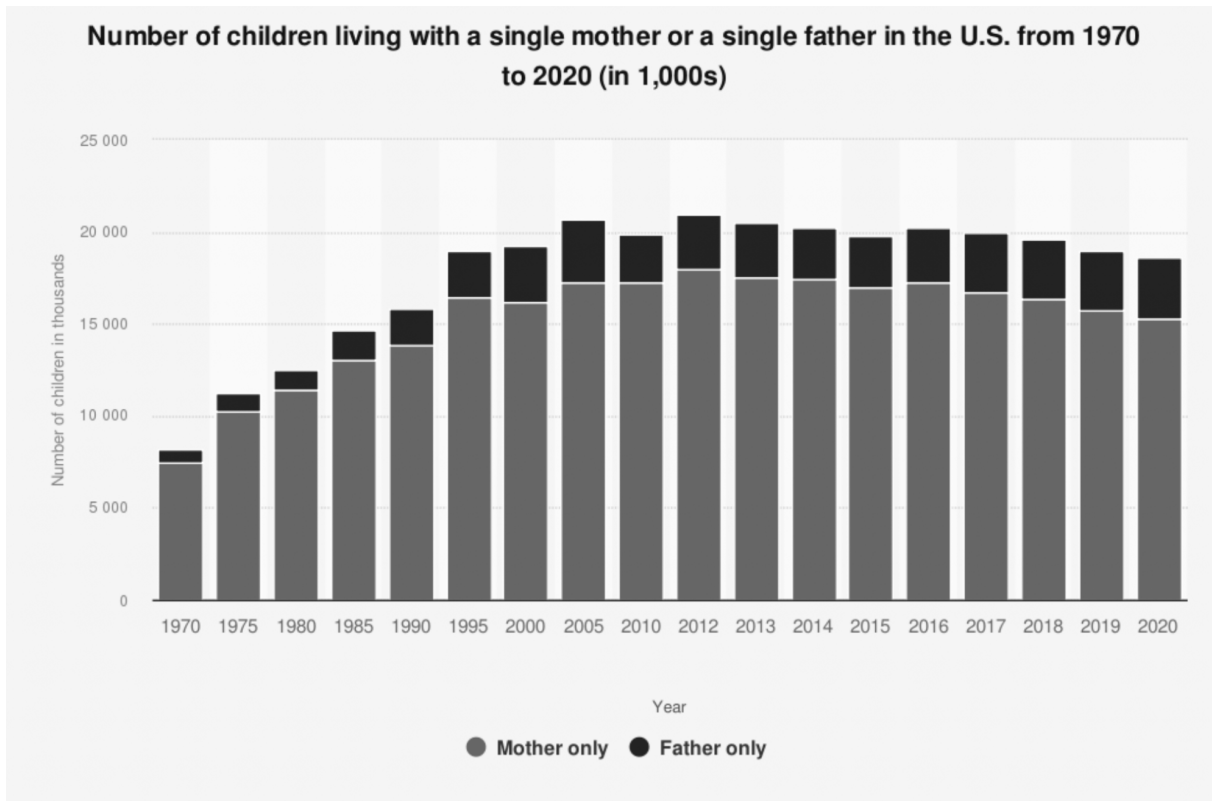


Figure 1: Sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau

or contraceptive education. However, all attempts at reducing the rate of single parenthood have been insufficient, given that the rate of single parenthood has continued to climb and appears to have accelerated after these various programs were implemented (See Figure 1). Between 1990 and 1995, children living with a single parent increased, coinciding with the implementation of the CSRA program in 1991.

While the ACA benefited many, it posed significant disadvantages for single parents. As one former beneficiary put it, “...as a single parent I have always had Medicaid. Now here in Georgia in 2012 they cut me off because I have a part-time job” (as cited by Michener, 2018, p.1). There is also precedent for discrimination against minorities within the Welfare system (Duncan, 2015); Michener notes that the subtle yet all-powerful ability of bureaucratic institutions to determine who is an eligible recipient has been historically used discriminatly against African Americans (p. 36).

Understanding the Relationship between Single Parents and the Judiciary

According to a study that analyzed the legitimacy of the judicial branch, researchers found that people's perceptions of trustworthiness in the judiciary are dependent on personal experience and actual events (Bühlmann & Kunz, 2011). An earlier study collected opinions regarding the various common perceptions of the judiciary and found the most frequent response that "the courts are congested, inefficient and not 'user-friendly' (Selya, 1995, p. 909). The efficacy of local courts is pertinent to our analysis because single parents will likely interact with local judiciary in the event of separation or child support negotiations.

What is most indicative of the lack of a relationship between the court system and single parents is that only 31.4% of single mothers had obtained a legal child support agreement as of 2019 (Grall, 2020). The process can be invasive, complex, inconvenient, expensive, and time-consuming. First, it must be substantiated that both parties involved are biologically the child's parents. Factors such as parents' state residency, income, assets, and childcare costs will determine the amount of child support they will receive (The U.S. Administration for Children and Families). If there is pushback from one of the paternal parents or complications during the process, a lawyer or mitigator is almost always necessary. This is where things can get financially straining when pursuing child support. The average single parent will make

\$14-\$29/hr (ziprecruiter.com), whereas a lawyer will cost \$100-\$500/hr and a mitigator \$100-\$300/hr (undubledlegalhelp.com). On top of financial burdens, local courts operate under regular business hours on a first-come-first-serve basis, meaning that appointments are unattainable and parents have to choose between a day's wage or waiting in line. For those who want to skip out on the hefty lawyer fees, determining child support "under-the-table" may entail child support payments that are far less than what the single parent is entitled to and not legally bound by a court order meaning any broken agreement cannot be prosecuted.

Political Attitudes of the Single Parent

The fact that little information is available about the attitudes of single parents is essential to this study. Some research shows that among individuals who agreed to engage in panel studies, the group that had broken off after committing to the study seemed to be single parents (Rusch, 2013). However, as several pieces of the research highlight, it is no surprise that single parents are not prone to be politically engaged. Some argue that being the sole care provider and financier discourages women from engaging in the extra stress of political discourse (Wemlinger and Kropf, 2013; Shore, 2020). At the same time, others point out that they are generally less politically ambitious (Bernhard, Shames, and Teele, 2021). As a result, access to single parents' political attitudes and representation in political leadership may have limits altogether.

It is unclear why political science largely dismisses family structure as a demographic factor, but it is undeniably the case in most statistical regressions that this particular demographic is excluded. However, these facts can only be a partial explanation. Most national surveys make no explicit distinction between a single respondent and a parent or a single person. However, most national surveys will distinguish respondents according to their race, age, gender, economic status, and education. So, when it comes to distinguishing family dynamics, the data is not easily accessible.

WHY SINGLE PARENTS DISTRUST OTHERS

The study on single motherhood accessible to the political sciences focuses on how non-group members (people who are not single parents) perceive single motherhood or how single parenthood negatively impacts society. For example, a PewResearch study came out saying, "Seven in ten Americans (69%) say the trend toward more single women having children is bad for society, and 61% say that a child needs both a mother and father to grow up happily (Heimlich, 2011)". Conversely, the way single moms have been researched may reflect a legitimately hostile attitude toward single motherhood in scientific research (Collins and Margo, 2000; Fineman, 1991; Hare-Mustin and Broderick, 1979). The literature and political debate on single parenting have mostly excluded single moms' input and assumed that single parenthood is a choice a parent deliberately chooses.

As much as we know about the hardship of most single parents, we know virtually nothing about its political implications. However, if we take into consideration the various kinds of adversity, such as poverty (Stepan and Linz, 2011), domestic abuse (Gibson-Davis et al., 2005), health deterioration (Bianchi, 1994), social isolation, depression (Cairney, Boyle & Racine, 2003), public scrutiny (Heimlich, 2011), we can make some sound predictions regarding their trust and then measure this hypothesis. The following section breaks down the various reasons why single parents distrust others.

“Stretched Thin”

Bowling Alone (2000), a magnificent investigation of the erosion of social capital, sheds light on how and why single parents create the social bonds they do. Single parents have seemingly limited time to socialize, so they frequently seek social connections in the workplace (p. 365). This, however, may not be a universal experience for the majority of single mothers, as about half of all single mothers work part-time or are unemployed (See Figure 2). In the case of

single moms entering the workforce, social capital conditions appear to increase, owing to greater interpersonal connections (p. 365).

However, this is rarely the case because single parents are frequently too preoccupied to join in social activities or kindle meaningful friendships. Single parents are constantly concerned about financial strain, job uncertainty, a lack of savings, exertion, and inflation; hence, there are significantly higher stakes associated with working as a single parent, which hinders meaningful social participation (p. 352), making them far less agreeable and more likely to prioritize down-time than socializing.

