

THE SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS OF SINGLE
MOTHERS IN GUGULETU

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts in the Department of Social Work,
University of Stellenbosch



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APRIL 2004

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis, is my own original work and has not been previously in its entirety or in parts been submitted at any other university for a degree.

Signed:

Date: 3/02/04.....

SUMMARY

This research investigates the social support networks of single mothers.

The basic premise underlying this research is the importance of social workers' understanding of the social support networks of single mothers. It is necessary for social workers to identify the social support systems that exist in a social support network, and to select those systems which would be relevant to the needs of the single mother. The aim of this study is to present guidelines for social workers to empower single mothers to utilise social support networks to fulfil their roles as parents.

The research report includes identifying personal information, issues faced by single-parent families, the nature of single-parenthood, emotional and functional changes experienced since becoming a single mother and the social support networks of single mothers. Knowledge of these indicators will increase the awareness of social workers of the needs of single mothers.

The empirical research involved the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to explore the theoretical part of the research. This section was divided into two phases. The first phase was devoted to acquiring a sufficient understanding of the nature of what single-parenthood with an emphasis on single mothers, and also to get a better understanding of the single mothers' existing social support network. The second phase included conducting interviews with the single mothers (N=10) with the help of a questionnaire.

The findings and responses of the respondents were analyzed and compared with the findings from previous studies undertaken by various authors. The findings of this research can be used as guidelines for social workers who need to assist a single mother with a need or problem, and more specifically can help the single mother to utilize her social support network.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie navorsing ondersoek die maatskaplike ondersteuningsnetwerke van enkelmoeders.

Die uitgangspunt van die navorsing is dat dit belangrik is dat maatskaplike werkers begrip sal hê vir die maatskaplike ondersteuningsnetwerke van enkelmoeders. Dis belangrik dat maatskaplike werkers die maatskaplike ondersteunings sisteme wat in die maatskaplike ondersteuningsnetwerk bestaan sal identifiseer, en om dan die sisteme wat relevant is tot die behoeftes van die enkelmoeder te selekteer. Die doel van die studie is om riglyne daar te stel vir maatskaplike werkers om enkelmoeders te bemagtig om maatskaplike ondersteuningsnetwerke te gebruik om hul rol as ouers te vervul.

Die navorsings verslag sluit die volgende in: identifiserende persoonlike inligting, probleme wat enkelouer gesinne kan ondervind, die aard van enkelmoederskap, emosionele en funksionele veranderinge ondervind sedert enkelmoederskap en die maatskaplike ondersteuningsnetwerke van enkelmoeders in. Kennis van hierdie indikatore sal maatskaplike werkers se bewustheid van die behoeftes van enkelmoeders verhoog.

Vir die empiriese navorsing is kwalitatiewe en kwantitatiewe metodes gebruik om die teoretiese aspekte van die navorsing te ondersoek. Hierdie afdeling is in twee fases verdeel. Die eerste fase is uitgevoer om genoegsame begrip te verkry van die aard van enkelouerskap met die klem op enkelmoeders, asook om 'n beter begrip te kry van die enkelmoeder se bestaande maatskaplike ondersteuningsnetwerk. Die tweede fase behels die voer van onderhoude met enkelmoeders (N=10) met behulp van 'n vraelys, in Guguletu.

Resultate en response is ontleed en vergelyk met die bevindinge van vorige studies wat deur verskillende navorsers onderneem is. Die bevindinge van die navorsing kan deur maatskaplike werkers gebruik word as riglyne om enkelmoeders wat behoeftes of probleme ondervind by te staan, en die enkel moeder meer spesifiek kan help om haar maatskaplike ondersteuningsnetwerk te gebruik.

DEDICATION

I hereby dedicate this thesis to my two grandmothers, Annetjie Malan and Enid Dewing (1928-2003), who have prayed for me and supported me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I hereby would like to thank the following people, who made it possible for me to complete this thesis:

To my parents, Dudley and Annette, and my brother, Jaco, who have offered moral and emotional support that was much needed. Also thank you for believing in my capabilities.

To numerous friends, of which the list of names is long, who believed from the beginning that I will be able to complete this thesis.

To Professor Green, for her patiencs and support to enable me to persevere and present this thesis to the best of my ability.

To the Social Work Department for all the advise and support.

Our Heavenly Father, who has blessed me abundantly, without whose guidance I would not have come so far.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Immense changes worldwide in family life and structure have resulted in an increasing number of single-parent families, the so-called “deficit” family units (Paterson, 2001:xi). Single-parent families are labelled by society itself as inadequate, flawed and broken. This mind-set, in turn, serve to compound the problems faced by the single mother. However, Whittaker and Garbarino (1983:3) in their book about social support networks, listed various ways in which single mothers, amongst others, can find support:

To whom do most people turn for help with their day-to-day problems? Social workers? Physicians? Psychologists? Nurses? Counsellors? Therapists? These professionals are part of the picture, but they are not the primary of first-line sources of assistance for most people most of the time. Research by community psychologists and others has shown that most people usually turn for help to friends, relatives, neighbours, co-workers, and even acquaintances. When professional assistance is sought, clergy, teachers and physicians rank the highest on the list; however, beauticians, bartenders and the like also rank high.

People who experience problems in their everyday lives therefore look for support wherever they can find it. This support mostly comes from the people around them. However, it is important to understand that specialist assistance is needed for specific problems and needs. Yet not all people know where to go for help, which in turn creates even more stress. Single mothers often also do not have the resources to seek professional help. The White Paper for Social Welfare (Department of Social Welfare, 1997:8) states that the family is the basic unit of society. It is through family-oriented policies and programmes that family life should be strengthened, which would ensure the best upbringing for children. Child-rearing techniques are of

great importance, as these impact greatly on children's development and their future (Alava in Myers, 1992).

Single parenthood has become common in recent years, creating even greater needs for assistance in childcare and upbringing. Single parenthood is still viewed largely as unacceptable by the general public who still adhere to the concept of the nuclear family (Jung, 1996:548). The infrastructure to support single parents in childcare still does not exist everywhere. According to Kesner and McKenry (2001:136), studies showed that an increasing number of children residing in single-parent households were linked to many of the United States' most serious social problems, such as delinquency, teenage pregnancy and welfare dependency. Single-parent families were also regarded as a risk factor for children's development.

Single parenthood is especially difficult for the black single mother in South Africa. In the Apartheid era services (such as medical and social welfare) were not always located in underprivileged communities and were therefore inaccessible to members of the black, coloured and asian communities (Department of Social Welfare, 1997:3). Although a lot has been done since 1994 by the South African Government through the Reconstruction and Development Programme and the new constitution, Guguletu remains one of the most disadvantaged communities in the Cape Town metropolitan area, due to its high incidence of poverty, illiteracy and the widespread ignorance about existing support networks (Nembudani, 1997:3). For the single mother in Guguletu it is important to be able to identify and make optimal use of the support networks in the area, because this will help her cope and make her life less stressful.

According to Sewpaul (1994:348) not only are black women in South Africa the victims of racism and sexism, but they are also relegated to the very lowest of the socio-economic strata where they suffer the most powerful onslaught of poverty. Black women are also increasingly becoming heads of households as a result of divorce or death of their partners, or choose to form single households thereby avoiding the status of second-rate citizens within their own households. Hofmeyer (1996:364) stated that family life in settlements such as Guguletu was characterised by single-parent families in which mothers have to fend for themselves and their families on both the emotional and functional (financial) level. It is thus important for

single mothers to be supported within the community in order for the children to grow up in a stable environment, protected from such risk as leaving school early and to be dislodged from family life.

It is therefore evident that children in the above mentioned communities are in dire need of good parenting. For good parenting to happen it is important for the single mother to be empowered. Single mothers need to be educated on how to use the social welfare system to their best advantage, because it is the social welfare services that will help single mothers identify other support networks in order to preserve family life. This will ensure that they give their children the best possible upbringing, which in turn will lead to a good quality of life for them. For the single mother the social welfare services are thus an important support system, for it can assist in locating other support systems and can thus make the parenting task less stressful.

To this end, social workers need to have a good understanding of the needs and problems of single mothers, in order to help them identify effective social support networks for themselves and for their children so that their needs and problems can be addressed sufficiently.

1.2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to present guidelines for social workers to empower single mothers who need social support networks to fulfil their role as parents. The following objectives have been formulated:

- To describe the nature and demands of single parenthood, with emphasis on the perception and experiences of single mothers.
- To explain what social support networks entail, with an emphasis on such networks for single mothers.
- To investigate the support that single mothers receive in Guguletu.

1.3 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

This study is part of a joint research effort by staff from the University of Göteborg, Sweden and the Department of Social Work at the University of Stellenbosch. The research project, stretching over a three-year period, entails a community study focussing on the lives of women and children in Guguletu. It investigates their everyday life, family life, social networks and strategies for survival in the midst of severe poverty. The overall goal of the study is to utilise the knowledge gained towards empowering these women.

Guguletu is a predominantly Xhosa settlement. A crèche in Guguletu which allows a maximum of 65 children between the ages of one and five years was identified as a suitable location from which the sample of single mothers was drawn.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology included the literature review, a discussion of the research method and the gathering of data.

1.4.1 Literature review

A review of current literature dealing with single parents and social support networks was undertaken. Study material was obtained from the J.S. Gericke Library and the Erica Theron Reading Room at the University of Stellenbosch as well as from the Internet. It was found that although information on single parenthood does exist, especially on teenage mothers (Howes and Green, 1996), most studies had been conducted in first world countries. The tool designed by Tracy and Whittaker (1990) to identify and assess the social support network of people will be used as a guideline to identify the support mechanisms utilised by single Xhosa mothers.

The literature review contributed to a greater understanding of the field of research on the part of the researcher.

1.4.2 Research method

An exploratory design was used for the purpose of this study. According to Grinnell (1993:119), such a design is used to explore, and to gain greater insight in to a specific field of study, of which initially very little is known, as both Mouton and Marais (1989:43) and Babbie (1989:80) pointed out.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were applied, the difference between the two being the way in which the empirical study was executed and the way in which the findings were reported. Qualitative research entails observations made by the researcher during interviews, while quantitative data obtained by means of questionnaires are presented as tables and figures illustrating the findings of the study. Babbie (1989:98) noted that by combining different procedures in a research design, the researcher is able to draw on the strengths of each method, which adds greater credibility to his research. The reason for using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is that although tables and figures are used, emphasis is also placed on the client's personal perspective in order to understand social actions (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:270). Bitonti (1992:2) also supported the use of the qualitative measurement-centred approach, because a study on the self-esteem of women could hardly be adequate if done by means of the quantitative approach only. The qualitative approach, where the phenomenon is studied from the point of view of those who are affected by it, seems more effective.

1.4.3 Sampling and data gathering

The study population consisted of some of the mothers of 65 children who were in a specific crèche in Guguletu. Purposive sampling was used, i.e. the sample consisted of the first ten single mothers who were able to participate. The **New Dictionary of Social Work** (1995:51) defines purposive sampling as a “[p]rocess whereby the sample is chosen in such a way that it will be representative of the relevant population”. Babbie and Mouton (2001:166) agreed with this.

Personal interviews were done at the crèche to obtain the appropriate information from the respondents, and were completed within three days. The crèche's principal was to act as translator if necessary, but the respondents were all able to speak English. This is a common method of data collection in South Africa because of the

illiteracy rate and it also complied with the qualitative methods that were used (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:249-256).

1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The literature review showed that there is ample information on single parenting, but not much focus on the specific situation of single mothers. The information gathered on social support networks was more focused on mental health than on social welfare, which meant that it had to be adjusted so as to make it more relevant to social work.

The literature review made it clear that the number of single mothers is increasing, but no recent statistics could be found on the number of single mothers in South Africa, even though South African Statistics website (2003) and other sources provided by the website were used.

1.6 CONTENT

The study is divided into five chapters:

Chapter 2 will give an overview of single parenthood with an emphasis on single mothers.

Chapter 3 will describe what social support entails, with reference to single mothers.

Chapter 4 contains the results of the empirical study.

Chapter 5 consists of the conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

ASPECTS OF SINGLE PARENTHOOD, WITH SPECIFIC EMPHASIS ON SINGLE MOTHERS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The family, like other social institutions, is undergoing rapid and dramatic changes in form, composition and structure. The traditional nuclear family, which included the father, mother and two children, is undergoing major changes. These changes are related to the following: skyrocketing divorce rates; the surge of women into the labour force; the need to have two or more incomes in order to make ends meet; concerns over proper child care and the need to balance work and family responsibilities; postponement of marriage; the greater prevalence of stepfamilies; a large number of children living in poverty; the sharp rise in single people living alone or with a partner of the same or opposite sex; the increasing number of childless marriages; the substantial number of intermarriages; and the prevalence of mothers with illegitimate children, to name but a few (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1998:3). It is thus important that social workers should be able to empower single mothers who need social support networks to fulfil their roles as parents. But first it is important for social workers to have a good understanding of the nature and demands of single parenthood, especially single mothers.

From the changes listed above it is evident that single parenthood is becoming a widespread occurrence. The question should therefore be asked: How can social workers assist single mothers? Firstly, a better understanding of what parenthood and single motherhood entail is necessary. In this chapter the focus will be on the nature of parenthood, and problems that single parents experience, with special emphasis on the changes a single mother has to deal with on a daily basis.

2.2 PARENTHOOD

Every family undergoes changes, which quickly turn into a crises should the family not have access to resources which can support the family members. In this section, various aspects of parenthood will be discussed, which should better equip social workers dealing with families in distress.

2.2.1 Transition to parenthood

The first aspect about parenthood that needs to be reviewed is the arrival of a baby. Parents have unrealistic expectations of themselves and the baby, little knowledge of normal child development, and only a faint idea of the demanding and relentless tasks they will be called on to perform. First-time parents too are often made to feel inadequate, confused and out of control. It is also a time in which important decisions have to be made, e.g. like day care arrangements if the mother has to go to work. This can be a time of crisis for any parent. Landman and Ryklief (1990:6) noted that the transition to parenthood is not always a simple or an easy process, because most parents enter parenthood while being largely unaware of all its repercussions.

The family and child are put at further risk in cases where there are additional stresses, such as relating to single parenting, adolescent parenting, parenting a handicapped or premature baby, or where marital conflict is present. Not being able to cope with these stressors can be harmful for the parent and the child and can also lead to a dysfunctional family. Changes in everyday life, inevitably affect parenthood

2.2.2 Changes in parenthood

The second aspect of parenthood that needs to be taken into account is that the nature of parenthood itself is changing. According to Gerdes, Coetzee and Cronjé (1996:81), parenthood focuses on preparing children to meet the increasingly complex demands of a constantly changing society, and to become competent and well-adjusted individuals. This is a formidable task for which parents might be inadequately prepared given the changing family structures and vaguely defined parental roles.

For the single mother parenthood itself changes when she lacks a partner to help with everyday tasks around the house and to raise the child(ren). This can be a major cause of stress to the single mother, lacking skills to cope with the change.

2.2.3 Parenting styles

The third aspect of parenthood is the fact that there are various parenting styles. Studies done by Hart, Olsen, Robinson and Mandlaco (1997:317-319) on three different parenting styles have helped explain why children behave the way they do. The first style that will be discussed is the **authoritative** parenting style, which includes warmth and responsiveness, democratic participation and easy-going parent-child interaction. The parent patiently responds to the child's demands, and physical and emotional bonding occurs from an early age. The second style is **authoritarian** parenting, which includes power-assertive or coercive forms of verbal hostility and corporal punishment. The child does not get the chance to establish a caring relationship with the parent, mostly because it fears the reaction of the parent if he or she should reach out emotionally. The last parenting style is that of **permissiveness** and can be defined as a lack of follow-through with discipline and ignoring misbehaviour. It is associated with a lack of self-confidence in parenting. The child is left to its own devices, for the parent does not seem to be able to apply effective parenting.

Hart *et al.* (1997:317-319) found that the authoritative parenting style, being warm and responsive, appears to be the most effective. It provides the child with an emotionally secure relationship, imparting the confidence and self-efficacy he or she needs to explore unfamiliar social environments and seek out emotional ties with others, including peers. Yet it is not only the parenting style that defines parenthood – other factors also play a role.

2.2.4 Factors influencing parenthood

The last aspect of parenthood that needs to be considered is that there are no set rules when it comes to parenthood, and parents cannot always prepare themselves to cope with all eventualities. Gerdes *et al.* (1996:82) mentioned five factors impacting on parenting. The first factor impacting on parenting in South Africa relates to cultural influences, because how child rearing takes place tends to mirror cultural values,

ideologies and beliefs. For example, a culture group such as the Xhosas consider circumcision of a young boy normal, while groups from the white population might find it barbaric. Secondly, social and economic factors exert an influence on parental role performance. Much debated in this regard is the role of the working mother. Thirdly, the educational level of the parents has been associated with greater parent involvement (especially by the father). Other studies (Jackson, 1994:36) however, found no influence at all. The fourth factor that influences parenthood is the age of the children: the younger the children the greater the strain on the parent. Younger children need more care. This is supported by a study done by Jackson (1994) on black mothers' perceptions of their young children. The fifth factor is parental role sharing. In some cultures parenting is still seen as the job of the mother only, even if she is employed full-time. The study by Barnes (2001:450) on different types of families supported this finding. According to this study, African-Americans and Whites met family needs differently and some negative characteristics of the African-American group were the result of responses to oppressive conditions in society.

One could therefore conclude that parenting today, in an ever-changing world, is not often regarded as very rewarding by society in general. For the purpose of this study the changing factors that can put stress on a single mother will be examined in the next section

2.3 SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

It is important for social workers to understand not only the various aspects of parenthood but also the nature and needs of single-parent families.

2.3.1 Description

Esterhuyzen and Esterhuyzen (1989:10) defined a single parent family as a unit consisting of one adult and a dependent child or children, where the other parent is absent, with no reasonable expectation for this parent to return. Single parenthood is thus a permanent condition, unless the parent enters into another relationship. De Kock (1993:44-45) defined a single-parent family as a unit where the mother or father

has to take sole responsibility for the care and education of the child(ren), as a result of the death of one parent, divorce, or birth out of wedlock.

Esterhuyzen and Esterhuyzen mentioned in their 1989 study already that single-parent families would in the near future be a general occurrence in South Africa, and would be widely accepted as one of the family types. They also predicted that this would be a high risk family for which society would need to create specialised services, such as day care facilities for children in the work places. Arosi (1992:16) also noted in her study on single mothers in Kwa-Zulu Natal that the single-parent family was becoming increasingly common, and that the majority of such families were headed by women.

2.3.2 Reasons for single-parent families

As mentioned before, such events as divorce, separation, widowhood, adoption or out of wedlock birth (i.e. teenage pregnancy) could all result in single-parent families (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1998; De Kock, 1993; Kesner & McKenry, 2001). Divorce was the main contributing factor (De Kock, 1993:46), because many couples do not get married according to “as long as we may live” principle. According to Kissman (1991:24), women specifically are negatively affected by becoming single parents. Single mothers experience a drastic reduction in the average standard of living after divorce and this, as well as the low wage-earning capacity of single mothers are but two issues that practitioners cannot ignore.

Births out of wedlock are also a main reason for single parenting. The incidence of teenage pregnancies especially has enjoyed the attention of social scientists for two reasons. First, it poses a threat to a society’s economic well-being and second, it has a negative effect on family sustainability (Howes & Green, 1996:1). Within this group it is mostly the mother who has to cope with the sole responsibility of childrearing.

2.3.3 Issues faced by single-parent families

Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1998:151) stated that although single-parent families have become an integral part of society, they are still seen as flawed. Single parents are still stigmatised and are often seen as outcasts from society. Jung (1996:548)

observed that single-parent families have to face many formidable obstacles, foremost being the negative public image. Although the number of single-parent households is undeniably significant, the general populace still tends to perceive such families as defective and the parents as failures. Even worse, many single parents view themselves in this manner. That in itself can lead to extra stress for the parent and be harmful to the family system.

Many studies (De Kock, 1993 and Chinkanda, 1994) have been done on the impact of single-parent families on the development of the child. Kesner and McKenry (2001:140) concluded that a single-parent family structure is not in itself a risk factor in children's development. The study concluded that there was no difference between children from single- and two-parent families in terms of social skills and conflict management. This might be the case, but there are still issues that single-parent families have to deal with which double-parent families do not.

Jung (1996:585-588) pointed out four main issues related to child rearing faced by single-parent families. First there is the **lack of resources**, which includes aspects like financial security. Single mothers' incomes seem to decrease because of their reduced earning power resulting in under- or unemployment. There is also the need for support with child care and the maintenance of the household. The absence of one parent can create an enormous vacuum, the filling of which might require a new family structure. Relationships with nuclear and extended family members are important, for single parents will need all the support that can be given to them (Oakley, 1992:21-43). Single parents also need to accomplish the developmental task of reorganising and increasing their involvement with support networks.

Secondly, Jung (1996:585-588) stated there could be **unresolved family of origin issues**. Many young adults move away from home because of strained relationships with their parents, leaving unresolved issues behind. These unresolved issues could relate to out of wedlock pregnancies or boyfriends that are not accepted by the family. When these young adults end up being single parents they are often forced to return to their parental home, which could rekindle earlier conflicts. This extra source of stress can cause the single parent, who does not know how to handle conflict, to take to the streets. This in turn causes even more stress, which can disrupt the whole family

system. Single-parent families that have good relationships with extended families find the transition to single parenthood much easier. The following case study from Jung (1996:586) illustrates this issue:

K sought counselling because of depression and the possibility of losing her job as a result of frequent absences. She indicated that her problem began when she and her two children, R and E, had to move in with her parents after her divorce. She further indicated that fights with her parents, particularly regarding the children, kept her depressed and unable to work. Some arguments were longstanding, dating back to early adolescence. The entire family was asked to participate in treatment.

Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1998:9) declared that families had to realise that there was no such thing as a problem-free family, but that everybody had to develop the ability to survive and regenerate even in the midst of overwhelming stress, misfortune and hardships.

Thirdly, there might be **unresolved divorce issues** or a temporary separation that led to a parent being single. Paterson (2001:62) wrote, "No aspect of marriage and family life has invited so much controversy as divorce." Aspects like custody has to be sorted out and the relationship between the partners play an important role for the transition to go as smoothly as possible. Divorce should proceed as smoothly as possible, given the effect of the separation on the child(ren). The following case study from Jung (1996:587-588) serves as illustration:

T sought therapy because her 16-year-old son began receiving poor grades and displaying oppositional behaviour after her divorce. Her other adolescent children were also beginning to do poorly in school and display angry feelings towards her. The children indicated in the first meeting that they felt caught between their parents' hostility. They were called upon to choose sides, carry messages and act as informants. T agreed that she harboured resentful feelings toward her ex-spouse, C, who reportedly left her for another woman. It was obvious that the family had not grieved the divorce and that T and C remained emotionally attached.

The study emphasised that a family need to address the changes in the family environment, which could have been caused by either divorce or death, so that the transition could be made as easy as possible for everybody involved.

The last issue concerns the **overburdened parentified child**. Certain children in the family might have to start taking responsibility for the other siblings, and especially the older children sometimes become confidants by providing parents with intimacy and emotional support. Many families, particularly low-income and traditional families, successfully use older children to assist in caretaking and household responsibilities. In other words, giving a child extra responsibilities will not automatically lead to family dysfunction. However, problems can arise when children are parentified. Firstly, the parent's authority over the children is diminished. Secondly, these children are diminished. Thirdly, the children might feel overloaded with age-inappropriate responsibilities, which could foster feelings of helplessness and failure and which could deny children the opportunity to interact with their peers. Paterson (2001:118) found that some single mothers became dependent on their children, and called it "co-dependency" where they were not able to make day-to-day decisions on their own anymore. Fourthly, rules and roles need to be made clear to children. This might not occur if the parent transfers his or her authority to a child. Finally, parents might not spend quality time with their children. When they are not spending time with them or giving them nurturing and support, children feel abandoned, neglected and lonely. In short, placing children in caretaking roles works well when authority remains with the parents; children are given reasonable and age-appropriate responsibilities; rules and roles are clear to everyone; and children receive attention and care from their parents. But for the single mother this could be difficult, especially if discipline always came from the father's side. In the next section the changes the single mother has to deal with while also dealing with the issues discussed in the above section will be examined.

2.4 CHANGES EXPERIENCED BY SINGLE MOTHERS

Parenthood, as explained earlier in this chapter, is not an easy task, and being a single parent can be even more difficult. De Kock (1993:65) pointed out in her study that

single mothers and their children undergo emotional and physical changes because of separation. Emotional changes include trying to cope with depression, fear for the emotional and physical safety of the self and the child, loss of friends and low self-esteem. Physical adaptations include sexual behaviour adaptation, changes in lifestyle, discipline of children and coping with the loss of privacy and time work and finances, day care, labour around the house, time management and housing. These changes will be explained in more detail to illustrate the difficulties parenthood holds for single mothers.

2.4.1 Emotional changes

Any mother must be able to cope on an emotional level, but this task becomes more strenuous when the mother becomes a single parent. The single mother must always be able to give emotional support to her child(ren). This support can be exhausted due to the demands of single parenthood and can cause emotional overload for the mother (De Kock, 1993:65).

2.4.1.1 Anxiety, depression and health problems

Single motherhood, common among the poor, is a salient risk factor for psychological distress. Anxiety, depression, and health problems are more prevalent among single mothers than among other marital status groups. Single mothers' risks of physical and psychological problems are intensified if they are poor and live alone with their children (McLoyd & Wilson, 1991:108). A link can therefore be found between economic hardship and mental health, so that even mothers who have jobs could suffer from depression, which could have a negative effect on their family life and parenting skills (McLoyd & Wilson, 1991:126).

Arosi (1992:21) mentioned that single mothers experience feelings of isolation and loneliness, as they do not have the sympathy and understanding of others in the community. She noted in her study that she had observed a definite decline in social activities, particularly with friends who remain married, when a woman became a single parent. In general, the parenting behaviour of clinically diagnosed depressed mothers was marked by unresponsiveness, and they were unsupportive and displayed hostile coerciveness toward their children (McLoyd & Wilson, 1991:109). This leads

to the conclusion that friendship plays an important role in the sustainability of a single mother's mental health and good parenting skills.

The single mother experiences additional role strain as a parent. Role strain occurs when an individual must simultaneously occupy several roles that are conflicting in their demands for time, energy and proficiency (Arosi, 1992:20). Kissman (1991:24) added that depression was often a problem for socially isolated single mothers confronted with the enormous demands of multiple roles (Kissman, 1991:24).

Jackson and Huang's (2000:39) findings on parenting stress and behaviour among single mothers of pre-school children support a model whereby:

- the more behaviour problems the child is perceived to have, the more the depressive symptoms felt by the mother;
- the more depressive symptoms the mother feels, the more likely she is to rate herself high in parenting stress;
- the more depressive symptoms and parenting stress the mother experiences, the lower her estimate of her self-efficacy; and
- the lower the mother's self-efficacy, the less competent her parenting.

These findings are consistent with Bandura's (1989) premise that depressive symptoms negatively influenced perceived self-efficacy. Thus, low self-efficacy leads to poor utilization of existing skills and a lack of tenacity in the face of difficulties. This causes the mother to feel like a failure, which adds even more to the depression.

Thus, isolation and role strain can be seen as the main causes of depression for single mothers, although economic hardship also plays an integral part. It can therefore also be concluded that a mother suffering from stress will not be able to play the part of the good parent and thus places even more strain on herself and her family.

2.4.1.2 Fear for the emotional and physical safety of self and child

Negative images are internalised by single mothers and could affect the way they are treated in social, legal and economic spheres. Women's actual experiences of being single, however, are as different as they themselves are. The fear of loneliness is

emphasised in the socialisation of little girls, for whom dependence is continually endorsed, so that early fears of being alone are perpetuated. Such fears of loneliness can lead to feelings of panic and impending danger (Paterson, 2001:75).

It is also the fear of physical danger that might make the women try and “fix” the relationship with a partner, although she might not realise that she is putting herself and the children in emotional danger. A burglar, a fire or a child getting hurt are the fears a single mother has to live with and can be a cause of stress for the whole family.

2.4.1.3 Loss of friends and sources of adult support

Another emotional change the single mother might face, occurs when she experiences the loss of friends. There are two reasons for this loss. First, there is the stigma attached to single mothers (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1998:151) and second, some mothers do not have time to socialise, because they have to care for the house and the children and may also have to work outside the home, and thus start to alienate their friends (De Kock, 1993:57). The single mother needs friends for support during the transition to single parenthood, seeing that she will not be able to cope with all the parenting responsibilities on her own.

Arosi (1992:23) observed that in the early days of being alone most women find salvation within their network of female friends. Not only does this provide a source of adult support, conversation and humour, but it also provides hope, practical help and advice. Friends are enormously valuable in supporting the single parent’s activities outside the home, providing ideas and company and initiating social events.