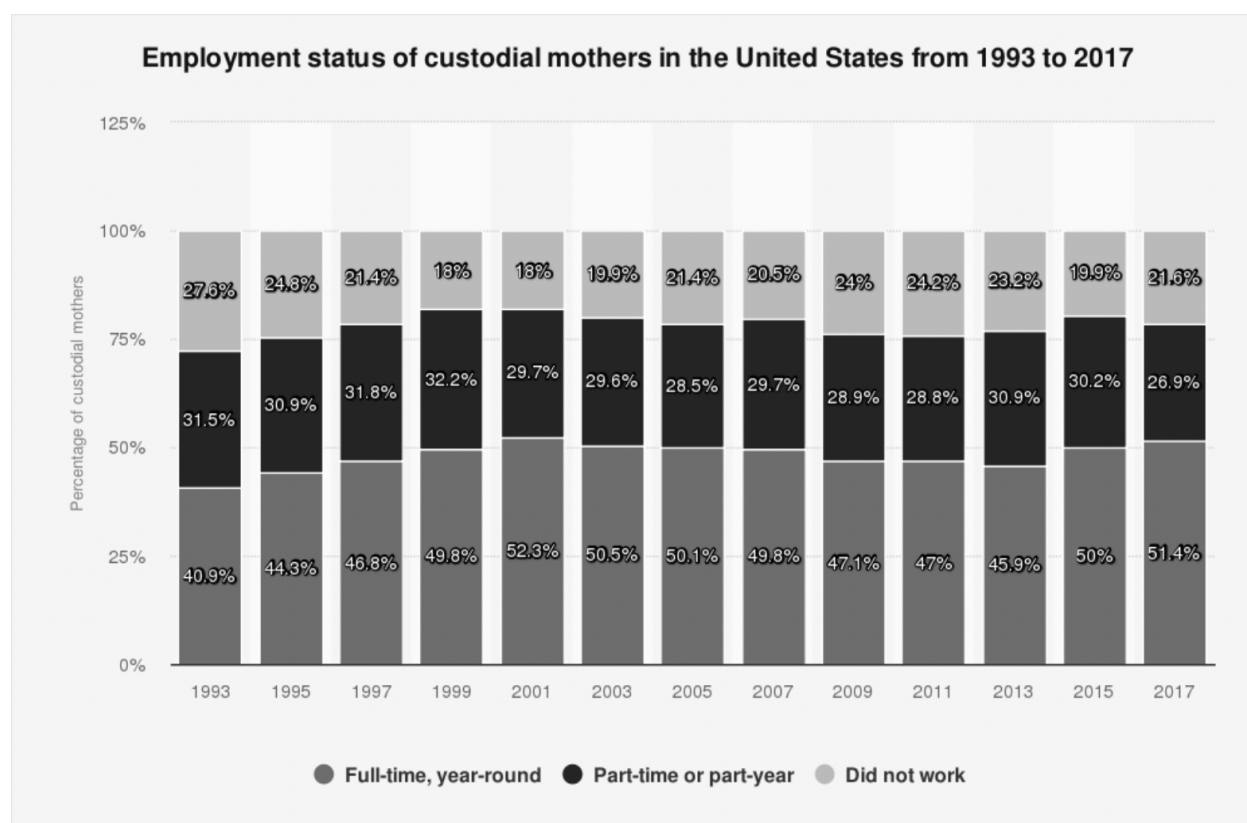


Figure 2: Sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau

Hostility Towards the Single Parent

Next, the pressures imposed on single parents can be unbearably stressful and demoralizing. Numerous studies examine how lone parents have a detrimental effect on their

children's behavioral characteristics (Barajas, 2011; Manning and Lamb, 2003). One parent makes all the sacrifices yet is scrutinized for assuming the role of the parent who stayed. It is uncommon for these studies to focus on the "implications of absent-parent families"; almost always, the implications are pushed toward "the impacts of growing up in a single parent household." Surprisingly, in a 2010 PewResearch survey (See Figure 3), single parents with children were deemed less of a "family" than married couples without children. While the difference is only 2%, it is interesting to note that when a parent is not married, they lose their standing as a viable family unit in the eyes of society as a whole. All of this means that society looks down on single parents, resulting in sentiments of exclusion.

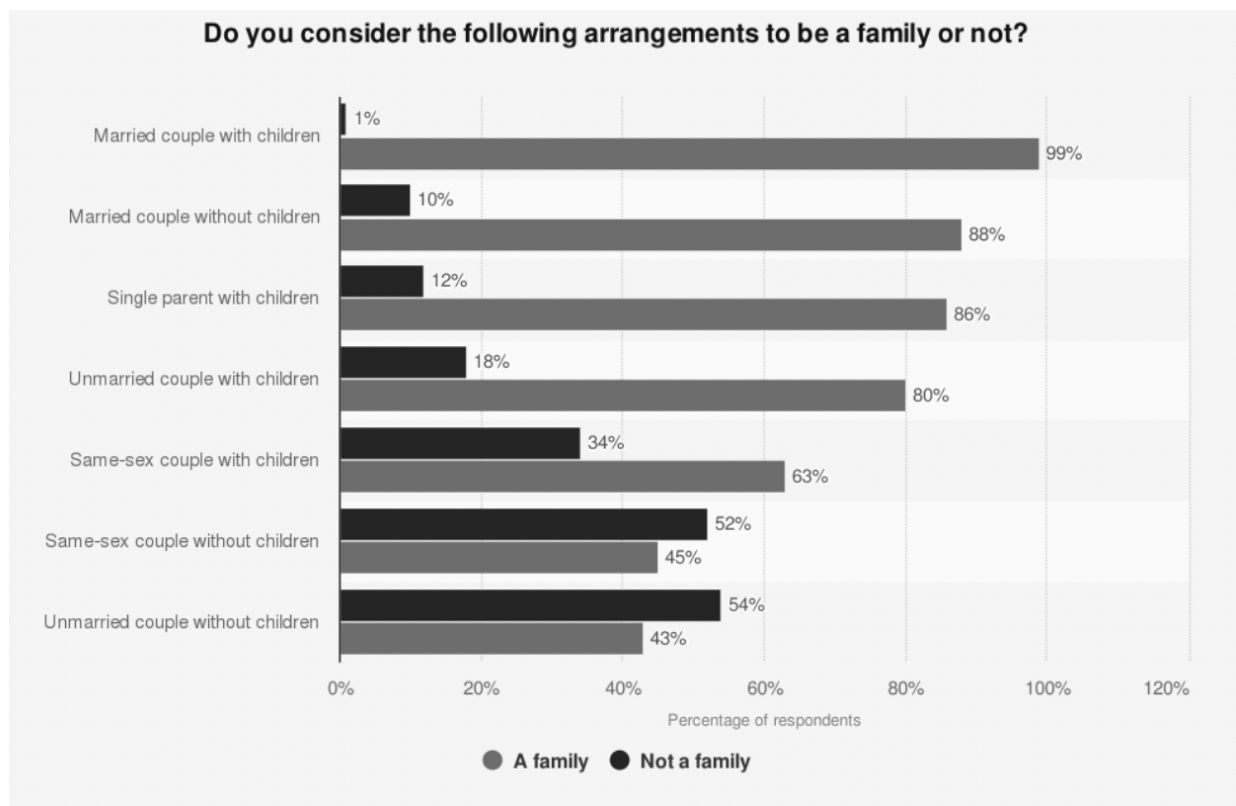


Figure 3 sourced from [Pew Research](#).

According to reports, single parents, particularly women, are six times more likely to be victims of domestic abuse than entire family systems (Zill, 2015). Single parents are also more

likely to experience betrayal trauma, which can have a profound psychological effect on how individuals develop interpersonal trust. Jennifer Freyd and Anne P. DePrince draw a clear distinction between men and women experiencing betrayal trauma, noting that acts within marriages can provoke a severe type of trauma, permanently altering these women's perceptions of men (1996, pg. 98). Infidelity was the second most common reason for divorce, accounting for 59.6 percent of all divorces in the United States (p. 386). The type of experience that divorced women and even single women can face may eventually cause these women to lose their trust in men entirely.

As previously stated, there is precedent within institutions that empower bureaucrats to discriminate against those in need, but as one Black single mother living in poverty explained, despite her reservations: "At the end of the day, you have to ask yourself. Are you concerned about what these people are going to think, or are you concerned about the health of your child?" (stated by 'Lucy' as cited by Michener in 2018). Despite the open animosity directed towards these parents, their values remain unchanged, and their opinions on society may eventually shift due to the judgment they experienced; all the while, they learned to become more self-sufficient, reducing their need for society's benevolence.