2.4.1.4 Changes in self-image

Low self-image can also be experienced as an emotional change. First, the mother could feel guilty for not being able to make the marriage work. Secondly, feelings of guilt could occur when she is struggling with parenting responsibilities after the death of the other parent.

According to Arosi (1992:25) *Parents without Partners* is one of the largest and best known organisations for single parents internationally and in South Africa. By joining

such a group the single mother can learn from others in the same situation through sharing and comparing experiences. It can be reassuring for single parents to learn that their histories are not very different from those of others, and may help improve a low self-image.

2.4.2 Functional changes

Single mothers have too many duties to fulfil on their own. Functional duties relating to work, household and parenthood could become too much for the single mother and cause unnecessary stress. In the following section the different functional changes will be discussed.

2.4.2.1 Sexual behaviour adaptation

The first functional change the single mother goes through is that of change in her sex life. According to De Kock (1993:58) sexual frustration of single mothers should not be left out of the equation. It is often difficult for women to be alone after years of having had a normal sex life. In De Kock's (1993) study one single mother said: "It really is a problem for me that I have to sit at home night after night with the children . . . it is difficult for me to have to sleep alone. Although we used to fight often, I still had a man to sleep next to me." Sexual frustration can lead to a disruption in family relations in the home.

2.4.2.2 Changes in lifestyle

When a woman has to be on her own again after having a partner, there would obviously be changes in her lifestyle. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1998:33) observed that for an ongoing living system, such as the family, to maintain its continuity, it must be able to tolerate change. It is after divorce or the death of a spouse that the greatest changes occur in the lifestyle of the single mother. Evolution is a normal and necessary part of every family's experience as it goes through its life cycle of change, but the single mother has only her own coping mechanisms with which to address such changes.

2.4.2.3 Discipline of children

To discipline a child has always been seen as one of the important tasks of parenting. Studies have been done on an international level to establish what kind of disciplining

technique would work best for the child. One such study was done by Vissing, Straus, Gelles and Harrop (1991) who reported that maladaptive treatment of the child by the parents teaches the child to behave in the same way toward other family members and also toward their own children when they are adults. Furthermore, the child internalises the way he or she is treated by his or her parent, which could lead to deviance amplification, where the child acts out the role that has been attributed to him or her (Martin, Linfoot & Stephenson, 2000:34).

This can make the role of the single mother difficult, especially when she is experiencing role strain. A stressed single mother could for example lash out to the child. The child then starts misbehaving because of negative feedback, and does not feel the need to behave correctly which in turns puts even more stress on the mother. This establishes a vicious cycle that is difficult to break. It is usually only when the child ends up in serious trouble that the help of a social worker is sought.

2.4.2.4 Handling of loss of privacy and time

Another change the single mother can experience is the loss of privacy and time during and after the separation. Esterhuyzen and Esterhuyzen (1989:18-19) identified divorce as the main cause of a single mother's loss of privacy and time. It is during the divorce proceedings, which may drag on unnecessarily when parents cannot reach a solution, that private family issues are brought to light.

2.4.2.5 Work and finances

For most single mothers it is important to have a job, but due to the fact that they have more responsibilities at home, changes in their working environment could occur. Change also occurs when the single mother must start working after a separation. Esterhuyzen and Esterhuyzen (1989:6) and Arosi (1992:20) mentioned that the single mother could expect to experience financial difficulties. Another economic consequence is the shift to becoming the primary wage earner of the family. Mothers with education and skills will have fewer problems securing employment than those who are in need of further education.

The accumulation of multiple roles exhausts people's supply of energy, leading to role strain and negative consequences for the mother and the child. Jackson's

(1994:36-39) finding was, however, that children were better off when their working mothers were more highly educated even though it meant more roles for the mother. This suggests that education might moderate potentially negative effects of role strain in families headed by single mothers attempting to escape poverty through work. This also suggests that the more educated these single mothers are the better they can cope with different roles in everyday life, especially when these roles become more because of separation from the other parent.

According to Jones and Wattenberg (1991:146) many of these mothers had part-time jobs that did not provide fringe benefits such as health insurance, paid sick and vacation leave, maternity leave, and retirement benefits. Single mothers also had to endure the extra stress of losing their jobs when a child fell ill, because an absent father was even less likely to help with caretaking than a custodial father (Kissman, 1995:152). It is therefore important that welfare and labour policies in South Africa should be set up in such a way that it can protect these mothers and children from being exploited.

De Bord, Canu and Kerpelman (2000:315) supplied the following case study to show that working mothers could undergo stress. When only one aspect goes wrong in the working single mother's life the whole balance can be affected:

[C]onsider the situation of a single mother in a low-income family who is hired for a job but has transportation difficulties. Her car often breaks down, and no bus route goes to her workplace. This mother has a need for reliable transportation to work, but the income she earns is not enough for her to purchase a reliable car, leading to a lack of fit between the family's need and work supplies. This unmet need for reliable transportation also leads to the mother's inability to meet the job demand of being at work by 08h00 every day, creating a lack of fit between family abilities and job demands. Thus one imbalance (lack of supplies to meet need) can affect the fit in the other half of the model.

Jackson and Huang (2000:31) supported the argument that working mothers had a more positive effect on family life, for their study found that mothers experiencing economic hardship and, in particular, poor black mothers who were unemployed, were more likely than others to be punitive and harsh toward their children.

To conclude it is clear that economic strain plays an important role in family life. The social worker's role in this respect will be to help these mothers find good secure jobs in order to preserve family life.

2.4.2.6 Day care and school

As a growing number of single mothers of young children enter the work force for extra income, the concern for children in day care and for those cared for at home, will grow. Choosing appropriate day care for your child can be difficult. According to Whittaker and Garbarino (1983:194), parents seemed to express satisfaction with different types of care for different reasons. Parents who employed an in-home sitter cited greater control over their child's care, but less satisfaction with specific child rearing techniques that the sitter used. Parents with children in family day care felt that it met their children's needs for emotional attachment and discipline as well as being convenient and flexible for themselves. Parents who chose centre-based care, such as a pre-school facility, mentioned the educational programme and the assurance that the care was of good quality because the centre was licensed. Parents might therefore select centre- or home-based care for different reasons. For the single mother this could be a problem, because she has to make this decision on her own (where previously she had the support of a spouse), because of the issue of financial support and because she might not have all these options in her community.

2.4.2.7 Labour around the house

For the single mother, having to do all the jobs in and around the house can be another source of stress. According to Paterson (2001:137-138) in addition to the dual roles imposed by work in and outside the home, single mothering adds an extra dimension of sole responsibility. Women find that rather than having rearranged their roles to accommodate an increased workload outside the home, they have simply added it onto their domestic responsibilities, juggling both in compressed time. So for the single mother labour around the house can be fitted in, but overloading role

responsibilities and not having time for themselves can lead to negative outcomes like a nervous breakdown. The single mother will need a strong support network and organisational skills to be able to juggle it all. According to Kissman (1991:25), it was also important for the mother to realise that she did not need to do it all, and that it was in order to ask for help.

2.4.2.8 Time management

Another type of change the single mother will experience relates to the spending of time. Paterson (2001:102) mentioned that previous researchers had issued dire warnings about single parents not having time to spend with their children and the harmful effects of this reduced contact time. In Paterson's (2001:102) study the contrary was found, as evident by one mother's report on how she and her son negotiated time:

On a Saturday, he just likes me to be around . . . we might play a game together, we'll snuggle in the morning, maybe we'll play a board game, but he doesn't spend all that much time with me, especially if he's with his friends. I mean, I'm ignored. But when it's getting toward night time, then all of a sudden, he wants, especially when its bedtime . . . then he wants me. That's it. You know, and then he starts talking, but I'd say probably to devote time to each other in an eight-hour day – I don't know – an hour maybe?

From this statement it is clear that time is relative to the person it is spent with. Time management is important for the individual single mother for whom circumstances are constantly changing, but it is also important to realise that what works for one mother might not work for another.

2.4.2.9 Housing

A single mother's prime concern for herself and her family is probably adequate housing. Yet this could pose a real problem for single mothers, mainly because of their low-income jobs. Even in the 1970s and 1980s, the population of low-income families, primarily single mothers and their children, grew to become the highest subgroup in America regarding poverty, increasing the demand for affordable housing

at the time (Mulroy, 1990:542). Therefore, this not only puts strain on the family – even the government has to supply a sustainable environment for these families to ensure their safety.

Mashabela (1990:50) predicted that the occurrence of squatter settlements in South Africa would increase, and that these settlements would form the urban African towns and cities of the future. This should be seen against the backdrop of the estimate made in 2000 by the Minister of Housing, Ms S. Mthembu-Mahaye, that South Africa's urban population would double between 2000 and 2025. There would therefore have to be a substantial increase in the 200 000 new units built per year in South Africa to address the increasing need for housing and to address the backlog of more than 3 million units (Weyers & Reitsema, 2001:47).

It is often accepted by the general public that family life in these settlements are characterised by single-parent families in which mothers have to fend for themselves and have to care for their children alone in the absence of their “husbands”. This correlates with the finding of Hofmeyer (1996:364) that it was not unusual for African fathers to leave their families, leaving the mothers to cope alone. Some of these single mothers sometimes had to go live with family, for they could not cope on their own. This could cause overcrowding. In a study done by Howes and Green (1996:26) in Paarl, Western Cape, an average of 12 people were found to live in a house with no more than three rooms. These authors also found the housing circumstances to be of poor quality. For the single mother and her child(ren) this is not ideal, and could cause a breakdown in family life.

In the study of Weyers and Reitsema (2001:58) on squatter settlements, they found those families to be dysfunctional. Half of their respondents had trouble sleeping. A list of a few of the fears of respondents, includes:

- “I am afraid of the thugs, Tsotsis and bad people.”
- “The people who do crime.”
- “I am afraid of some people killed people [sic].”

- “At night they is [sic] so dark and me I don’t want to go at the street [sic]. The people want to kill any childrens [sic].”
- I afraid the rapes [sic].”
- In night I don’t go out because I don’t see at street [sic].”

From the above fears that people in informal settlements deal with, it is clear that the single mother needs sufficient housing for herself and her children.

In South Africa the single mother therefore not only has to cope with inadequate housing, but she also has to try to provide a safe emotional and functional environment for herself and her family.

Emotional and functional changes are of such a nature that single mothers need assistance to cope with everyday life, and it is here that the social worker plays an important role.

2.5 FUNCTIONS OF SOCIAL WORKERS

The emotional and functional changes that a mother experiences after becoming single make it vital for her to receive support. It is thus important for social workers to know the part they will have to play to empower these single mothers.

Jung (1996:589) suggested the following practical principles for social workers to follow in helping these single parents. First there is **working together**. Social workers have to show their clients that they care about them as individuals and that they support, understand and empathise with them. In working together with families, social workers should neither establish themselves as authority figures nor set themselves apart from family members. Rather, social workers offer their special expertise, demonstrating that they are part of the support network and that they influence and are influenced by the family members.

The second principle entails that social workers have to be able to **empower** their **clients**. Empowering clients emphasises the social work values of the uniqueness and dignity of the individual, and client self-determination (Lee, 1994:11). Social workers

should not “do for” their clients, but rather “work with” them to facilitate the skills, support, or resources clients need to manage their lives. Social workers should help clients realise their skills and facilitate their support networks to manage their lives, thus giving them equal status, fostering self-reliance and emphasising strengths (Saleebey, 2002).

Thirdly, social workers should try to **involve significant family members**. Involving significant family members in treatment, including extended family members, non-custodial parents, and ex in-laws, is at the core of family-centred practice. Working with various family members provides families with the opportunity to pool resources, reduce stress and overcome deficits.

The fourth principle is that the social worker must be able to help the single mother to **allocate resources**. Many single-parent families lack the means to adapt effectively to their new family structure (Barnes, 2001: 450). Social workers, therefore, need to assist them in acquiring essential resources to help them adapt to their new situation. As resource allocators, social workers might need to be involved in planning, outreach or community networking to empower the single parent.

The fifth principle requires that social workers must then also be able to help the single mother **focus on small changes**. Jung (1996) and Jackson (1994) noted that many single parents are simply overextended and have little energy left for the family. Therefore social workers should emphasise small changes in order to prevent failure, and autonomy rather than dependency. As solution-focused therapy emphasises, small changes can lead to bigger changes down the road.

The last principle indicates that social workers must also help the single mothers **to be self-efficient**. Single parents often feel insecure, incompetent and helpless. Talking about self-esteem and how they feel might be supportive but does not necessarily lead to important changes. Self-efficacy, however, focuses on successful accomplishments, taking action and fostering positive energy and focusing on strengths (Lee, 1994:12-13). In becoming efficacious, clients feel empowered and in control of their lives and, therefore, will naturally feel good about themselves.

The assistance of a social worker towards extra support and understanding plays an important role in good parenting, which could help alleviate the strain and hardship a single mother has to go through.

2.6 CONCLUSION

Parenthood in itself is not an easy task for any parent or parents to handle. In today's changing world, this task is made even more difficult considering factors like cultural differences, economic circumstances and educational levels of the parent.

Single-parent families form a great part of society today, even though they are seen as flawed and broken. A single-parent family not only have to deal with the factors influencing parenthood in general, but also with issues that single-parent families have to face, such as divorce and a lack of resources. Studies such as the ones mentioned in this chapter proved that single-parent families are in themselves not harmful to the parent or the child(ren), but that it mostly depends on how they cope with stressors in their environment.

The single mother has all of the above issues to cope with, but also the emotional and functional changes such as depression, low self-image, and changes in life style, work and finances. It is therefore easy to understand why it is important for single mothers to acquire the skills to cope with all of these issues and changes. The role of the social worker is of great importance to the single mother, because she has to be able to identify and use the support systems in the community in order to preserve family life.

In the next chapter the social support systems in the network of a single mother will be explained, along with social support assessment tools which can be used. The practice framework used by a social worker when working with social support networks and single mothers will also be considered.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS FOR SINGLE MOTHERS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As mentioned before, being a parent in today's society is no easy task. Being a parent implies that one must be able to supply means to meet one's children's basic needs. With the cost of food, clothes and school fees always increasing, it is not uncommon for both parents to be working. They also work together in raising the children, by sharing tasks like taking the children to sport activities, outings and helping them with their homework.

Being a single parent is an even more stressful task, not only because the single parent is the only breadwinner, but also because the parent has to raise the child on his or her own. Single parents today need a social support network from inside and outside the family to assist them in executing the family functions efficiently.

The aim of this study is to present guidelines for social workers to empower single mothers who need to utilise the social support networks to fulfil their roles as parents. For this to happen it is first important to have a better understanding of these social support networks. This chapter deals with the use of social support networks, the different social support networks available and how they are useful not only to single parents but also to the people in supportive professions. Subsequently an explanation of social support networks will be given.