Comparing Different Countries' Welfare Systems

There is much dispute on the efficiency of social assistance programs in rehabilitating individuals or dependents. As with the unfounded concern, a prominent figure under Regan's government was the infamous "Welfare Queen," who sought up kinfolk to qualify for welfare. While these statements were false, they left an indelible mark on voters. Rothstein clarifies how these pernicious assumptions contradict some well-supported empirical findings. In general, he showed that the more generous a welfare state is, the happier people are and, therefore, the more capable of increasing their prosperity; this, in turn, discouraged reliance on assistance. When all

other variables are accounted for, he observed that when people are dissatisfied, they tend to stay on welfare longer (Rostein, 2010).

Additionally, he argues that welfare beneficiaries were significantly less happy in welfare states like the U.S. than in generous welfare states such as the Nordic countries (p. 6). He believes that when welfare is administered "well," well-being likewise prospers, resulting in mobility. The distinction he draws between selective and generous aid for single parents is critical. A single parent under the selective system is more likely to be unemployed due to the high cost of childcare, necessitating the need for some selective benefits. When she becomes a member of the selected system, she is branded as a "non-contributor" to society and is forced to live off unearned money. That is not the case in liberal welfare regimes, where single moms can work and use public child care, thus benefiting everyone around them through their ability to contribute (p.8). A sense of belonging is another social capital that can affect an individual's happiness (Leung et al., 2013). It is one thing to live in a community, but quite another to be deeply rooted and cherished within it. Single parents are stigmatized, undesired, and a drain on community bonds, both in the literature and within their communities.

THE "SINGLE PARENT" VARIABLE **Household Types and Family Dynamics**

Some social scientists argue that studying household types is challenging to apply in an empirical investigation. However, they are a viable variable if done correctly. *Households* are defined as the ecological basis for most human growth and social organization (Carter, 1984, p. 44). Additionally, home construction is one of vivacious cross-cultural domesticity, which on a racial and ethnic level, contributes vibrantly to indicators of family dynamics on social and political trust. The root of the difficulty, however, as Carter points out, is that the "household cannot universally be identified in terms of physical correspondence" but, more accurately, as a

"task-oriented unit" (p. 54). For some, that goal is to start a family; for others, it is to pay rent and take care of housekeeping tasks; and for the single parent, the household unit's primary purpose is survival for themselves and their kindred. For the sake of analysis, there is no particular reason to make further distinctions about household types beyond the number of adults, the relation of those adults to each other, and the number of kids within the household.

Assembling the Empirical “Single Parent” and Highlighting Intersectionality

Following Hamme’s (1984) recommendation, I will attempt to break down the single parent into anatomical terms. Hamme proposed that of the most common features of a single parent, age, gender, income, race, and education seem to show a degree of relevance.

Age plays a significant role in determining the outcomes for a single parent. Approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ of single parents will have their first child under 30, and $\frac{1}{3}$ will have their first child under 25 (U.S. Census). Another study (Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 2004) points to the parents whose children rear at a young age are still in cognitive development, meaning they are still developing maturity. Additionally, younger parents. People in this age range also tend to be less educated or underdeveloped careers. Therefore, they are forced to choose between pursuing better economic circumstances but attending far less to the child's needs or staying in their economic circumstances and facing instability. In either scenario, consequences were prevalent (Mare and Tzeng, 1989). Of the third of all women in 2007 who were married, $\frac{1}{3}$ of those marriages ended before the age of 24. Single parents are predominantly women in the U.S.—approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ of all single-parent families are run by women (Livingston, 2018). Single fathers, the underwhelming minority, over a quarter of fathers under 30 are single parents (Livingston, 2013). An investigative reporter for Forbes put out an article showing that in 2014 a single mother earned an average of \$36,780 and had average earnings fall by 6% over the last ten

years (Mathur, 2015). Single parenthood is also distinctive in race: 30% of all single moms are Black, 40% are White, and 25% are Hispanic. It is worth noting that these numbers are disproportionate to the entire population separated by race. Education also plays a role—nearly half (45% in 2018) of single parents had the educational equivalency of high school graduates or lower. At the same time, only 1/3 of all single parents hold a bachelor's degree or be higher.

A culmination of sociological drawbacks such as having children at a young age, being female, being a person of color, being low-income, and having low educational attainment are all trademarks of single parenthood. However, it is essential to have a healthy amount of suspicion about what factors brought about single parenthood and which factors are a byproduct of single parenthood. What is important to note about all of these factors is that it is highly likely that these factors intersect and, therefore, may exacerbate adversity amongst single parents.

REVIEW ON SOCIAL AND POLITICAL TRUST RESEARCH

Uslaner defines social or generalized trust as a feeling that "most people can be trusted" (2018, pp. 2). He contends that this form of trust is developed by a mix of socialization and natural optimism rather than through direct encounters with other people or personal experiences (pp. 3). Putnam (2000) asserts that this form of trust lies at the heart of social capital and serves as the impetus for collective action. Thus, social capital, or equal economic distribution, serves as a proxy for trust levels (Uslaner, 2018). In Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (2000), the lack of social weaving and strong interpersonal links exemplifies the problem of social capital loss. Given the article's premise, it seems appropriate to offer some correlative statistics on the welfare system and the role of social trust in it. According to Tamilina (2018), "universal" welfare programs correspond with increased levels of social trust and social capital, but "selective" social services create a cultural divide between recipients and others, eroding social trust.

Various techniques can assess social trust, including quantitative analysis of survey data, experimentation, and even rational choice theory. Uslaner asserts that methodologies built on socialization as a driving factor (i.e., examining how demographic characteristics affect trust) and self-reported answers provide more reliable findings (pp. 4). When compared to number-specific scale measures, survey scales that employ item-specific answer possibilities exclude less "incorrect" self-placement on a response scale (Bauer and Freitag, 2018, pp.8).

Whether social and political trust is separate or interdependent is still extensively debated. For Newton et al. (2018), "Greater confidence leads to more social trust" (pp.6), whereas others believe that while they interact with each other, they develop in isolated ways. For example, Uslaner (2018) posits a weak relationship at best. As Uslaner describes it, political trust is the confidence one has in government institutions based on evaluative performance (pp. 1-2). Unlike social trust, which often entails predetermined intrinsic values or ideals, political trust responds to short-term changes and implementations of different policies. Most accountable for political trust is the ever-changing state of the national economy (pp. 9), making it a far more unstable type of trust to measure.

As implied, it may be challenging to assess people's political trust for various reasons appropriately. Establishing standard criteria is difficult, separating layers of government is complex, and identifying what influences people's responses becomes prohibitively costly (Uslaner, 2018)—the exacerbation of division in the U.S. worsens these issues even more. Other indicators of political trust have been utilized, including voter participation, anti-incumbency votes, and tax compliance (pp. 10). Compared to methods provided for self-placement on social trust scales, the methods available to measure political trust on self-placement scales are less broad (Bauer and Freitag). Typically, the standard practice on a self-placement scale is to use a

5-point scale to questions like "How strongly do you trust [government, elections, courts, ect.]" (2018, pp.4).

With all that said, Newton et al. highlight that "the main problem with trust research is isolating clear causes and effects" (2018, pp. 3). Therefore establishing a relationship between single parenthood and trust will be difficult in that determining which variable is affecting the other will need to be thoroughly justified. However, empirical evidence may or may not be accessible at this time, given the underfunded literature regarding the political attitudes of single mothers. However, an ambitious goal of this research is to connect a nuanced political understanding of single motherhood to a broad political topic such as trust research.

Theory and Hypothesis

The research objective is to determine why social capital is low in communities that tend to have high rates of single parenthood. The theory behind the research question is that given the numerous studies that show social capital can causally be linked to teen birth rates and traits of teen pregnancy and single parenthood share overlap, this paper's theory that trust explains low social capital.

The posed research question is, "Why does social capital correlate with rates of single parenthood?" I will attempt to answer this question by investigating the levels of political and social trust, the cornerstones of social capital, amongst single parents in their households. My central theory, following the literature, is that single parents and their households will have significantly less social and political trust than the rest of the population and respective household types. My null hypothesis is that single parents and single-parent households will not have varying social and political trust levels inconsistent with the general population and respective household types.

Methods

A COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW OF THE GSS AND ANES

Separate assessments on single parenthood's influence on social and political trust were conducted using the General Social Survey (GSS) and the American National Election Studies (ANES). The GSS and ANES capture distinct but related notions to this study that are significant to my investigation. The GSS does not provide a direct measure of "single parenthood" at the individual level, but the ANES does. However, the GSS included information about respondents' household types, which enabled me to compare single-parent families to other types of households. What is lovely about this is that it illustrates the impact of single motherhood on the single parent and everyone else in the home.

Additionally, assessing the consequences of each household type is exceptionally illuminating in terms of the effects of marriage, having children, and having children out of wedlock. In comparison, the ANES provided direct access to the single parent variable as an individual unit rather than a household, which provides valuable insight into the differences between measuring for a single parent and measuring from a single-parent home. In both cases, the ratio of single parents as a variable was proportional to the remainder of the non-single parent population, which is a strong indication that both datasets are assembling adequate samples. GSS data often include more complex survey questions and itemized answer scales to assess social and political trust. Additionally, it provided the same notion in many question formats, which simplified the process of creating indexes and testing for dependability in respondents' consistency in responding to the questionnaire. Social trust was a straightforward attribute to quantify using the data supplied by GSS. Instead of taking a normative approach to a question on social trust, the GSS would ask questions such as "How frequently do you go to a bar with friends?" to go into the specifics that the analysis encourages. Although political trust may be

construed in various ways, the GSS allowed for detailed regressions. Political trust took a comparative, in-depth approach, which enhanced the overall conclusion. I was primarily interested in discovering empirical implications based on the literature study on how single parents engage with the judiciary.

In contrast to the ANES, the GSS had supplied the particular variables required to conduct that specific regression. On the other hand, the ANES provided responders with a more theoretical standpoint. Frequently, a prologue given was that respondents should consider their response "generally," although the GSS insisted on a precise response. It would ask many questions about principles and norms and less about specific instances. For example, "Generally can most people be trusted?" does not allow further insight, which is complementary to how the GSS poses the same question regarding social trust. Political trust was even broader in what is asked about trust in government, albeit at the federal level, and trust in elites who are public officials. It is not much more specific than that in its attempt to record political trust. However, a wealth of data existed on how individuals felt about particular political philosophies under the ANES. Given the paper's focus on single motherhood, it was interesting to see how single parents felt about Feminism as a proponent of gender equality.

The General Social Survey

To test the hypothesis, we used data from the GSS, the General Social Survey, financed by the National Science Survey and developed by the University of Chicago. The GSS has records dating back to the 1970s to 2021. To participate in the survey, respondents had to be over 18 and have an address where mail could be addressed.

I want to see if when household types are distinguished, there will be a statistically significant difference between households in response to various questions regarding their social and political trust. To account for contending variables that may influence household types, we

controlled for the respondent's financial status, happiness with social life, feeling of 'wealth' in one's own life (self-placement), general happiness, religious importance, optimism for the future and rating the level of safety they feel in their neighborhood (all of which may impact how a single-parent household may respond to questions regarding trust). With the respondents split into these five categories, we will be able to run a regression that tells us how these households vary in response to multiple dependent variables.

American National Election Studies

The second way we will test our hypothesis is by using the American National Election Studies (ANES) dataset, financed by the National Science Foundation but developed by Stanford University. To participate in the survey, respondents had to be over 18 and have an address where mail could be addressed. With respondents split into two respective categories, we will assess the difference between how a single parent's responses might differ from a non-single parent. We want to see if when single parents are distinguished from the rest of the population, there will be a statistically significant difference in response to various questions regarding their social and political trust. To account for contending variables that may influence single parents, we controlled for age, education, race, gender, and income, which may impact how a single parent may respond to questions regarding trust.

Measures

GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY - DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Measuring Social Trust

Two independent GSS survey questions were combined to generate the dependent social trust variable, which quantifies respondents' perceptions of how much they can trust others and how they believe others to be helpful. To acquire a more accurate understanding of the relationship between social trust and single parenthood, it was necessary to add single parents' judgments of other people's integrity and their levels of altruism.

First, following their levels of trust, respondents were asked, "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?". The question is sufficiently framed so that it leaves little space for ambiguity or ambivalence, which is beneficial because the majority of people will identify with one camp or the other. Additionally, the question does an excellent job of avoiding predetermined responses from respondents by asking respondents to examine their viewpoint 'generally' rather than recalling specific interactions with others. Additionally, it straddles the line of extremity, which means that the two response options are not so polarized that respondents may lack affiliation with either response option.

Second, respondents were asked, to gauge their outlook on society's altruism, "Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful, or that they are mostly just looking out for themselves?". The question is appropriately asked since, as previously said, it provides minimal space for ambiguity or ambivalence. The question is not very severe in either direction since it avoids using absolute language, allowing the answer to locate themselves on their respective side of the spectrum readily. This question also assists in determining an individual's level of cynicism about society.

Measuring for Political Trust

Three independent GSS survey items were combined to construct a dependent variable measuring political trust in the judicial system, judges, and the United States Supreme Court. It was critical to distinguish between confidence and trust in the system itself and in the people who are a part of that system to reflect respondents' degrees of political trust appropriately.

First, respondents were asked, per their normative confidence levels, "How much confidence do you have in [courts and legal systems]?". This inquiry was straightforward, without priming, and inquired about the system normatively, which is adequate for analysis.

Second, following their confidence level, respondents were asked, "Using the following scale ranging from 0 to 10, where 0 means No trust at all; and 10 means Complete trust, please indicate how much trust you have in America's courts?". Compared to a categorical answer scale, the thermometer response scale rating is sufficient in that respondents have the entire agency for their self-placement. In terms of the question's operation, it is commendable that they make it apparent that they are speaking from personal experience. What could have been more precise is the sort of American courts to consider for the respondent. While the question might pertain to any court, it would have been preferable if they said it directly. Otherwise, the reply is more than likely to answer the question correctly.

Third, respondents were asked, in accordance with their confidence in the people within the system, "As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?". The question has three categorical response possibilities, with the middle response indicating ambivalence, which is appropriate given that courts are a subject on which not everyone has an opinion. However, the question would have been significantly enhanced if it included a "Don't Know" choice, considering that the ordinary individual is unlikely to possess sufficient knowledge to make an informed judgment.

I did a reliability study on my usage of several indicators. These three concepts—normative confidence in the system, personal confidence in the courts, and confidence in the system's decision-makers—serve as solid indicators of respondents' total political trust. The

alpha is .47, and in no circumstance does the alpha increase when one of the indications is excluded.

GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY - INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Measuring Household Types

Our analysis included respondents from a variety of different household types. We analyzed only those who provided information on their household type. Respondents were questioned about their marital status, the number of persons in their household, and if they were parents to one or more children. According to the following criteria, respondents were classified into five categories and given a respective label for our analysis:

Response Options	Household Type
1 single adult, +1 kid/s (Never Married)	Single Parent (Never Married)
1 single adult, +1 kid/s (Once Married)	Single Parent (Once Married)
1 single adult, 0 kids	Single Adult Household
2 adults, + 1 kid/s	Co-Parent Household
+2 adults, 0 kids	Adults Only Household

Controlling for Happiness with Social Life

Social happiness is a variable that I want to regulate since it can undermine one's social trust. If a person is dissatisfied with their social life, they have a limited number of interpersonal contacts through which to measure their trustworthiness. As a result, it was critical to assess single parents' social trust while adjusting for alternative causal explanations such as social life satisfaction. A composite of respondent responses from several social measure variables was compiled to provide a realistic picture of an individual's social happiness.

First, respondents were asked, per carrying out social duties, "In general, please rate how well you carry out your usual social activities and roles. (This includes activities at home, at

work and in your community, and responsibilities as a parent, child, spouse, employee, friend, etc.)". This is an excellent question in that it indicates to what extent the respondent is committed to adding to their social life.

Second, respondents were asked, in accordance with their perception of their loneliness, "How often in the past 4 weeks have you felt that: You lack companionship?". Having the respondent consider only the time within the last four weeks was wise because everyone gets lonely from time to time, but the surveyor is trying to capture the most recent affliction. On a 5-point scale, respondents could choose from a range of "Never" to the most extreme case of "Very Often." Considering that the question poses a specific timeline for reference, I would have preferred if the response options ranged from "0-1 in the past 4 weeks" for mild cases and "everyday" for extreme cases because the range provided is subjective to what is considered "Very Often." Nevertheless, it is sufficient because it generally captures the respondents self-perception of loneliness which is ultimately a subjective experience.

Third, following how frequently they engage in social activities, respondents were asked, "How often do you go out to eat or drink with three or more friends or acquaintances who are not family members?". The concern surrounding this question is that "three or more friends" seems like a relatively high number and one or more friends seems like it would be sufficient enough. However, this question works because it grants substantial implications for the respondent's social group size.