3.2 DEFINITION OF SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS

A thorough grasp of a social support network is important if the rest of the chapter is to be understood. This section defines the nature of a social support network. According to Pilisuk and Parks (in Whittaker & Garbarino, 1983:4) social support networks convey something about the *process* of support. They described it as "a

range of interpersonal exchanges that provide an individual with information, emotional reassurance, physical or maternal assistance, and a sense of the self as an object of concern”, something that also conveys the *structures* and *regular patterns* of support. Whittaker and Garbarino (1983:5) were of the opinion that a social support network was a set of interconnected relationships among a group of people that provided enduring patterns of nurturance (in any or all forms) and provided contingent reinforcements for efforts to cope with life on a day-to-day basis.

Caplan (1974) and Maguire (1991) identified three major forms of assistance operating in social support networks. First, the significant others like family, help the individual to use his or her own psychological resources and overcome difficulties, empowering the person to deal with the causes of the stress. Secondly, the networks share tasks such as cleaning the house, paying the bills, or preparing meals to limit the amount of stress on the overburdened individual and to clearly show concern and caring. Thirdly, social support networks supply extra resources, such as guidance, money or skills, to help the individual handle difficult situations better.

House (1981) and Maguire (1991) described three purposes of social support networks. First, less desirable influences are crowded out as supportiveness increases, so that stressful situations and stimuli become less dominant as positive interaction and types of help grow. Secondly, general health improves as individuals begin to take better care of themselves under the influence of caring support or become more aware of their realistic roles in solving their problems. Finally, social support serves as a buffer against the effects of stress, thus protecting people from such common psychological overreactions as self-blame and guilt and physical reactions such as lethargy, sleeping or eating disorders related to depression, or abuse of alcohol or other drugs.

It can be concluded that social support networks exist where different groups (i.e. family, people at work) assist one another in making day-to-day functioning easier. It also supplies emotional support. Social support networks provide functional and emotional support. In the next section the use of such support networks will be discussed.

3.3 USE OF SUPPORT NETWORKS

Social support networks, when adequately understood and appropriately focused, can be used very effectively by social workers and other health professionals in direct, daily practice to help those whose lives have been disrupted in a way that has resulted in the loss of close personal ties (Maguire, 1991: xiii). In South Africa it is important for social workers to be able to identify social support networks, for these networks can help ease the workload of social workers and help them obtain the appropriate help they need, thus making the aiding process fast and effective for all parties involved.

To parents the support of friends, relatives and their neighbours is extremely important. Yet Simons, Lorenz, Wu and Conger (1993:370) pointed out that the help from this group is secondary to that provided in the marital relationship. They observed that individuals typically invest much more time and emotional energy into their marriage compared to other relationships. Unfortunately, this secure support is not an option for the single mother. Single mothers with young children need to utilise external sources of support to the greatest extent possible since support does not exist in the home any more. Landman and Ryklief (1990:6) found in their study that even with temperamentally difficult and irritable babies, mothers with high levels of social support were able to establish more secure attachments with their children. So even if single mothers do not have their spouses or partners to support them, effective parenting can still take place if they can utilise their social support correctly.

For the purposes of this study, in this chapter *social support* refers to the different ways people seek emotional and functional support, with special reference to the single mother. It is vital that the social worker chooses the appropriate framework to address needs and problems the single mother might be experiencing.

3.4 PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

In social work practice the use of an appropriate practice framework for a social worker is of paramount importance, for it makes him or her more knowledgeable, more effective and more professional. There are many frameworks to choose from and the proper application of the frameworks improves social work practice (Sheafor, Horejsi and Horejsi, 2000:82). According to *Sheafor et al.* (2000: 49) a practice framework “is composed of a coherent set of concepts, beliefs, values, propositions, assumptions, hypotheses and principles.” Such a framework can be thought of as an outline of ideas that help one to understand people, how they function and how people change. In this chapter the focus will fall on four practice perspectives and one practice model, which could be included in a practice framework, used to assess the social support networks of single mothers.

3.4.1 Practice perspectives

The following four perspectives were chosen for this study:

3.4.1.1 General systems perspective

According to Sheafor *et al.* (2000: 89) the general systems perspective helps the social worker to maintain a focus on the dynamic interplay of the many biological and social systems that affect client behaviour and functioning. Social workers that follow the general systems perspective are therefore willing to work with different systems on different levels (i.e. micro, mezzo and macro) (McMahon, 1996:30). The incorporation of a general systems perspective (Pincus and Minahan, 1973) into the practice of social work has provided a means by which social workers can gain a clearer perspective of the reciprocal influences among individuals, families, groups and the environment. For the single mother this is important for she is not always able to get assistance on the micro level, and to this end the social worker needs knowledge of the systems on the different levels to assist with the single mother’s needs or problems.

3.4.1.2 Ecological perspective

Social work education and the profession itself are steeped in knowledge and values related to the social environment. The profession distinguishes itself from others in viewing all clients in the context of their social systems (Maguire, 1994:21). This correlates with the definition by Sheafor *et al.* (2000:91) of the ecosystems perspective, namely: “To maintain the social worker’s focus on the concept of person-in-environment in a practice situation”. Today social workers cannot focus on the individual itself – they have to focus on the environment that the person finds him- or herself in to give appropriate help (Germain and Gitterman, 1980).

Garbarino and Abramowitz (1992) provided an ecological systems map illustrating the connections between individuals and families, the church, the school, peer groups, and the systems that they represent. The social worker who operates with this ecological systems view in mind is aware of the physical environment as well as the impact of social, economic and political forces on the lives of their clients. It must be understood that both the individual and the environment change through time (Devore & Schlesinger, 1996:113).

3.4.1.3 Strengths perspective

Sheafor *et al.* (2000:93) described the strength perspective as “resting on the observation that it is much easier to help a client achieve positive lasting change by focussing on and building on the client’s strength...”. Single mothers have to be able to cope on their own after they have been to see a social worker. It is therefore important that the social worker focuses on the single mother’s strengths, enabling her to rely on her own strengths when needs or problems arise in the future (Saleebey, 2002).

3.4.1.4 Ethnic perspective

According to Sheafor *et al.* (2000, 94) an ethnic-sensitive perspective is to “ensure that the social worker is attentive to ethnic, cultural and religious diversity among clients and that the problem and effects of discrimination are addressed in practice”. For this study the ethnic perspective was very important, for the researcher belongs to a different racial group than the sample group, and felt that sensitivity to ethnic differences was important.

3.4.2 Practice model

A practice framework can also include a model. For the purpose of this study the social support system model was chosen.

3.4.2.1 Social support system model

Maguire (1991:22) mentioned the social support system model as one intervention approach that social workers could be trained to use. Table 3.1 illustrates social support system intervention and how it can be used in the training of social workers.

Table 3.1 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEM INTERVENTION

Approach	Treatment model	Supporting theory	Empirical base	Value premises
Social support system intervention	Development and use of formal and informal social systems for treatment and support.	Systems theory, with some family and organisational theory.	Epidemiological and social survey research with network analytical results.	Client's tendency to use family, friends, and other natural systems should be encouraged and augmented with professional treatment, coordination and support.

The model presented in Table 3.1 can be explained as follows:

- The **treatment model** teaches the social worker to recognise and use techniques that minimise the effects of adverse social conditions such as unemployment, difficult marital relationships, family or job situations, psychological effects of illness and disease, and other stressful stimuli in the environment.
- The **supporting theory** which in the systems theory (Whittaker & Garbarino, 198) in general states that people are interconnected in various ways, for example socially, culturally and racially. Systems theory has been used in social work as a way of organising and ultimately applying interventions sensitive to the diverse demands of modern living.

- The **empirical base** of the model explains to social workers that they need to do research into the environment they are working in to identify needs and problems and also to assess resources that are available to them in the community.
- The **value premise** of a social worker is also important, for it helps to reinforce positive bonds with the client, and so has a positive influence on the helping process (Maguire, 1991:23-26).

It is important for social workers to have a theoretical framework as basis to help the client (Sheafor *et al.*, 2002). People do not generally know how to ask for help, and by the time they reach a social worker the problem might have turned into a crisis. The social support system model (Maguire, 1991) is especially appropriate when social workers have to work with single mothers. The reason for this is that the single mother needs a support system outside the home, for there is often no real concrete support inside the home to help the mother cope with the stresses of parenthood.

In the following section a review is given of the measurement tools available to social workers when assessing a single mother's care situation, and in identifying existing social support systems.

3.5 SOCIAL SUPPORT MEASUREMENT TOOLS

Social workers not only need to know what types of social support networks exist, they also need to know how to identify the social support networks that are existent or non-existent in their clients' lives. This can be done through the use of social support measurement tools. These measurement tools are used to help with interviewing, planning and intervention. In recent years, researchers have developed a number of measures for assessing social support. Structural measures describe the existence or quality of social relationships, and functional measures assess various types of supportive exchanges. Tracy and Whittaker (1990) identified three of these tools, which will be explained separately.

3.5.1 Eco-map

The first tool is the eco-map. According to Compton and Galaway (1994) it maps in a dynamic way the ecological system, the boundaries of which encompass the client in the life space. Fig. 3.1 is an example of such a map.

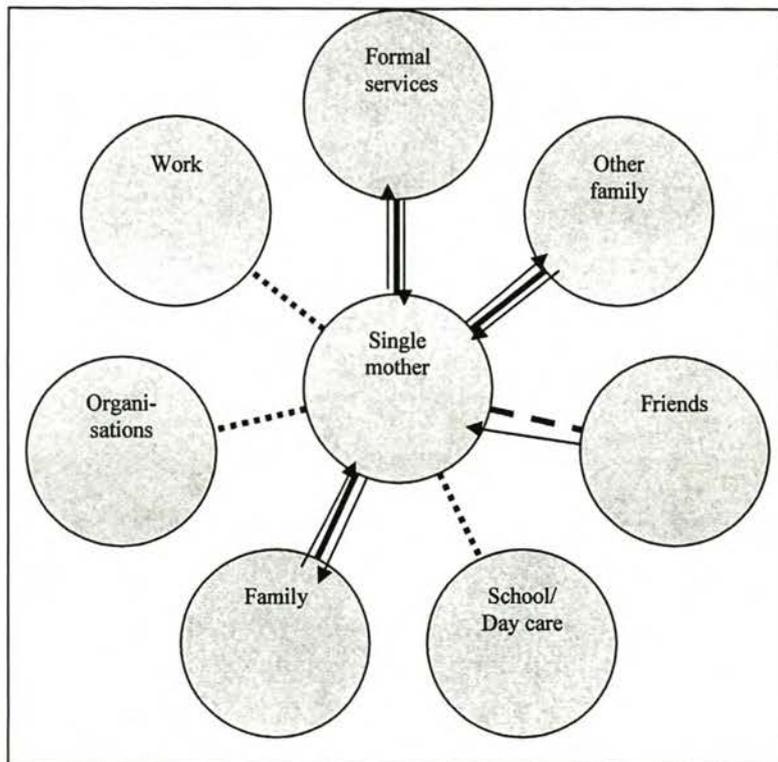


FIGURE 3.1: ECO-MAP

The map illustrates the major systems that are part of the client's life and the nature of the client's relationship with each system. The eco-map provides an overview of the client's situation, and portrays the important nurturing or conflict-laden connections between the client and the environment. The eco-map works in close relation to Pincus and Minahan's (1973) general systems perspective and Germain and Gitterman's (1980) ecosystems perspective, for these perspectives are commonly used in social work to assess the relationship between the client and his or her environment.

The eco-map work as follows: A circle is drawn in the middle of the page and the client's name is written inside. Surrounding this circle, more circles, each naming a different type of social system that has an influence on the client, are drawn. The

specific nature of each connection is indicated by words or different lines, for example _____ for strong connections, ----- for tenuous connections, for stressful or for no connection. Arrows are drawn along the lines to signify flow of energy.

The advantage of the eco-map is its visual simulation of connections between a family and the environment, its ability to demonstrate the flow of energy into and from the family, and its depiction of nurturing as well as conflicting relationships. One disadvantage of the eco-map is its imprecise terminology, which makes it difficult to determine the exact nature of the relationships portrayed (Tracy & Whittaker, 1990:463).

3.5.2 Social network map

The second tool is the social network map and was developed by Whittaker, Tracy and Marckworth in 1989 in a project aimed at developing and enhancing social support resources for families that were at risk of disruption (Tracy & Whittaker, 1990:462). According to these authors (1990:463), the social support map entailed a circle mapping technique. The map (presented in fig. 3.2) is a visual display of network membership.

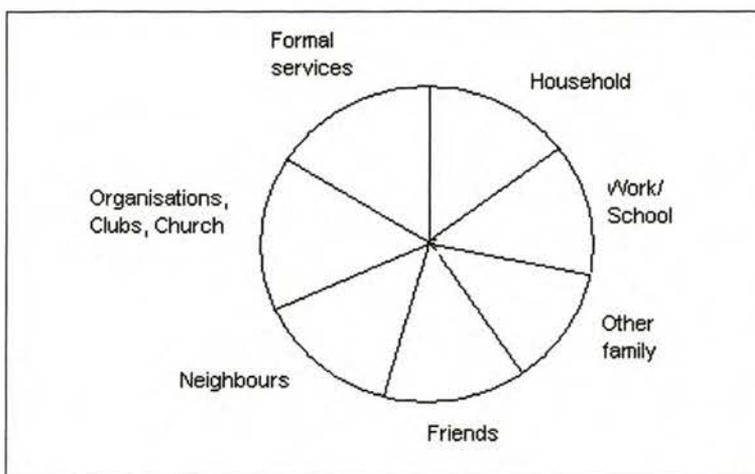


FIGURE 3.2: SOCIAL NETWORK MAP

Names and initials of network members are displayed on the map by the clients, as is the type of help (i.e. emotional or functional) received from these members. Unfortunately the social network map reveals little information about the functioning

of systems relationships, and therefore the family support social network grid is used in conjunction with the social network map. This tool (presented in fig. 3.3) is another visual of noting who supports the client in different areas, but is more descriptive than the social network map.

TABLE 3.3: FAMILY SUPPORT SOCIAL NETWORK GRID

Name	Area of life	Concrete Support	Emotional Support	Information/ Advice	Critical	Direction of help	Closeness	How often seen	How long known
	1.Household 2.Other family 3.Work/School 4.Organisations 5.Other friends 6.Neighbours 7.Other professionals 8.Other	1.Hardly ever 2.Some-times 3.Almost always	1.Hardly ever 2.Some-times 3.Almost always	1.Hardly ever 2.Some-times 3.Almost always	1.Hardly ever 2.Some-times 3.Almost always	1.Goes both ways 2.You to them 3.They to you	1.Not very close 2.Sort of close 3.Very close	0.Does not see 1.Few times/yr 2.Monthly 3.Weekly 4.Daily	1.Less than 1 yr 2.1-5yrs 3.More than 5yrs
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									

This grid works according to a rating system. In the first column the area of life (e.g. household, school) where a person seeks support is named. In the following three columns concrete support, emotional support and information advice are analysed. Column five examines how critical this support is, and column six focuses on the direction of help. In columns seven to nine is taken into consideration how close the client is to the specific person that is giving the advice, how often they see each other and how long they have known each other (Tracy & Whittaker, 1990:466).

These tools play an important role in helping the single mother and social worker, for it gives visual stimulation to help determine which social support systems are available in the network and which are not, and how they can be utilised in a specific situation. In the next section the social support systems within the network will be discussed separately to get an understanding of why they are so important to the single mother.

3.6 TYPES OF SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS

As soon as a social worker has selected the appropriate practice framework to help a single mother, it is important to be able to identify the necessary social support networks that will be of help to her. It is important for the social worker to know that every case is unique. Maguire (1991:137) described this as follows:

There are tremendous differences between a person in his or her early 20s and the same person in the late 50s. The career of the young adult is just beginning or still being chosen, whereas that of the older adult is winding down, and retirement plans are often under serious consideration. The young adult is often single and just starting to look for a lifelong partner; the older adult is often in a long-term relationship and beginning to lose children to marriage and careers of their own.

Because people are all different, they do not have the same needs and social workers therefore cannot employ similar strategies for everybody. In this section a general observation will be given on the support networks that can be found in everyday life, with reference to single mothers.

3.6.1 Family

The first social support network is the family. Maguire (1991:100) stated as follows: "The individual is a product of his or her family, and that family and its dynamics are a product of the community, culture and society in which it survives." The nuclear family is changing dramatically, because of divorce and people choosing to have children out of wedlock, but this statement also applies to single-parent families. Families are central to family life, and as such have several functions.

Chinkanda (1994:186-190) and Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1998:10) identified the following six functions of the family:

- The family as a collector and disseminator of information about society
- The family as a source of ideology
- The family as a feedback guidance system

- The family as a guide and mediator in problem-solving
- The family as a source of practical service and concrete aid
- The family as a source and valuator of authority.

These functions indicate that a healthy family structure meets the new and developing needs of infants and children and provides feedback to the child indicating that he or she is a worthy human being.

Chinkanda (1994:190) and Cochran, Lerner, Riley, Gunnarsson and Henderson (1999:6) added that any family that performs its supportive function and does not limit the potential of its members is characterised by certain features. These features include the following:

- The family should experience a significant level of cohesion, stability and integration.
- The family should be accorded its rightful place as the basic unit for raising and nurturing children. It must be seen as an institution that cannot be replaced by any other societal institution.
- The family members should have a common language and feel free to express their opinions both within and outside the home.
- The family should be enabled to observe important dates within the family and also in the wider community. Celebration of birthdays and anniversaries of historical events are examples of such important dates.
- The family should perceive itself as having the power to influence societal institutions, especially education and health care institutions.

These features illustrate the important supporting role played by the family, which is necessary for the basic functioning of an individual. Marriage and parenthood are two entities in the immediate family that directly influence the single mother and can lend support.

3.6.1.1 Marriage

The first and most important source of support in the family is that of marriage. Maguire (1991:71) stated that “[w]hatever the reasons for entering into marriage, it is

the strongest bond by which two people can commit themselves to one another". Men and women marry for many different reasons, but generally a factor such as needing companionship or a trusted individual to talk to and care about is high on the list. Other important issues are social and economic security, status and sexual needs. Historically, roles within marriage have been defined by gender. Women stayed at home, raised the children, took care of cooking, house cleaning and other household and familial chores. Men worked outside the home earning money for food, clothing, housing and other necessities for the family. Furthermore, the husband expected more nurturance, emotional support and affection from his wife than he was required to give her. Otherwise, he was considered to be exceeding his required role tasks as a husband (Maguire, 1991:72-73). Today according to Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1998: 3-5) this has changed. More and more women are entering the work force and equal roles are played in the house.

Esterhuyzen and Esterhuyzen (1989:5) and Maguire (1991:73) observed that marriage is a changing concept. Today people might live together without getting married, women do not stay at home any more but have joined the work force, and some married couples never have children. This dramatic and relatively sudden shift in marital and familial responsibilities has placed added psychological strain on women, who have simply been required to add the responsibility of breadwinner to their roles as wives or lovers and mothers. For many these multiple, demanding roles have caused a high degree of stress and subsequent inability to cope. Simons, Lorenz, Wu, and Conger (1993:368-381) found in their study that women had higher rates of depression than men because they were expected to be the more feeling, emotional gender group. Some feminist research and literature (Kissman, 1991: 23) have also upheld the view that women take on an unfair, added societal burden as a result of the tendency that they, more than men, have to blame themselves when things go wrong.

In Arosi's (1992:23) study it was mentioned that single parents who were separated or divorced still viewed the other parent as a most valuable supportive figure. The potential of support can only be realised if the parents are able to continue their parental partnership despite having ended other forms of partnership. For the single mother who does not have the companionship of a partner (even though it has been

proved that married women suffer from more stress than single women) the stress is more severe, for now she has to fulfil the roles of mother and father.

3.6.1.2 Parenthood

The second type of support within the family is that of parenthood (Esterhuyzen and Esterhuyzen, 1989:13-14). As mentioned before, marriage and family life have undergone dramatic changes during the last half of the 20th century due to numerous factors, such as urbanisation, high divorce rates, the employment of women, and the feminist movement (Goldenberg and Goldenberg, 1998). Inevitably, parenthood has also changed. Gerdes, Coetzee, and Cronjé (1996:81) referred to parenthood today as being focused on preparing children to meet the increasingly complex demands of a constantly changing society, and to become competent and well-adjusted individuals. This is a formidable task for which parents might be inadequately prepared because of changing family structures and vaguely defined parental roles.

As mentioned before, parenting is a difficult and demanding task. For the single mother it can be even more difficult and demanding. Women who consciously decide to be a single mother seem to do so from a position of psychological strength, which means that they embark on the single-parent journey with certain inner resources and advantages. Women who are thrown into the situation do not have these resources and advantages, at least initially, and find themselves unprepared either psychologically and/or financially (Arosi, 1992: 17). Kissman (1995:151) suggested that mothers who raise children alone often internalise low expectations about their ability to head families and subsequently develop 'worried well' syndromes. That is, they might attribute all family conflicts to their inability to parent their children alone. It can therefore be concluded that as married couples need extra support from outside the family when it comes to parenthood, single mothers need this even more.

Oakley (1992:14) concluded in one of her previous projects (in the 1970s) on first-time motherhood, that the interviewing process itself can be seen as a socially supportive experience. Most of the women interviewed for this project had said how good it was to have taken part in the research, and to have had a chance to talk about the things that concerned or delighted them. When social workers simply listen to single mothers and give them a chance to speak they are already providing support,

and the social worker will gain greater significance in the social support network of the mother.

3.6.2 Other family

Another social support system is the extended family, including siblings, uncles and aunts and grandparents. It is within the family system that one first learns how to make linkages, connections or bonds with others. Successful bonding based on open and accurate communication leads to strong social support networks. The capacity to develop these systems later in life is invariably learnt in the family system (Howes and Green, 1996:35-36).

Chinkanda (1994:185) stated that strong family relationships or strong group cohesion provided a cushion or protective barrier against the negative perceptions transmitted by society at large. Chinkanda (1994:186) also stated that not all families provide support for their members. Some families can actually be a major source of stress for individual members, who might benefit more by severing ties with them. Keller and McDade (1997:71-72) agreed, stating that family members and friends had been an important potential source of help for all of the parents in their study. However, some obstacles might prevent parents from accessing these sources. The most common reason given by parents in the probability sample in McDade's (1997) study for not seeking help from family and friends was the belief that it would not be helpful. Other reasons were stigmatisation, judgmental behaviour and fear of intrusion and of being misunderstood.

Yet, according to Arosi (1992:24), it was important for the single mother to realise the potential support of family. Nearby family could provide an "outside the household" reserve resource. The children's grandmother might be willing to babysit or to make her house available to the children for the hours between the end of school and the mother's arrival from work. The single mother's siblings might also provide auxiliary homes for the children. A brother could sometimes act as the "man of the family" and help the single mother with repairs around the house, speaking sternly to misbehaving children, coaching them in sport and taking them to games.

For the family to function correctly it should be able to perform the following four family tasks, according to Harway and Wexler (1996):

- Daily living tasks, like preparing food, cleaning, repairs around the house and child care. For the single mother outside help would be required to be able to perform some of these tasks.
- Family leadership tasks, which give direction to the development of the family. These could be done by one person in the family or shared over time by different family members. The single mother does not have the option to share these leadership responsibilities. This can be a cause of stress because she also does not have anyone she can discuss her decisions with. Here the support of the extended family could be very helpful.
- Cohesiveness-building functions, which refer to the development of family rituals and traditions, secrets and rules for everyday living and coping with stress. The single mother needs these building functions to keep the family together in times when the family is fragile and likely to be torn apart. With the help of the family this task will be easier and some responsibility will be taken away from the single mother.
- Development of a family value system, which refers to setting up a hierarchy of goals. This will help the single mother to focus on the future instead of dwelling on the past.

With the help of the family, the single mother will be able to perform these functions and so maintain the efficient functioning of her family.

According to Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1998:10), some families, regardless of type, number of problems, ethnic or racial composition, socio-economic level, or degree of education, are happier and more stable than others. Some are more competent, show greater recuperative abilities in adversity, are more flexible, more collaborative, adaptive to changing external conditions, purposeful in pursuing satisfaction for all members and in successfully carrying out developmental tasks. Usually organised according to some form of generational hierarchy, such families are able to balance intergenerational continuity and change and to maintain ties with the past, the present, and the future without getting stuck in the past or cut off from it.

Clarity and ease of communications also characterise such families – a clear set of expectations about roles and relationships within the family is provided. Whatever their type, whether led by single mothers, stepfathers or grandparents, such families respect individual differences and the separate needs of the family members. These family members have mastered effective problem-solving strategies. It can thus be concluded that the immediate as well as extended family of the single mother plays an important social support role, helping her cope with the day-to-day functioning of parenting.

3.6.3 Day care and school

The third type of social support system is that of day care or the school. In this section *school* also includes *day care*. In her supportive role, the single mother has a responsibility to develop and motivate the child so that he or she can derive the maximum benefit from the schooling experience. The school can be a support system for the single mother, by for example letting the mother know when the child is exhibiting bad behaviour and helping the mother to help her child.

Chinkanda (1994:193-196) named three roles played by the school. First, it plays the role of **socialisation agent**. Schools have the responsibility to assist the single mother in socialising the children. Instead of undermining family ties, the school strengthens these ties by supplementing the family's role and offering an important additional societal source of socialisation. The school should serve as an extension of the family and should not stand in contrast to what the family represents. Secondly, it helps in the **development of a positive self-image**, in which the teacher has a major responsibility, especially when dealing with, for example, an underachiever, a child from a deprived home, a child with a negative self-image or one from a multiproblem family. The school should take cognisance of the impact that any such factors have on the child as a human being and a learner and also of the influence of this child's behaviour on the other children in the classroom. If the school employs a psychologist or a social worker or has access to such a professional, the child who experiences any kind of problem or need should be referred to him or her at an early stage (Esterhuyzen and Esterhuyzen, 1989: 40-44). The third role of the school is that of **empowerment**. According to Chinkanda (1994: 195) most black children are from disempowered communities. This was not only because of the existence of apartheid

as a form of institutionalised discrimination, but also because of the daily experiences of black people in their contact with members of the white community. It is thus up to the school to provide these children with the right education, in order to empower them to rise above their circumstances (Lee, 1994).

If the school can play these roles in the education of the child, it automatically helps the single mother, because she would not have to spend so much energy on these issues and would thus be able to help the child with another aspect of his or her development. The school and the family can jointly make education a positive experience for the young child.

3.6.4 Work

Employment serves as a twofold support for the single mother, financially as well as emotionally, as it can temporarily take her mind off the problems at home. For a single mother who needs to work it is important to be able to balance all her roles. She must also be ready to accept and adjust to last-minute changes in her routine. Affordable child care, for example, is a requisite to enable mothers to participate in the labour market and to provide for their families. Unfortunately, according to Kissman (1995:151), the single mother is especially at risk of losing her job when her child falls ill. It is thus important for this mother to have an open relationship with her work, in order to rely on the work place as extra support when needed. Work provides a social support network to the single mother, but can also be a great burden if the single mother's situation is not understood.

3.6.5 Organisations

Organisations in the community can also be of great support to the single mother. Three kinds of organisations can be identified as social support systems, namely community organisations, clubs and the church. These organisations play an important part in assisting the single mother with parenting.

- **Community organisations**

According to Maguire (1991:110), the family that is involved in neighbourhood Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts, soccer, swimming, football, dance recitals and other such activities within the community has healthy social and

physical outlets and is provided with social support. It is thus important for the single mother to involve herself and her children in such activities, for they can play a major role in stress relief and support.

- **Clubs**

Arosi (1992) was of the opinion that families that were connected with self-help groups of some kind also broadened their base of support. Some self-help groups are specifically oriented to family concerns, such as:

- *Parents Anonymous*, which helps parents who are abusive toward their children.
- *Alanon*, which helps family members of alcoholics.
- *Parents Without Partners* for single parents.

- **Church**

Maguire (1994:109-110) observed that churches and synagogues were a frequently overlooked resource for overwhelmed family networks. The importance of spirituality in the lives of people was acknowledged as far back as 1917, when Richmond (1917:378) advised social workers to consider the positive effect of religion on families. In view of the focus currently being placed on the strength perspective (Saleebey, 2002) and considering the possible value of spirituality in the lives of people, it follows that this phenomenon in the client's life should be taken into consideration during any programme aimed at empowering people (Kruger and Williams, 2003: 347). Hope is a necessary ingredient in the successful process of change. Youth groups, choirs and innumerable small committees that have been developed to help local churches also serve to help their members (Pincus and Minahan, 1973).

At least one of these organisations will be functioning in a community. The reason single mothers do not use them might be because they do not know of their existence, which makes it crucial for the social worker to be aware of these social support networks to assist the single mother in finding appropriate help.