Lastly, respondents were asked, in accordance with how often they would socialize with particular people in their lives, ranging from relatives to nonrelatives, friends of close or far proximity, and participate in adult activities. Respondents were given a card and asked to write down how often they attended the following: (A) "Spend a social evening with relatives?", (B)

Go to a bar or tavern?", (C) "Spend a social evening with friends who live outside the neighborhood?", or (D) "Spend evening with neighbors?". These questions are insightful because they indicate with whom the respondent has close relationships outside the home.

I did a reliability study on my usage of several indicators. The alpha is .65, and in no circumstance does the alpha rise when one of the indicators is excluded. The four concepts—respondents' proclivity for social responsibilities, their perception of their loneliness, the frequency with which they engage in social activities, and with whom they engage in social activities—all provide valuable indicators of respondents' overall satisfaction with their social lives.

Controlling for General Happiness

General happiness consists of four variables to gauge one's perspective of happiness: rating life, life satisfaction, quality of life, and happiness rating. Following their most recent assessment of their life, Respondents were asked, "If you were asked to rate your overall life from 0-10, where 10 represents the best possible state and 0 represents the worst possible state, how would you rate your life today?". The self-rating system is typically in trust research (See Lit. Review on Trust Research), making this question sufficient. The rating system itself for the question may be a bit ambiguous as it only explains the values of 0 and 10, and it is not clear how a four would be different from a 6; nevertheless, people tend to gauge themselves fairly. One indicator was per respondents' self-assessment of their quality of life. They were asked, "In general, would you say your quality of life is... [Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good, Excellent]". These response options are good because they do not provide a mutual response. It is essential that the respondent finds themselves on one side of the spectrum and not in the middle because most people have a general sense of what side of the spectrum they identify.

Finally, respondents were asked how they rate their happiness, "Taken all together, how would you say things are these days--would you say that you are very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?". The three-item list is somewhat skewed because there are two affirmative response options and only one negative response option, which may leave the skew off balance. With that, however, the question is good, and it keeps the scope of the answer quite general.

When all concepts were considered, current life rating, life satisfaction, quality of life, and happiness rating, it was possible to create a general happiness index of respondents. I did a reliability study on my usage of several indicators. The alpha is .65, and in no circumstance does the alpha rise when one of the indicators is excluded.

Controlling for Optimism for Future

This index is composed of items that indicate any form of Optimism, but mainly from an economic perspective. It is essential to control for Optimism as it significantly pertains to one's perception of others and the efficacy of government. To create the index, four concepts were considered: general Optimism, rating life overall in five years, Optimism about the financial future, and Optimism about your kid's financial future.

First, respondents were asked about their general Optimism in a normative sense. The respondents were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: "In uncertain times I usually expect best," "I'm always optimistic about my future," "I expect more good things to happen to me than bad," "If something can go wrong for me it will," "I hardly ever expect things to go my way" and "I rarely count on good things happening to me."

Respondents were given a 5-point response scale and a "Don't Know" option. If it were up to me, I would have left out the "Don't Know" option from the response scale since there was already a neutral response scale available. With that being said, however, only two participants had selected the "Don't Know" options, and the rest had placed themselves on the 5-point scale.

These six questions were then put into an index that generated an overall value that gauges one's general Optimism. I did a reliability study on my usage of several indicators. The alpha is .71, and in no circumstance does the alpha rise when one of the indicators is excluded.

Second, per their rating of life overall in five years, respondents were asked, "If you were asked to rate your overall life from 0-10, where 10 represents the best possible state and 0 represents the worst possible state, how do you think you would rate your life five years from today?". The question is similar to respondents' life assessment, but this time with the added perspective of 5 years down the road. Again, the rating system itself for the question may be a bit ambiguous as it only explains the values of 0 and 10, and it is not clear how a four would be different from a 6; nevertheless, people tend to gauge themselves fairly.

Third, following Optimism about the financial future, respondents were asked, "The way things are in America, people like my family and me have a good chance of improving our standard of living -- do you agree or disagree?". Then they were given a 5-point response scale; there was no "Don't Know" option which is great since a neutral response option was already provided.

Last, following Optimism regarding respondent children's (if applicable) financial future, respondents were asked, "When your children are at the age you are now, do you think their standard of living will be much better, somewhat better, about the same, somewhat worse, or much worse than yours is now?".

When all concepts were considered: general Optimism, rating of life overall in five years, Optimism about financial future, and Optimism about your kid's financial future, it allocates a broader understanding of all the various facets that contribute to one's Optimism for the future. It is worth noting that the alpha was difficult to compute with certainty because the conceptual

items used were not all asked by the same people. The mean item intercorrelation is .16, with general Optimism lowest with the concept of Optimism for your kid's financial future.

Controlling for Financial Status

It was essential to control financial status to measure social and political trust accurately because one's finances greatly influence political and social attitudes. An index was created using five concepts. Each concept was ranked in the following order of importance to the index regarding financial status: satisfaction with the financial situation, social class, rank in society, income class of home or building, and occupational prestige.

Regarding satisfaction with the financial situation, respondents were asked, "We are interested in how people are getting along financially these days. So far as you and your family are concerned, would you say that you are pretty well satisfied with your present financial situation, more or less satisfied, or not satisfied at all?". Respondents were given a 3-point response scale that was satisfactory for our analysis. A 5-point scale would have possibly made for a more evenly distributed response, but the question is appropriate for analysis.

Next, respondents were asked, "If you were asked to use one of four names for your social class, which would you say you belong in: the lower class, the working class, the middle class, or the upper class?". This is an interesting question because it leaves social class subjective to the respondent. It is also a nice distinction that the lower and working classes were separated. One point of contention would be that some people may find themselves an "in-between" in regards to social class (i.e., "working-middle class, or upper-middle class," so it may have been better suited to allow for more than one selection.

Third, respondents were asked about their provided ranking in society: "In our society there are groups which tend to be towards the top and those that are towards the bottom. Here we have a scale that runs from top to bottom: Where would you put yourself on this scale?".

Next, respondents were asked about their income class of home and or building, "What do you believe the income status of this housing unit is, relative to the rest of the general United States population?" which is an interesting question because it involves the entire economic status of the household as a hold rather than individual status.

Last, following occupational prestige, respondents were asked to rate their occupation prestige from a score of 16 (being the lowest prestige) and 80 (the highest prestige).

When all concepts were implemented, an index scoring respondent's financial status was created. I did a reliability study on my usage of several indicators. The alpha is .75, and in no circumstance does the alpha rise when one of the indicators is excluded.

AMERICAN NATIONAL ELECTION STUDIES - DEPENDENT VARIABLES **Measuring for Social Trust**

Social trust has many different meanings. The GSS focused on whether respondents perceived people as helpful and trustworthy. In contrast, the ANES dataset will see if respondents view people normatively as trustworthy using the following concepts: social trust in society, whether respondents often talk to friends about politics, and whether they consider themselves Feminist.

To measure normative social trust, respondents were asked, "Generally speaking, how often can you trust other people?" and given a 5-point response scale ranging from "Never" to "Always. It was important to distinguish whether people have experienced trust using the GSS and then using the ANES to measure whether respondents generally believed that people should be trusted. Next, it was important to see whether respondents felt comfortable confiding in close friends regarding their political views. They were asked, "How many days in the past week have you talked to your family or friends about politics?" and were asked to place themselves on a scale ranging from 1 through 7. Lastly, respondents were presented with a "feeling thermometer"

to gauge their views on feminism. Feminism was particular to the study because it would be interesting to see whether a single parent, typically a female, shares the same sentiment as the rest of the female population.

Measuring for Political Trust

Social trust has many different meanings. The GSS focused on whether respondents perceived people as helpful and trustworthy. In contrast, the ANES dataset will see if respondents view people normatively as trustworthy using the following concepts: social trust in society, whether respondents often talk to friends about politics, and whether they consider themselves Feminist.

Political trust is a broad concept, so it is vital to narrow down the definition. Where the GSS is looking at Judicial analysis of political trust, I was interested in using ANES to capture more normative political trust implications. So I looked at several indicators of an individual's normative political trust through the following concepts: trust in the federal government, trust in elites (political officials), internal and external efficacy, life satisfaction, and whether they participated in the 2012 Presidential Elections.