3.6.6 Friends

Another type of support is provided by friends and neighbours (Arosi, 1992:23). The family system is affected by the neighbourhood and by the degree of support (or lack of it) that the family receives. For instance, the family that has active ties to the local church, scouting groups, community leaders, friends and neighbours tends to be more comfortable and to have a stronger sense of its own acceptance into the community than other families (Maguire, 1994:100). Bacon (in Henderson *et al.*, 1981:11) quoted: "The healing support of friendship, to include both sexes, that this communication of a man's self to his friend works two contrary effects; for it redoubleth joys, and cutteth griefs in half. For there is no man that imparteth his joys to his friend, but he joyeth the more, and no man that imparteth his griefs to his friend, but he grieveth the less." From above it can be concluded that the role of friendship can be very supportive, especially when there is no other family.

Whittaker and Garbarino (1983:204) referred to day care neighbours. In their study, these neighbours (people who could provide care when encouraged to do so) enabled families who needed care to connect with providers whom they otherwise might not have been able to locate, and providers in turn were given emotional and instrumental support that encouraged them to continue providing care. In this case the neighbours were not only supplying the single mother with support, but she in turn was supporting them. Through this process empowerment could take place.

3.6.7 Formal services

The last type of social support system is that of formal services, in which professionals play a significant role. For certain problems the expertise and neutrality of professional helpers are sometimes necessary and even welcomed. People are much more likely to perceive professional help as essential and to seek it when severe personal impairment or stress occurs. The qualified professional often has a crucial function in facilitating both informal social support networks (such as group of friends, neighbours and kin) and social support groups (such as *AA*, *Foster Parents Association* and *Parents without Partners*), since laymen do not always have the necessary negotiating skills. Informal social support networks function on their own, and although the professional can often work through and with them, efforts to organise and/or professionalise them might be socially detrimental. Social support

groups, however, often do need professional encouragement (Whittaker & Garbarino, 1983:15-16).

Tracy and Whittaker (1990:461) observed that professionals, in this case specifically social workers, should realise the importance of client support, because their clients were isolated in a unique way. They are surrounded by social support systems that might support, weaken, substitute or supplement the helping efforts of professionals. It is therefore important for the social worker to assess the single mother's situation and her environment in order to give the best support possible.

Kissman (1995:152) stated that because so many families headed by mothers are impoverished, practitioners cannot ignore the need to advocate for comprehensive policies and programmes to enable families to survive. Complications arise for social workers in South Africa due to the fact that the development of new systems in South Africa must be in accordance with certain rights and obligations enshrined in the new South African Constitution (1996) and international treaties. These human rights declarations (in Chapter two of the South African Constitution) and treaties include the right to social security and assistance, the right to an adequate standard of living, the fundamental right to be free from hunger, children's socio-economic rights and the right to substantive gender equality. Weyers and Reitsema (2001:46-48) observed that while the Department of Welfare and Population Development is committed to adhere to these rights and obligations and ensure equal access to services to all South Africans, their efforts are especially hampered by fiscal constraints, a lack of administration capacity and poor infrastructure in previously under-serviced areas. The infrastructure to help the single mother and her child(ren) therefore does exist, but it will require lobbying from social workers and other professionals alike to see the rights of this group realised.

The help of social support networks is easy to reach and use, but only if those in need know how to use them. It is even more important for the single mother to be able to utilise these support systems, for it can help her cope and sustain good family functioning. Social support systems can be a great resource if used correctly, as illustrated in the following section.

3.7 RESOURCES PROVIDED BY SOCIAL SUPPORT

Social support networks can be a great resource to a single mother if used correctly. The definition for a *resource* according to the New Dictionary of Social Work (1995:54) is: “Means or service that can be mobilized and applied instrumentally to satisfy a need, combat a social problem or promote social functioning”. If social support networks are harnessed to satisfy a need, combat a problem and promote social functioning, it would be a great resource. According to Maguire (1991:xv-xix) at least five resources can be identified when analysing social support in terms of its practical components. These five resources of social support will be discussed below.

3.7.1 A sense of self

The first resource embedded in a social support network is that of supplying the single mother with a sense of self. Many clients of social workers have difficulty with individuality. They have a poor sense of who they are or what they want. The client defines himself or herself in relation to others – not as a unique, responsible, autonomous human being. The line between “self” and “other” is blurred. It is often only through healthy involvement with a supportive social system, such as family or the work place, that individuals can acquire or relearn abilities in themselves. Social support offers the interactional environment that allows people to appreciate their uniqueness. The members of a social support network are anchored around the individual, permitting that person to develop an awareness of his or her autonomous and unique existence as a thinking, feeling human being.

Surprisingly, the best way for those in the social support network to help in this regard could be to do nothing but listen. People dealing with less severe emotional problems feel that they are best helped by talking to friends or relatives about their problems or needs. Oakley (1992:14) documented her insight into the fact that the interviewing process itself had been a socially supportive experience to the mothers in the study. The women mentioned that it was good to partake in the study and have a chance to talk about the things that concerned and delighted them. Maguire (1991:xv) also added that empathetic, supportive social workers probably tap into this perspective best, because they recognise that people need to be trusted to figure out their own best

paths. They recognise that when people are encouraged simply through non-judgmental, genuine acceptance to understand themselves, they ultimately arrive, without direction from outside, at solutions compatible with their own best interests. Thus, reflective listening and empathy are methods social workers can use in early phases of treatment as they begin to develop social support to help single mothers view their concerns introspectively, as individuals taking ultimate responsibility for their own fates (Saleebey, 2002).

3.7.2 Encouragement and positive feedback

According to Maguire (1991:xvi), the second resource is to empower people to believe in themselves. People constantly evaluate themselves in light of what others say and do. They need to know that they are valued and needed. Many clients come for help with a damaged, traumatised sense of their own self-worth. Those who have been abandoned, neglected, or in some other way hurt and devalued by others invariably begin to question their own worth, wondering how, if others care so little for them, they can justify caring for themselves. In contrast Arosi (1992) noted that, a positively oriented social support network that included family and friends, provided single mothers with feedback that they had worth and were valued. This in turn could give them the confidence to change their behaviour previously based on assumptions that they had little or nothing to offer their families.

3.7.3 Protection against stress

The third and very important resource mobilised within a social support network is that of protecting a single mother against the stresses of everyday life. Maguire (1991:xvi) cited evidence to suggest that social support was essentially a protective mechanism. Research has indicated that when a stressful situation such as the loss of a job, a divorce, death of a spouse or a major medical problem develops, people with strong social support networks handle the stressors more successfully. This holds true regardless of which category, like race and sex, people happen to be in. Whittaker and Garbarino (1983:22) and Germain and Gitterman (1980) stated in support that where the environment was supportive, creative adaptation and growth occurred. Where the environment was non-protective or depriving, stress was created and growth and adaptive functioning might be impeded.

Professionals in social services can build this protective buffer against stress by making family, friends and other members of the network fully aware of their importance to the single mother by pointing out various ways in which they could be of help. Family and friends who at first might only be peripherally involved with the single mother can become a vital part of the process by receiving this kind of positive feedback. Their sense of altruism and of being caring people can be encouraged so that a stronger involvement with the client is developed. Family and friends sometimes need to be reminded that occasional words of support or encouragement or simply their willingness to listen can be of immeasurable help to others. They might also have to be reminded that the success of many social support endeavours really depends on some very simple humane behaviour, such as showing the same level of caring, encouragement and support that any good friend would offer. Not only is the single mother dependent on family and friends to relieve stress, but by helping her they are also empowering themselves.

3.7.4 Knowledge, skills and resources

Social support networks can also be a resource when it relates to helping with specific problems by providing useful information. According to Tracy and Whittaker (1990: 461), these include where to apply for a job or money, or how to approach an alienated friend or relative. Members of a caring social support network also supply people in need with the tools to rebuild their lives. Such help could come from an uncle who provides a job, an aunt who sensitively approaches the client about his or her maladaptive behaviour, or even from another client who perhaps belongs to the same self-help group (Maguire, 1991:xvii).

Arosi (1992) concluded that self-help groups were useful components of social support networks, particularly as providers of knowledge, skills and resources. In working with a single mother, social service professionals often find their best allies in other clients who have lived through the same trauma, be it the death of a spouse, the problems of adjusting to divorce, the effects of incest, or the ongoing battle of alcoholism.

3.7.5 Socialisation opportunities

Maguire (1991:xviii) identified the final resource provided by social support network as that of creating socialisation opportunities. Social workers find many of their clients to have poor social skills. For some this could be a temporary setback, reflecting their withdrawal as a result of a divorce, a recent health problem or a blow to their self-esteem from losing their job. Others have had poor social skills since early childhood for any of a variety of social, psychological or even genetic or physiological reasons.

Whatever the cause, interaction with others can enhance self-worth and, in addition to providing the type of specific help described above, it also breaks the cycle of isolation. It might allow a client with poor social skills to become involved in relationships rather than continuing to be cut off from other people. For some clients, nearly any social activity is positive. Attending a church service, athletic event or bingo game, preferably accompanied by a friend or relative, can be that significant first step in the right direction. The habit of severing off social contacts needs to be counteracted with encouragement to meet new friends and to re-establish old relationships.

Helping the clients with his or her socialisation generally involves a series of discussions about the client's past relationships, about what those relationships meant and how they helped him or her. This process is enhanced from the outset when the professional lets the client draw a diagram or describe his or her social support network. Discussions inevitably develop that lead the client to reconsider the meaning and usefulness of past and future relationships.

Paterson (2001:65) quoted single mothers as feeling helpless, experiencing a loss of identity, being overwhelmed by the demands of full parenting and economic survival, feeling increasingly socially isolated, cut off from the outside world because of time constraints, and feeling locked into the world of their children. It is thus important for single mothers to be given the skills to make use of social support networks to combat these negative experiences.

3.8 CONCLUSION

Social support networks, provide love, support and guidance, and help define people as individuals with separate needs and identities. Single mothers need the resources contained within these social support networks, not only to realise their own potential, but also to help them cope with the everyday stress of single parenting.

For social workers who are trying to help single mothers realise their full potential it is important to have a practice framework that is relevant to the need or problem. This also helps them to work in a systematic way. The measurement tools are a guide for the social worker and the single mother alike to identify the social support networks and the manner in which they can be utilised to maintain family functioning.

By actively engaging and interacting with a system of families, friends and professionals the single mother grows and learns more about herself and her place and purpose in life. In this way she also helps herself to function well in a complex society.

In the next chapter the results of the empirical study on the social support networks of single mothers will be given.

CHAPTER 4

A SITUATION ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS OF SINGLE MOTHERS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Social workers in any community need guidelines to be able to support and assist clients to meet their needs. It is therefore important for them to be able to identify resources that exist in a certain community which can help single mothers with a specific need or problem. For the single mother it is extremely important to learn how to identify and use her own social support systems (for she has to make use of the resources in her community), in order to make her role as a single parent easier and less stressful.

The objectives of this study were to describe the nature and demands of single parenthood, with an emphasis on single mothers; to explain what social support networks entail, with an emphasis on social support networks for single mothers; and to investigate the support single mothers receive in Guguletu.

These objectives were formulated in order to achieve the aim of the study, which was to present guidelines for social workers to empower single mothers to develop social support networks to fulfil their role as parents.

In the previous chapters some relevant definitions as well as the role of the social worker were discussed. This chapter sets out the results of the study undertaken with single mothers in Guguletu, and will now be discussed.

4.2 EMPIRICAL STUDY

An exploratory design was used for the purpose of this study, which according to Grinnell (1993:119), is used to explore and to get an understanding of the research topic.

Qualitative and quantitative methods were applied. The difference between the two is contained in the way in the empirical study is executed, and in the way in which the findings are reported. Qualitative research entails observations made by the researcher during interviews, while quantitative data by means of with questionnaires are presented as tables and figures reporting the findings of the study. In the empirical study, a questionnaire (Annexure B) and interviews based on the purpose of this study and the literature study were used. Babbie (1989:98) stated that by employing different procedures in a research design, the researcher is able to draw on the strengths of each of the qualitative and quantitative methods, which adds to the credibility of the research.

The population of this study consisted of some of the mothers of 65 children who attend a crèche in Guguletu. Purposive sampling was used, i.e. the first ten single mothers who were able to participate was used for this study. The ten interviews with the single mothers were recorded at the crèche over a period of three days.

4.3 RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The data that was gathered will be presented and discussed in terms of the five sections of the questionnaire. They are:

- Identifying personal information of the single mothers
- Identifying issues faced by single parents
- The nature of single parenthood
- Emotional and functional changes experienced
- Social support networks of single mothers.

4.3.1 Identifying personal information

Personal information was organised into six categories and will now be discussed:

4.3.1.1 Age of respondents

The age of the respondents is important, for it gives an idea of what the average age of single mothers. Table 4.1 illustrates the age of the respondents:

TABLE 4.1: AGE OF RESPONDENTS

AGE	f	%
Under 19	0	0
20-29	7	70
30-39	2	20
40-49	1	10
Over 50	0	0
TOTAL	10	100

N=10

The table above indicates that seven (70%) respondents fall in the 20 to 29 years age bracket, two (20%) respondents fall in the 30 to 39 years age bracket and one(10%) respondent fall in the 40 to 49 years age bracket. These findings disagree with the findings of Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1998), De Kock (1993) and Kesner and McKenry (2001), who concluded that teenage pregnancy was one of the main reasons for single motherhood.

4.3.1.2 Number of children of respondents

Table 4.2 illustrates the number of children of the respondents:

TABLE 4.2: NUMBER OF CHILDREN

NUMBER OF CHILDREN	f	%
1	4	40
2	5	50
3	1	1
4	0	0
More than 5	0	0
TOTAL	10	100

N=10

From Table 4.2 it can be seen that four (40%) of the respondents have only one child and that five (50%) respondents have two children. The number of children of a single mother has determines how she copes with everyday life. These findings agree with findings by Esterhuyzen and Esterhuyzen (1989:6) and Arosi (1992:20) that the single

mother could expect to experience financial difficulties, and the number of children is very important in this regard. Therefore the more children she has, the greater the financial burden and the higher the level of stress.

4.3.1.3 Age of respondents' children

The ages of the children of the respondents were requested. Gerdes *et al.* (1996:82) mentioned that the younger the children, the greater the strain on the parent. The reason for this was that the younger child needs more care. The graph in Figure 4.1 illustrates the ages of the children of the respondents:

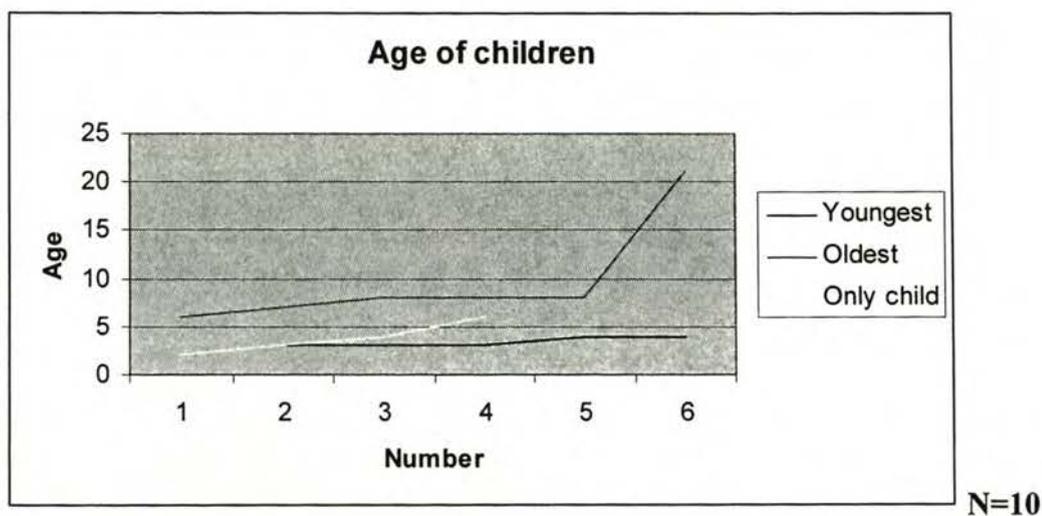


FIGURE 4.1: AGES OF CHILDREN

The graph shows that the ages of the youngest children vary from two to four years, the ages of the oldest children vary from six to twenty-one years and the ages of only children vary from two to six years. Based on the findings about the ages of the respondents themselves (specific ages were given during the interviews) and the ages of the respondents' children, more than half of the respondents were 20 years and younger when they had their first child and therefore these could be regarded as teenage pregnancies. Teenage pregnancies hold negative consequences for the mother and the community. First, they are a threat to a society's economic well-being and secondly, they have a negative effect on family sustainability (Howes & Green, 1996:1). It can thus be concluded that these single mothers started experiencing problems from the day their babies were born.

4.3.1.4 Respondents' highest qualifications

Some studies (Gerdes *et al.*,1996:82) concluded that higher educational levels of parents were associated with greater parent involvement. However, studies done by Jackson (1994:36) found that it had no influence at all. Figure 4.2 illustrates the highest qualifications of the respondents in this study:

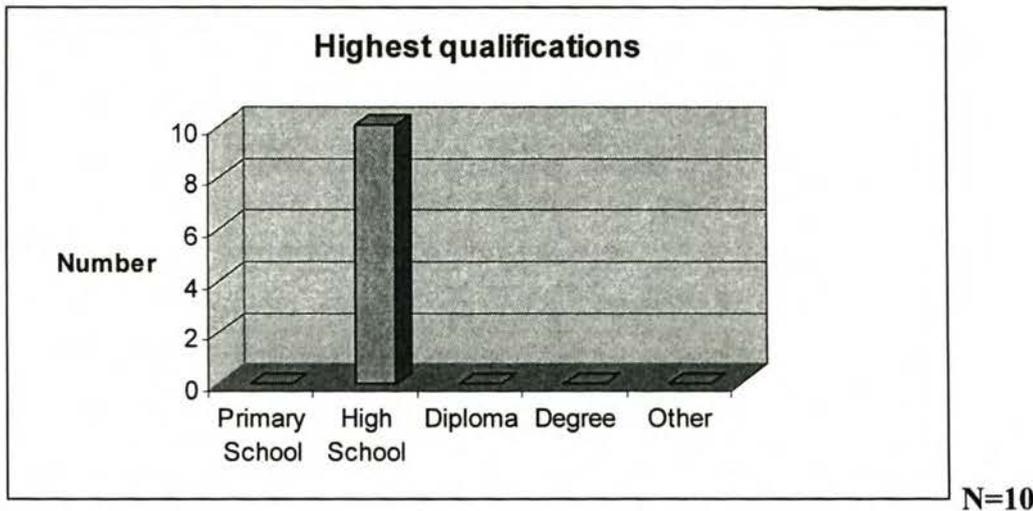


FIGURE 4.2: RESPONDENTS' HIGHEST QUALIFICATIONS

From the figure above it can be seen that most (nine) of the respondents' highest qualification was high school, although only one respondent had finished high school. Respondent 4 gave the following reason for having completed her high school career:

“Yes I passed the standard eight and then left school because of financial problems.”

It thus seems that the respondents did not always have a choice when it came to obtaining the highest possible school qualifications. They subsequently have to cope with being a single parent despite having finished only a part of high school.

4.3.1.5 Employment status of respondents

For most single mothers it is important to work, because they are often regarded as the breadwinners. The single mother is often forced to seek employment after a separation. Table 4.3 illustrates of the employment status of single mothers in this study:

TABEL 4.3: EMPLOYMENT STATUS

STATUS	f	%
Employed	0	0
Unemployed	10	100
Total	10	100

N=10

Table 4.3 indicates that all the respondents were unemployed. It must however be noted that one respondent was a volunteer at a welfare organization. Esterhuyzen and Esterhuyzen (1989:6) and Arosi (1992:20) mentioned that the single mother could expect to experience financial difficulties due to not being able to find adequate employment. Another economic consequence of single parenthood was the shift to becoming the primary wage earner of the family. Respondent 4 told of her worries at being the sole bread winner and not being employed:

“Yes, because I am the bread winner at home. So my house was belonging to my mother, so now it belongs to me. So how must I pay the rates for the house?!”

It must also be mentioned that the higher the level of education the single mother the more she can insist on better pay. This also corresponds with Jackson’s (1994:36-39) finding that children were better off when their working mothers were more highly educated even though it means more roles for the mother. Jackson and Huang (2000:31) supported the argument that working mothers had a more positive effect on family life, for their study found that mothers experiencing economic hardship and, in particular, poor black mothers who were unemployed, were more likely than others to be punitive and harsh toward their children. Corresponding Table 4.3 and Figure 4.2, it did not seem likely that the respondents could insist on a better paying job, because of their level of education and because they were unemployed at the time.

4.3.1.6 Monthly income

As the single mother is the sole bread winner of her family, her monthly income is of great importance. Figure 4.3 gives an estimate of the monthly income of the single mothers:

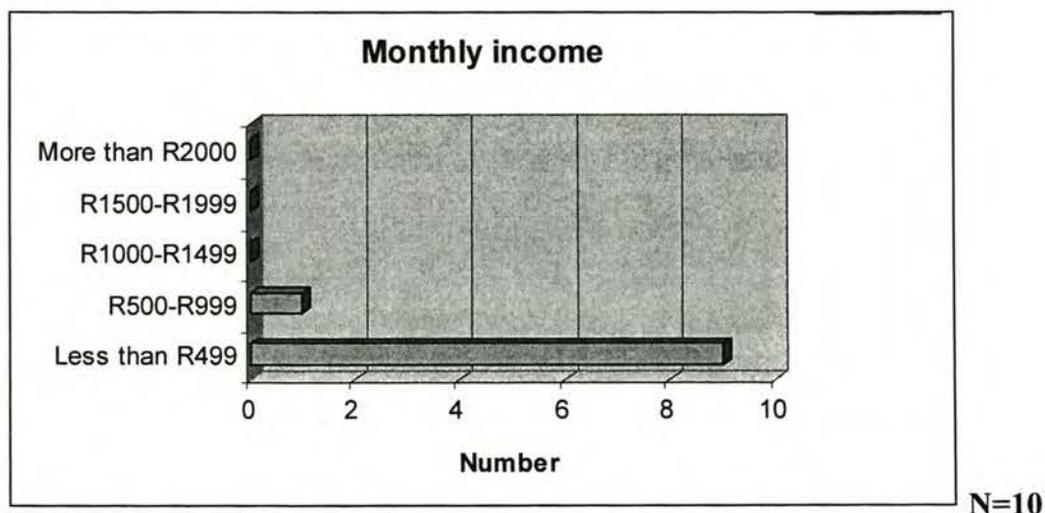


FIGURE 4.3: MONTHLY INCOME OF RESPONDENTS

As can be seen from Figure 4.3 above, nine (90%) of the mothers earn less than R499 per month, because they receive only R160 monthly, being the social security grant. The one single mother that falls in the R500 to R999 bracket gets support from her mother who has an income of R780 from a disability grant. When asked if this was sufficient for them and their families to live on, some of the single mothers gave the following responses:

Respondent 5: "It is not enough. The uniform, clothing."

Respondent 6: "Cause that money is R160 I have to pay the fees. Yes the crèche. I have to buy her food...And clothes. So it is not enough."

Respondent 7: "It is not enough, but I can't do otherwise."

It is therefore clear that these single mothers are not coping with their financial situations due to the fact that their income is insufficient to cover the families' need for food and clothing.

4.3.2 Issues faced by single-parent families

It was explained to the respondents that, being single mothers they could encounter some unresolved issues in their lives. Four issues were described and they had to say whether they currently were dealing with any or all of these issues. Table 4.4 illustrates the issues faced by single mothers.

TABLE 4.4: ISSUES FACED BY SINGLE PARENTS

ISSUES	YES	NO	f
Lack of concrete resources	10	0	10
Unresolved family of origin emotional issues	5	5	10
Unresolved divorce/separation issues	10	0	10
The effect of single parenthood on the relationship with children and the functioning of the family	1	9	10

N=10

The findings of the issues faced by the single mothers reflect the following:

- **Lack of concrete resources**

A concrete resource was explained to the respondents as being, for example, food, housing or clothes. All ten of the respondents said they had problems with these, especially because they did not have money due to unemployment. These findings correlate with Jung's (1996: 585-588) study that pointed out that single mothers' incomes seem to decrease because of their reduced earning power as a result of under-or unemployment. Here follow some of the respondents' comments about their lack of concrete resources:

Respondent 2: "Yes, we do have problems, to pay for the water, to pay for the rent."

Respondent 3: "No money."

Respondent 5: "You know that 160 [child support grant] is not enough for the

food and also the clothing and you must pay the school fees for the crèche...”.

From the above it can be concluded that these single mothers lack the concrete resources mainly because they do not have sufficient income to cover the costs of daily living and not because they feel that the absence of one parent leaves a vacuum, as stated by Oakley (1992: 21-43).

- **Unresolved family of origin emotional issues**

Half of the respondents said that they had unresolved issues relating to their family of origin, and made the following statements:

Respondent 1: “Because she [the respondent’s mother] is not working. She gets money from disability. She don’t have money, she don’t have enough money. So she asks me why you have two children. You are not working.”

Respondent 5: “Yes they were very angry because... because I am not working and even with the first one I am dependent on my mother. So with the second one they were very angry.”

Respondent 10 who did not have issues regarding her family of origin made the following statement:

“No, because my mother was so supportive.”

These findings should be interpreted in light of a statement by Jung (1996:585-588), that unresolved family of origin emotional issues could be an extra source of stress to the single mother, for she could not turn to them for emotional or functional support. Women who have good relationships with extended families find their transition to single motherhood much easier. It is therefore important for single mothers to strengthen their relationship with their families in order to get extra support when needed. They should also realise as stated by Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1998:9) that no such thing as problem-free families exists.

- **Unresolved divorce/separation issues**

All ten of the mothers in the sample group said they had separation issues (only separation issues, because none of the respondents has ever been married, as will be seen in the next section). According to Paterson (2001:62) aspects like custody have to be sorted out and the relationship between the partners plays an important role for the transition to proceed as smoothly as possible. Here are some of the responses to the question of separation:

Respondent 1: “Yes. He doesn’t give money for maintaining the children.”

Respondent 2: “He comes and goes. When I had my first one he did not have a job ... Then I did not see him, for about two years. Then with the second baby he had a job but he could not support me for he had own family.”

Respondent 4: “Oh, it was not a stable relationship.”

Respondent 9: “When I was pregnant, we don’t have a good relationship.”

As the statements indicate these single mothers were deserted by the fathers of their children and thus have been left solely in charge of the children. Their tasks as parents were being made even more difficult because they were not employed. It was also impossible for these single mothers to apply for some kind of maintenance because they did not have regular contact with the fathers of their children.

- **The effect of single parenthood on the relationship between the mother and children and the functioning of the family**

For the single mother it is important to have a stable relationship with her children and to ensure that the family function well together. This would eliminate unnecessary stress in the family environment. In this study only one single mother said she had problems managing her children. The statement respondent 7 made was as follows:

“If you can see when I am angry with them, sometimes they hide.

Afterwards, I realize it is not them it is me....sometimes you can’t

take it, you are not working, it is just hard.”

From this respondent’s response it is clear that the stress of being a single mother was causing problems within her family. The other respondents seemed to cope well with their children, although they had other problems. This correlates with Jung’s (1996: 585-588) findings that many families, particularly low-income and traditional families, function successfully when older children are used to assist with caretaking and household responsibilities. In none of the interviews was it sensed that any of the respondents were placing too much responsibility on their children or forming a co-dependent relationship with one of the children as, according to Paterson (2001:118), can happen in some single-parent households. Thus even when there are difficulties in the single mother’s life the support from her children and the positive functioning of the family can be a source of great strength to her.

4.3.3 Nature of single-parenthood

For this study it is important to realize why these mothers are single, and for how long they have been single. The findings will be discussed below:

- **Reasons for being single**

During the interviews the respondents were asked why they were single mothers.