In an attempt to capture respondents' feelings towards the highest level of government, respondents were asked, "How often can you trust the federal government in Washington to do what is right?"; and then, the response scale was recorded so that the 5-point scale would be indicative of for every point increase trust in government increases. Response scales in the regression were as follows: "1=Never", "2=Some of the following", "3=about half of the time", "Most of the Time," and "Always." I want to know how respondents normatively about government and people can often associate their normative feelings with government at the federal level. It is also essential to gauge whether respondents trust governments normative or specifically the people in government. Therefore respondents were asked whether they agreed

with the following statement, "Most politicians are trustworthy," and then asked to respond on a 5-point Strongly Disagree/ Strongly Agree scale. Respondents were asked to assess their own "Internal efficacy: good understanding of politics" and given a 5-point scale response ranging from "Not good at all" to "Very Good." Internal efficacy helps to measure whether respondents are literate political participants. Respondents were also asked, per their internal efficacy, whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement "Politics are NOT too complicated." Together these two concepts measure one's internal efficacy. Next, respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statements about the government's external efficacy: "officials care what people think" and "R has a say in what govt. Does." These two variables measure for external efficacy of government.

Additionally, life satisfaction was also measured. Respondents were asked to what extent they were "satisfied with life," using the following response options: "Not satisfied at all," "Slightly satisfied," "Moderately satisfied," "Very satisfied," and "Extremely satisfied." It was essential to see whether single parents were ultimately satisfied with life given their political adversity. Lastly, it was essential to see whether single parenthood affects political participation. So respondents were asked whether they voted in the 2012 Presidential election and were given the answer choices "Yes" or "No."

AMERICAN NATIONAL ELECTION STUDIES - INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Measuring the Single Parent versus the Non-Single Parent

Our analysis looks solely at single adults who have children, thus respectively labeled as "single parent." We only analyzed respondents who disclosed information about their relationship status and how many kids they had. When respondents were asked about their relationship status and whether or not they had kids, they were put into four respective categories:

Response	Single Parent – (“YES” or “NO”)
Single, +1 kid/s	YES
Single, 0 kid/s	NO
Not Single, +1 kid/s	NO
Not Single, 0 kid/s	NO

Controls

Regarding the earlier section titled "Assembling the Empirical 'Single Parent' and Highlighting Intersectionality," it was clear that the intersectional variables characteristic of single parents needed to be controlled for. Transforming the multifaceted individual into an object that can be empirically analyzed is difficult. So, to break down each aspect of single parenthood into various contexts, the following mechanisms of a typical single mother need to be considered: age, gender, whether a respondent is a person of color (POC), income, and education.

Age was treated as a continuous variable. Age, especially paired with when one becomes a single parent, can considerably impact political and social perception, and there must be controlled for in the regression. Controlling gender was also crucial because gender dramatically affects an individual's social and political perception. Since most single parents are women, it was necessary to control for the "female" factor in the regressions. Respondents were also asked to disclose their work income. Income generally affects people's attitudes and outlook on life in a powerful way. Single parents tend to struggle financially and are at risk for poverty. Therefore it must also be controlled in the regression. It is also essential to account for whether the respondent is a person of color (POC) because many single parents are also minorities. Lastly, education is also controlled because single parents struggle to obtain higher education depending on the age they have children. Therefore it is controlled in the regression.

Results and Discussion
GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY

Household Type	# of Respondents
Single Parent Household (Never Married)	240
Single Parent Household (Once Married)	363
Single Adult Household	965
Co-Parent Household	597
Adults Only Household	1,669

Social Trust

TABLE 1

Dependent variable:			
	Social Trust		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Single Parent (Never Married)	-0.125*** (0.031)	-0.103*** (0.033)	-0.039 (0.032)
Single Parent (Once Married)	-0.125*** (0.026)	-0.109*** (0.029)	-0.067** (0.027)
Single Adult Household	-0.011 (0.019)	0.005 (0.021)	0.035* (0.020)
Co-Parent Household	-0.004 (0.022)	-0.044* (0.024)	-0.044* (0.023)
Adults Only Household	0.033** (0.016)	0.016 (0.018)	-0.001 (0.017)
Social Happiness		0.121*** (0.034)	0.081** (0.033)
General Happiness		0.224*** (0.028)	0.095*** (0.028)
Financial Status			0.698*** (0.042)
Constant	0.433*** (0.012)	0.235*** (0.028)	0.012 (0.030)
Observations	3,469	2,789	2,789
R2	0.016	0.046	0.130
Adjusted R2	0.015	0.043	0.128
Residual Std. Error	0.369 (df = 3463)	0.359 (df = 2781)	0.343 (df = 2780)
F Statistic	11.313*** (df = 5; 3463)	19.029*** (df = 7; 2781)	52.049*** (df = 8; 2780)

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

According to Table 1, the primary regression rejects the null hypothesis. By a considerable margin, single parents who were never married and single parents who were once

married maintained significantly ($p < 0.01$) less trust by (-0.125), and both had substantial marginal differences in comparison to the rest of the household types. This model aims to see the underlying mechanism affecting the dependent variable. Model 1 reveals that being a single parent, once married, will significantly affect the dependent variable, and social happiness, general happiness, and financial status will also have an effect.

When financial status was not accounted for in the second regression, but other controls like social happiness and general happiness were considered, the second regression rejected the null. Also, by a considerable margin again, single parents who were once married and single parents that were never married are statistically ($p < 0.01$) less trusting of others (-0.103), only slightly lower than the first regression. Compared to the rest of the household types, only single-parent households indicated statistical differences under a p-value of .05. Interestingly, having children, as seen in single-parent households and the co-parent household, tends to lower respondents' social trust while having the inverse relationship with non-parental household units.

The last regression, where controls for financial status were in place, failed to maintain statistical significance for single-parent households where the single parent was never married but remained statistically significant results ($p < 0.05$) for single-parent households where the single parent was once married. Accordingly, the single-parent household had the lowest levels of social trust among all household types (-0.067). Other statistically significant factors indicated in the last regression as an effect of social trust are social happiness (0.081, $p < 0.05$), general happiness (0.095, $p < 0.01$), and financial status (0.698, $p < 0.01$). Other statistically significant factors indicated in the last regression as an effect of social confidence in the judiciary are general happiness (0.043, $p < 0.05$), optimism for the future (0.082, $p < 0.01$), and financial status (0.326, $p < 0.01$).

An important takeaway from this is that having children generally lowers trust in household types. One noteworthy distinction in the first and second regression was that social trust is only slightly affected by social and general happiness controls. There is no substantial impact from the internal perception of the self on sentiments of social trust. The third regression from Table 1 tells how external factors impact the single parent's psychology. Economic and financial strains ultimately play the most significant role in determining the single parent's interpersonal and social trust. When financial constraints such as low income and job insecurity are removed, single parents may gain a higher sense of social trust. Single parents who were once married maintained statistical significance despite the financial status variable's implication.

What this may indicate is that single parents who were once married may have endured a negative experience within their marriage and there retain a sense of "betrayal" (See "Hostility Towards Single Parents" section in the Lit. Review) that has since lingered in their perceptions of interpersonal relationships. For these single parents, financial factors are only a partial explanation for these women's trust issues.

Political Trust

TABLE 2

Dependent variable:		
	Confidence in Judiciary	
	(1)	(2)
Single Parent (Never Married)	-0.086*** (0.021)	-0.054** (0.022)
Single Parent (Once Married)	-0.018 (0.018)	-0.005 (0.019)
Single Adult Household	-0.030** (0.013)	-0.019 (0.014)
Co-Parent Household	-0.015 (0.015)	-0.003 (0.012)
Adults Only Household	0.012 (0.011)	-0.006 (0.012)
Social Happiness		0.013 (0.024)
General Happiness		0.043** (0.021)
Financial Status		0.326*** (0.030)
Optimism for the Future		0.082*** (0.022)
Constant	0.522*** (0.008)	0.285*** (0.025)
Observations	4,236	3,171
R2	0.008	0.062
Adjusted R2	0.007	0.059
Residual Std. Error	0.274 (df = 4230)	0.255 (df = 3161)
F Statistic	6.550*** (df = 5; 4230)	23.236*** (df = 9; 3161)

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 2 measures levels of confidence in the judiciary across household types. In the main regression, without controls, single parents who were never married are significantly ($p < 0.01$) less confident in the judiciary (-0.086); thus, this particular household type successfully rejected the null hypothesis by substantial margins compared to the other household types. Interestingly, single adult households were also significantly ($p < 0.05$) less confident in the judiciary (-0.030). This model aims to see the underlying mechanism affecting the dependent variable. Model 2 reveals that being a single parent, never married, will significantly affect the dependent variable. Likewise, general happiness, financial status, and optimism for the future will also affect.

In the second regression analysis, with all items controlled for, the single parent, never married household retained a statistically ($p < 0.05$) significant result of -0.054, only slightly lower than the results of the primary regression. However, this time, single parent, never-married households were the only household type to indicate a negative statistical significance.

In the second column, the controlled regression was a test of the viability of the primary regression, in which the second regression surpassed viability with all controls accounted for. The key takeaway is that all household types tend to have low confidence in the judiciary. However, single parents who have never married have the lowest confidence of all household types. It is also worth pointing out that the large discrepancy between single-parent households, never married, and single parent, once married households are logically consistent with the literature review. Only the case is that single parent who has never been married trust the legal system significantly less.

In contrast, single parents who were once married seemingly do not share this perspective. This could mean that single parents who were once married were either able to

achieve some understanding with their co-parent, thus alleviating the need to seek out legal counsel, or had a prearranged agreement prior to the ultimate separation that served as a foundation for their parental agreement. There are cases where the parents are no longer in contact with the other parent, have no interest in making contact with the parent, or are too intimidated by the legal process to pursue restitution.

AMERICAN NATIONAL ELECTION STUDIES

Social Trust

Single Parent – (“YES” or “NO”)	# of Respondents
YES	938
NO	7,342

TABLE 3

Dependent variable:			
	Social Trust (1)	Talk w/ Friends (2)	Femenist (3)
Single Parent	-0.223*** (0.032)	-0.274*** (0.094)	0.181 (1.029)
Female	-0.0004 (0.020)	0.205*** (0.058)	8.260*** (0.651)
Income	0.018*** (0.002)	0.032*** (0.005)	-0.024 (0.052)
POC	-0.098*** (0.008)	-0.089*** (0.024)	0.966*** (0.263)
Education	0.067*** (0.005)	0.134*** (0.015)	2.005*** (0.172)
Constant	2.853*** (0.044)	2.821*** (0.128)	35.908*** (1.428)
Observations	7,536	6,242	6,726
R2	0.095	0.038	0.047
Adjusted R2	0.095	0.037	0.046
Residual Std. Error	0.861 (df = 7530)	2.261 (df = 6236)	26.342 (df = 6720)
F Statistic	158.412*** (df = 5; 7530)	49.529*** (df = 5; 6236)	66.355*** (df = 5; 6720)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 3 consists of various dependent variables aiming to measure social trust, but in a different way than that of Table 1 and 2, respectively. The first regression measures how single parents generally feel about their trust in society, and when all controls are taken into account, we were able to reject the null hypothesis. This model aims to see the underlying mechanism affecting the dependent variable. Model 3 reveals that being a single parent will significantly affect social trust and income. Whether the respondent is a person of color (POC) and education

will also affect. Second, the model reveals that being a single parent will significantly affect one's ability to talk with friends about politics. Being female, whether the respondent is a person of color (POC) and education will also affect. Lastly, the model reveals that being a single parent will not significantly affect feelings towards Feminism. However, being female, whether the respondent is a person of color (POC) or education, does affect.

The second column of Table 3 measures how frequently the respondent speaks with friends about politics throughout the week. This regression retained significance ($p < 0.01$) when all other values were controlled and sat at -0.274 . The constant was inversely 2.821 , $p < 0.01$. Other variables that had statistically significant results were gender (0.205 , $p < 0.01$), income (0.032 , $p < 0.01$), and whether the respondent is a person of color (POC) (-0.089 , $p < 0.01$), and education (0.134 , $p < 0.01$). The last column measured feelings toward Feminism on a scale from 1-to 100. However, they did not produce statistical outputs when all measures were controlled.

The takeaways from the first regression indicate that single moms are far less socially trusting in general, signifying that not only have their experiences made them less trusting (as indicated in Table 1), but they also have a normatively common sense of trust in society as a whole, compared to those who are not single parents. What can be inferred from this is that experiencing single parenthood makes people less trusting. What we can infer, however, is that these parents tend to struggle with having meaningful and deep relationships with others outside the home.

The second regression shows us that single parents, to some degree, experience social and political isolation from their friends and are unable to or do not feel comfortable disclosing their personal beliefs with a friend. Perhaps out of fear of judgment, rejection, or several other possible reasons, these parents have difficulty disclosing their beliefs to those around them. This

may imply that due to their own particular experience, they have a hard time opening up and allowing themselves to be understood by their friends.

The last regression was speculative and may have no overarching effect on a parent's social trust. However, it does provide some exciting indications about the psychology behind single parenthood, despite a lack of statistical significance to social trust overall. Feminism, as normatively defined, is the economic and social equality of the sexes. Most people have decent support for such notions, as indicated by the constant value. Females are also more supportive of Feminism, as indicated by the coefficient for females. The single parent, however, is not as supportive. Keep in mind that 80% of single parents are women, so it appears that something substantial is happening. Single parents, often single mothers, are the epitome of taking on their family's social and economic role. They are the caregiver, and financiers for their household, thus ought to be the poster girl for Feminism. However, according to single parent coefficients, they tend to be less supportive than most women. Perhaps, this is because they take on so many core roles originally designated to both mother and father that they feel frustrated. Although, none of this can be affirmed without statistical significance.

Political Trust

TABLE 4

Dependent variable:					
	Trust Gov. (1)	Trust elites (2)	External Efficacy (3)	Internal Efficacy (4)	Voted for President (5)
Single Parent	0.009 (0.008)	0.032*** (0.010)	-0.004 (0.010)	-0.002 (0.008)	-0.059*** (0.015)
Age	0.002*** (0.0001)	0.002*** (0.0002)	0.0003 (0.0002)	0.001*** (0.0001)	0.004*** (0.0003)
Female	-0.005 (0.005)	-0.002 (0.006)	0.016** (0.006)	-0.053*** (0.005)	0.039*** (0.009)
Income	0.0002 (0.001)	-0.0004 (0.001)	0.002*** (0.0004)	0.003*** (0.0004)	0.006*** (0.001)
POC	0.001 (0.002)	0.005** (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.017*** (0.004)
Education	-0.001 (0.001)	0.005*** (0.002)	0.020*** (0.002)	0.021*** (0.001)	0.036*** (0.002)
Constant	0.267*** (0.013)	0.204*** (0.018)	0.204*** (0.018)	0.473*** (0.014)	0.314*** (0.026)
Observations	7,384	6,625	6,661	6,661	7,387
R2	0.018	0.021	0.035	0.098	0.099
Adjusted R2	0.018	0.020	0.034	0.097	0.099
Residual Std. Error	0.200 (df = 7377)	0.255 (df = 6618)	0.257 (df = 6654)	0.197 (df = 6654)	0.394 (df = 7380)
F Statistic	23.109*** (df = 6; 7377)	23.237*** (df = 6; 6618)	40.293*** (df = 6; 6654)	120.124*** (df = 6; 6654)	70.447*** (df = 6; 7312)
	100.406*** (df = 6; 7380)				

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

To see which underlying mechanism was having the most significant effect on the regression, all controls were accounted for in Table 1. Then in the following table, Table 4.1, mechanisms such as age were discounted for internal efficacy and vote for president; finance was discounted for trust in government. Table 4.1 reveals the effect of single parenthood on the several dependent variables when the leading coefficient is removed from the regression; this is done so that the effects of each impact can be isolated and then thoroughly examined. What should be noted is that no matter what variable is discounted, external efficacy remains unimportant to the independent variable.

Political Trust (Adjusted)

TABLE 4.1

Dependent variable:					
President	Trust Gov.	Trust elites	External Efficacy	Internal Efficacy	Voted for
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Single Parent	0.013* (0.007)	0.032*** (0.010)	-0.004 (0.010)	-0.021*** (0.008)	-0.108*** (0.015)
Age	0.002*** (0.0001)	0.002*** (0.006)	0.0003 (0.0002)		
Female	-0.007 (0.005)	-0.002 (0.006)	0.016** (0.006)	-0.053*** (0.005)	0.037*** (0.009)
Income		0.002*** (0.001)	0.002*** (0.0004)	0.006*** (0.0004)	0.005*** (0.001)
POC	0.002 (0.002)	0.005*** (0.002)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.005*** (0.002)	-0.025*** (0.004)
Education	-0.001 (0.001)	0.005*** (0.002)	0.020*** (0.002)	0.021*** (0.001)	0.035*** (0.002)
Constant	0.266*** (0.012)	0.204*** (0.018)	0.204*** (0.018)	0.556*** (0.011)	0.555*** (0.020)
Observations	7,765	6,625	6,661	6,794	7,542
R2	0.019	0.021	0.035	0.086	0.071
Adjusted R2	0.018	0.020	0.034	0.085	0.071
Residual Std. Error	0.200 (df = 7759)	0.255 (df = 6618)	0.257 (df = 6654)	0.197 (df = 6788)	0.394 (df = 7536)
F Statistic	30.047*** (df = 5; 7759)	23.237*** (df = 6; 6618)	40.293*** (df = 6; 6654)	127.754*** (df = 5; 6788)	70.447*** (df = 6; 7312)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 4 is another regression on political trust, but this time using the ANES data set and is a different approach to measuring political trust. These dependent variables are less specific and aim to measure how respondents generally feel about politics and government.

In the first column, the regression run measures how respondents generally feel about the federal government. However, when income and all other controls are taken into account, the regression loses all statistical significance. I rejected the null hypothesis with all controls accounted for, except for income, only at a $p < 0.1$, standing at 0.013. Another variable that affected the results was age (0.002, $p < 0.01$).

The second column measures to what extent the respondent trusts elites in power to do the right thing. Other variables that had statistically significant results were age (0.002, $p < 0.01$), income (0.002, $p < 0.01$), whether the respondent is a person of color (POC) (0.005, $p < 0.01$) and education (0.005, $p < 0.01$). The second column measures respondents' levels of belief regarding external efficacy. In both simple and controlled regression, the null hypothesis was correct. There is no statistically significant change in how single parents feel about government external efficacy.

The fourth column measures respondents' beliefs regarding what degree they understand politics. However, our regression fails to retain significance when age is accounted for. Other variables that matter include gender (female, -0.053, $p < 0.01$), income (0.006, $p < 0.01$), whether the respondent is a person of color (POC) (-0.005, $p < 0.01$) and education (0.021, $p < 0.01$).

The last column measures the level at which single parents participate in politics by voting for president in 2012. The highest political participation for all people tends to be in presidential elections, making this a viable measurement of political participation. When people participate in elections, it indicates, to some degree, that they have confidence in that system. What the regression indicates, however, is that when all controls were counted, except for age, single moms significantly ($p < 0.01$) participated less in voting in presidential elections by -0.108, far lower than the content set at 0.555.

A notable divergence from Table 4 and Table 1 is that single moms seem to have some faith in the federal government but notably less trust at the local level in their confidence in the judiciary. Single parents tend to lean more liberal, albeit because of social welfare, but have a seemingly different perspective, at least among single parents who never married, about their attitude when it comes to local courts. This goes logically from the literary approach where I addressed the substandard connection between single parents and the court system. Another significant distinction, compared to Tables 1 and 3, is that while parents have low trust in individuals, they have some faith in public authorities, which accords with the initial premise about support for social welfare.

Table 4 and Table 4.1 are separated so that the effects are more comprehensive in what is having the most significant impact, whereas the former controls for all variables. For starters, income is a driving factor for people's general trust in the federal government; this is in line with the literature review on political trust (See Page 5). People's trust in government tends to fluctuate according to national economic performance. Trust in elites holds steady with all controls accounted for, which means that single parents look to elites to do the right thing for the people. Single parents are generally neutral regarding external efficacy and are not the most significant opposition to government operations. Although this is a stark contrast to their attitudes towards the judiciary, as noted in Table 2. Internal efficacy is primarily influenced by age, meaning as one gets older, they feel more comprehensive about politics and their institutions. However, when age is discounted, there are significant differences in regression outcomes, and single parenthood becomes relevant. Vote for president is an exciting indicator in that it withstood the test of validity and retained all significance when all things were accounted for. What this may indicate is that single parents generally do not participate politically and that

perhaps can be due to a plethora of factors, such as time constraints, stressors, disinterest in politics, and feeling that, as indicated by low internal efficacy, they believe that they are incapable of getting the government to address their concerns.

Conclusion

This paper attempted to rewrite an overly simplistic theory: yes, single parenthood correlates with decreased social capital, but that is not the whole story. Based on my findings, I have shown that social capital affects single parents. Other researchers have neglected the missing component of the impact of single parenthood on trust, particularly trust in society and our political institutions. What this study shows is that there is a cyclical relationship between society and single parents. Single parents will continue to disengage from the community and politics; thus, the issue's roots will likely continue unresolved.

It also contributes to the "Trust Research" literature by demonstrating the critical nature of personal experiences in the home as a proxy for trust levels. Additionally, it adds a perspective that appears to be lacking in the literature on single parenthood: the single parent's perspective. Due to the scarcity of academics who are also single parents, we are short of literature from scholars that can attest to the single parent experience. It is mostly the case for scholars of single parenthood to be undertaken by members of the "out-group," those who are not single parents. Representation in the social sciences must broaden its investigation to include the perspective of single parents because of scientific inquiry. Jamila Michener, cited on page 6, may speak authentically about the experience of a black woman because she is a member of her community. The community of single parents must have the same level of inclusion. Without the participation of additional single-parent viewpoints, we overlook the empowerment tools offered in social science research and miss a significant piece of the puzzle.

While this paper also speaks to single parents' economic disadvantages, this paper hopes to emphasize that the defining feature of single parenthood is not solely economics. While economics may explain the macro experience of single parents, trust explains the micro experiences. Beyond that, this paper has shown that one of the defining features of single parenthood is a lack of quality interactions with their community, social circle, and government, thus resulting in significantly lower trust.

The easy part of investigating the effects of single parenthood is much empirical and qualitative data regarding its effects. It is well-known that rates of single parenthood correlate with low social capital; that single parents tend to have economic instability, emotional damage, social and political isolation; it is known the effects of single parenthood on their children in their workplace environment; it is known as what keeps them up at night, and what they long for most. The hard part comes with understanding and fully immersing oneself in the experience of the single parent. The social sciences attempt to take the human experience and apply it to something bigger, to understand the culture, society, history, and what comes next—but what good is all that if it fails to generate a deeper understanding of others. In future assessments into understanding why single parenthood correlates with low social capital, I hope researchers challenge themselves to take on the single parent's perspective and dive a little deeper into their experiences. Because for all that we know about the single-parent, we still so little understand them as people.

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Appendix

APPENDIX A

Dependent variable:				
	Belief that Sexist in Power			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Single Parent	-0.111** (0.046)	-0.219*** (0.046)	-0.165*** (0.044)	-0.106*** (0.044)
Marital Status	0.020*** (0.007)	-0.012 (0.007)	-0.022*** (0.007)	-0.018*** (0.007)
Trust Elites	0.692*** (0.068)	0.768*** (0.067)	0.339*** (0.073)	0.308*** (0.073)
Gender		0.272*** (0.027)	0.286*** (0.026)	0.278*** (0.026)
Age		-0.005*** (0.001)	-0.006*** (0.001)	-0.007*** (0.001)
Discrim. Female		-0.234*** (0.013)	-0.133*** (0.014)	-0.163*** (0.014)
Internal Efficacy			0.681*** (0.064)	0.676*** (0.064)
External Efficacy			0.252*** (0.056)	0.204*** (0.056)
Rep. Party ID			-0.663*** (0.038)	-0.686*** (0.038)
Race				-0.045*** (0.011)
Self Perception				0.135*** (0.013)
Constant	3.322*** (0.035)	3.982*** (0.083)	3.689*** (0.090)	3.389*** (0.106)
Observations	7,231	6,914	6,905	6,876
R2	0.015	0.085	0.148	0.167
Adjusted R2	0.015	0.084	0.147	0.166
Residual Std. Error	1.138 (df = 7227)	1.097 (df = 6907)	1.059 (df = 6895)	1.047 (df = 6864)
F Statistic	37.766*** (df = 3; 7227)	106.850*** (df = 6; 6907)	132.741*** (df = 9; 6895)	125.215*** (df = 11; 6864)

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

APPENDIX B

Original Survey to be Distributed to Single Parents living in Boulder, Colorado and Aurora, Colorado. Given that Boulder county tends to be more affluent and homogenous, the intent of this survey was to do a comparative analysis between the respective populations to see if the experiences of single parents are universal or dependent on location.

Age:

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Age:

How old were you when you had your first child?

Around what age did you become a single parent?

Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

Please specify your ethnicity. (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Caucasian
- ☐ African-American
- ☐ Latino or Hispanic
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Other/Unkown

What gender do you identify as?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non-binary / third gender
- ☐ Prefer not to say

What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?

- ☐ Some High School
- ☐ High School/GED Equivalent
- ☐ Some College
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Master's Degree
- ☐ Ph.D. or higher
- ☐ Trade School

As of today, are you married?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Separated
- ☐ No

What is your current employment status?

- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Part-Time
- ☐ Full-Time
- ☐ Self Employed

In the past year, how often have you felt _____?

	Never	Sometimes	About half the time	Most of the time	Always
judged by coworkers for being a single parent	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
judged by relatives for being a single parent	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
judged by friends for being a single parent.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
discriminated against for being a single parent	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
stigmatized for being a single parent	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
anxious about finances	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
hopeless for long periods of time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
angry about a political issues	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
frustrated at the world	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
optimistic about the future	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