Figure 4.4 gives an illustration of the answers:

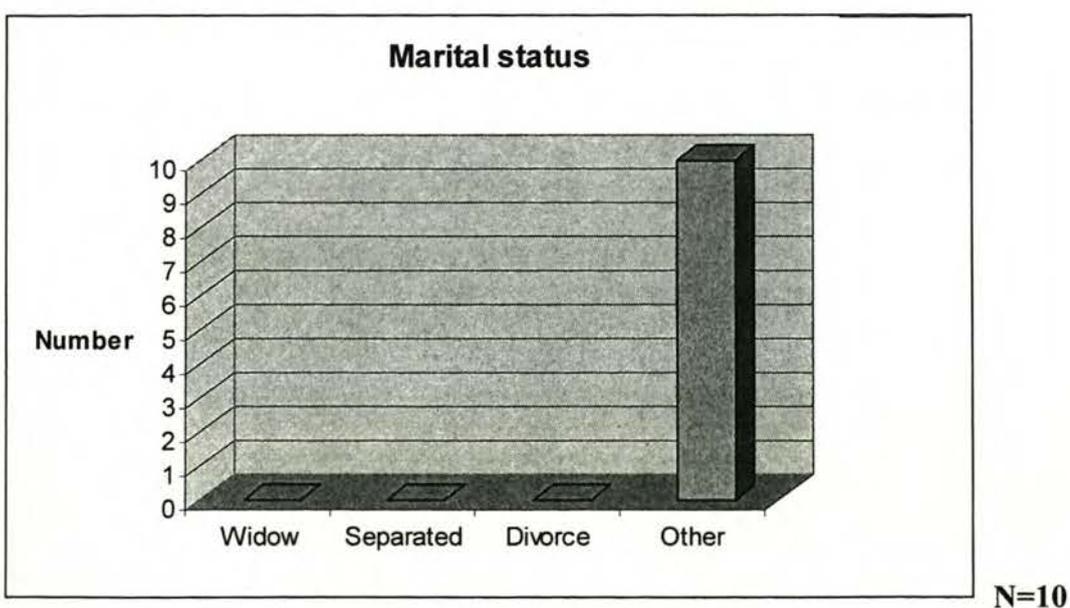


FIGURE 4.4: MARITAL STATUS

All the respondents stated that they have never been married, one of the reasons being the following:

Respondent 4: “No, we had the intention of getting married, cause I had the two kids from him. ...so we were not married cause he wanted to be on his own... .”

Research (Goldenberg and Goldenberg, 1998:3) showed that some women were single mothers by choice. All the respondents in this study however would have preferred to be married and were not single mothers by choice. They never got married because circumstances in their relationships at the time of them becoming pregnant were not favourable.

- **Duration of single motherhood**

The respondents involved in this study have never married, and have therefore been single mothers since the day their first child was born. This was also when most of their problems started, for they had no work and were ill prepared for the demands of single parenthood. Figure 4.5 illustrates how long these women have been single mothers; it then also correlates with Figure 4.1 which reflects the ages of the children.

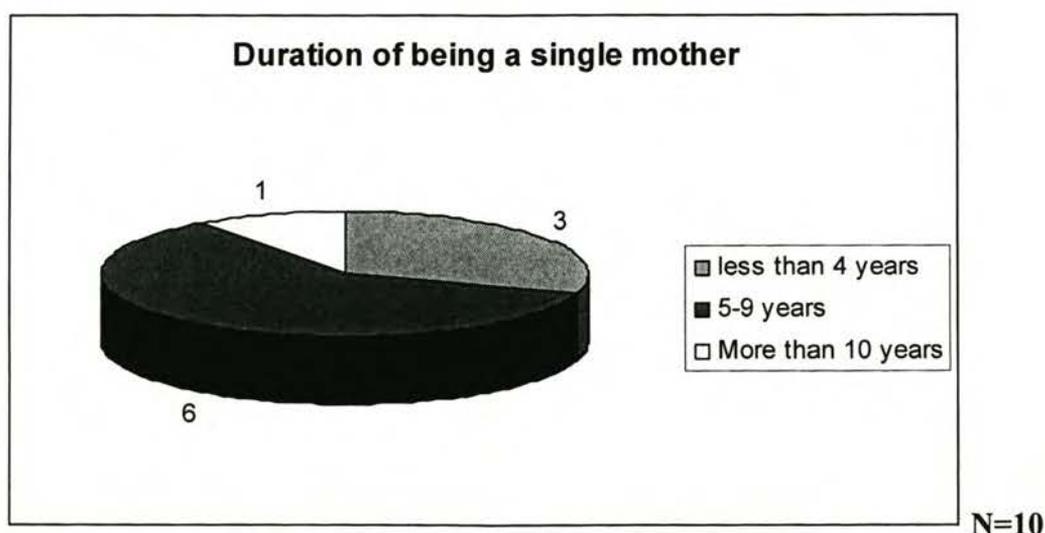


FIGURE 4.5: DURATION OF BEING A SINGLE MOTHER

Figure 4.5 shows that three of the respondents have been single mothers for less

that four years, six respondents have been single mothers between five and nine years and one respondent has been a single mother for more than 10 years.

4.3.4 Changes experienced

When becoming a single mother it is reasonable to expect that one's life will undergo certain changes. These changes will however be made more bearable if the single mother has a strong social support network. Most of the mothers in this study did not have a strong social support network. In this section consideration will be given to the emotional and functional changes women could experience when becoming a single mother, and whether the respondents were affected by these changes. Table 4.5 illustrates the number of single mothers affected and those not affected.

TABLE 4.5: CHANGES EXPERIENCED

CHANGES	YES	NO	f
Emotional			
Anxiety, depression and health problems	3	7	10
Fears for the emotional and physical safety of self and child	8	2	10
Loss of friends and sources of adult support	4	6	10
Changes in self-image	9	1	10
Functional			
Sexual behaviour adaptation	8	2	10
Changes in everyday lifestyle	9	1	10
Discipline of children	3	7	10
Handling of loss of privacy and time	10	0	10
Work and finances	7	3	10
Day care and/or school	1	9	10
Labour around the house	1	9	10
Time management	7	3	10
Housing	4	6	10

N=10

The findings in Table 4.5 will be discussed below:

4.3.4.1 Emotional changes

De Kock (1993:65) mentioned in her study that single mothers underwent such emotional changes as trying to cope with depression and low self-image. Below is a list of changes the respondents experienced, reflected in Table 4.5.

- **Anxiety, depression and health problems**

Only three (30%) of the respondents suffered from anxiety, depression and health problems. Below are some of their comments:

Respondent 4: “Yes I had changes because I remember one time I go to the doctor because I always have the headache so I went to the doctor to check maybe and she told me my blood pressure is a bit high and what he observed ... he told me it seems as if I am so stressful.”

Respondent 5: “Yes, my first child the father of my child says it is not his child.”

Respondent 7: It [depression] changes a lot, a lot.”

It can thus be concluded that being a single mother can have a negative effect on mental and physical health.

McLoyd and Wilson (1991:126) and Arosi (1992:21) found in their studies that single motherhood was a salient risk factor for psychological distress. Anxiety, depression and health problems were more prevalent among single mothers than in other marital status groups due to isolation and loneliness. And these difficulties were intensified if they were poor and lived on their own. The responses of the seven (70%) single mothers in this study who had no psychological or health problems, however, disproved this theory. So even though these single mothers encounter difficulties in their everyday lives, they seem to cope on the emotional and physical level.

- **Fears for the emotional and physical safety of self and the child**

As can be seen from Table 4.5, eight (80%) of the respondents said that they were worried about the emotional and physical safety of themselves and the child. Most of these fears were however not related to living in Guguletu, but were mainly emotional fears linked to the fact that they did not have enough money. These fears were expressed as follows:

Respondent 2: “Because I don’t have money, my baby he always want to go to school... .”

Respondent 4: “Yes because she [friend] can’t go one giving me money for the bread. Then sometimes I don’t manage to bring it back and then the other time I am shy to go to her. Like Sunday it was so rainy, I was just up and down worried about what I am going to eat.”

Respondent 6: “If maybe he got hit by a car.”

Respondent 7: “Like when I am angry. Sometimes they need something I do not have the thing. Sometimes I need something from me then I don’t have it. Sometimes they force me,...Mommy at school we need this...she keeps on saying Ma and I will become angry.”

The different fears expressed above correspond with Patersons’ (2001:75) statement that women’s experiences [fears] of being single were as different as they themselves were. It can be concluded that the respondents did have certain fears concerning themselves and their families. It is therefore important for single mothers to address these fears before they lead to feelings of panic and impending danger for themselves and their families.

- **Loss of friends and sources of adult support**

When asked if they had lost any friends or adult support when they became single mothers, only four (40%) said yes. Two respondents who answered yes to this question said the following:

Respondent 1: “I lose my friend, because I lose my boyfriend.”

Respondent 8: “I could not talk to my parents, they just chase me away. They told me to stay on my own. I stay in the back with my children now.”

Respondent 7 even said that she had experienced no change in friendships because she never had any friends, even before she got pregnant. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1998:151) and De Kock (1993:57) both emphasised the importance of friends and adult support to the single mother. The loss of friends occurred because of the stigma and because they did not have time to socialise. (None of the respondents in this study gave this as a reason for losing their friends.) The loss of friends is not a positive sign for the single mother, for Arosi (1992:23) the importance of female friends to single mothers in that they were not only a source of adult support, conversation and humour, but also provided hope and practical help and advice. It is thus unfortunate that more than half of the respondents indicated that they had no friends or adult support, as this would lead to even greater stress in times when they really need it.

- **Changes in self-image**

Table 4.5 indicates only one respondent saying that her self-image had not changed since becoming a single mother. Some of the respondents had the following to say about the change in self-image:

Respondent 3: “I want a job.”

Respondent 5: “It is wrong to get children at my age, two children... it is not right.”

Respondent 6: “Like my self-image? Yes because the things that I did then for I don’t do it. Even I go to a party... .”

Respondent 7: “It changed because you are not yourself. You sometimes lose hope, because you are pregnant now, you have many childrens now. You change man, you change. You are alone everything is hopeless.”

The reasons given by Arosi (1992:25) as to why a single mother might undergo a change in self-image are twofold: not being able to make her marriage work, and

feeling guilty for struggling with parenting responsibilities. Only the latter reason is applicable to respondents in this study, as they have never been married.

4.3.4.2 Functional changes

De Kock (1993:65) identified functional changes the single mother had to face like sexual behaviour adaptation, changes in lifestyle and in housing. In this section the findings about these changes will be discussed:

- **Sexual behaviour adaptation**

Many of the respondents in the study had a problem with this question, and it is possible that the findings were not a true representation. Eight (80%) respondents said that they had experienced changes in their sexual behaviour, but did not really want to give reasons about how and why. However this is what three had to say:

Respondent 1: “Especially now I don’t have a boyfriend now.”

Respondent 7: “Ja, because I don’t have any feelings for men [now].”

Respondent 9: “My boyfriend leaves, and at the same times I don’t want a boyfriends inside of me.”

Even though these women have never been married, the loss of their partners had been traumatic and had caused frustration. The findings correlate with those of De Kock (1993:58) who stated that single mothers could become frustrated about not having sexual relations. The respondents who had experienced changes in their sexual behaviour, did not indicate that they were at the time interested in having sexual relations with anyone. The reason for this could be fear of falling pregnant and that they would just end up being hurt again.

- **Changes in everyday lifestyle**

Only one respondent said that her everyday lifestyle had not changed. According to Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1998:33) it is important for an ongoing living system, such as a family, to be able to tolerate change. Although none of these women experienced pregnancy as a negative experience, they could still feel the changes in their lives. Below are some of their comments, this regard:

Respondent 1: “Like now I, if I need something like even now I don’t have shoes, if I need something I’m just thinking of my baby, he don’t have shoes why I buy shoes for me... .”

Respondent 7: “There is the mood sometimes what you don’t get when you are not pregnant.”

Respondent 8: “ I don’t go to parties, nothing.”

It is obvious that the changes felt by most of the respondents are related to their pregnancy and responsibilities as a parent as well as not being able to do what they want anymore.

- **Disciplining of children**

Because these women were never married, they always had to handle the disciplining of children on their own. According to Table 4.5, three (30%) said they did experience change. Respondent 1’s reason was:

“I have problems with this child because he is still young.”

It can be concluded that the problem of disciplining could correlate with the age of the child.

Because we still live in a patriarchal society the disciplining of children was mostly lodged with the fathers. The respondents however always had to do it on their own, and the only changes they have experienced related to the age of the child(ren). How these mothers discipline their children is important, seeing that it could have an influence on the child later in life, as proved in a study by Vissing, Straus, Gelles and Harrop (1991).

- **Handling of loss of privacy and time**

As can be seen in Table 4.5 all ten of the respondents felt that they have lost their privacy and time when they became single mothers. Below are some of the statements they made in this regard:

Respondent 2: “Yes I loss time, cause I can’t go with friends.”

Respondent 6: “Like when I was not pregnant, so after I...you know that parts maybe. You see I am a private person, you coming you have a child so everybody knows that.”

The handling of loss of privacy and time as reflected in the statements of the respondents is the opposite of what Esterhuyzen and Esterhuyzen (1989:18-19) found, namely that this mainly happened because of divorce. These respondents have never been married; they mostly felt that they lacked time to have a good time with friends.

- **Work and finances**

From the interviews it became clear that most of these women did not even have jobs before they got pregnant. Still seven (70%) did state that changes had occurred in either work-related or financial circumstances. The following statements were made by them in this regard:

Respondent 4: “I have to pay the school fees for her, R150 when I have because we pay this year for next year. Like now I was supposed to pay the school fees, but I have not pay yet because I have no money. How am I going to pay? I just wish I can have a job.”

Respondent 5: “[Struggle] Not so much as now.”

Respondent 7: “No, because I was working.”

Respondent 10: “Ja, because I use to do some private jobs.”

These single mothers’ financial struggle corresponds with the findings of Esterhuyzen and Esterhuyzen (1989:6) and Arosis (1992:20) that single mothers could expect to experience financial difficulties. The single mothers in this study all showed a desire for employment, but because they did not have a good support system to help look after the children while they went out to look for work, for example, they were still without work. This is unfortunate, for Jackson and Huang (2000:31) found that working mothers had a more positive effect on family life.

- **Day care and/or school**

Table 4.5 illustrates that nine (90%) of the single mothers had not experience changes in school or day care. The reason for this is that all the separations that took place were either before the child was born or before the child was sent off to school. Respondent 8 said yes for she had to send her child to the Transkei to the child's father, for she could not support her. Whittaker and Garbarino (1983:194) stated that different parents seemed to express differing degrees of satisfaction with different types of care. For these mothers that option did not exist, for they had to take the cheapest option available to them. For the respondents looking for work day care centres were very important, for it gave them time during the day to go and look for work.

- **Labour around the house**

Table 4.5 indicates that the single mothers had not experienced any changes concerning labour around the house, due to the fact that they had not moved away and had always been single mothers. Respondent 7 who said she had had changes in this regard was living with her boyfriend when she got pregnant and had to move in with her grandmother when she fell pregnant.

The literature study did not give any information on single mothers in correlation to labour around the house. Authors like Kissman (1991:25) and Paterson (2001:137-138) had not taken this into consideration when they stated that it was important for the single mother to realize that she did not need to do everything. In this study it was therefore not possible to establish whether changes relating to labour around the house had a negative effect on single motherhood or not.

- **Time management**

Seven (70%) of the respondents said that they had experienced a change in time management since becoming a single mother. Below are some of their responses in this regard:

Respondent 2: "Yes I struggle cause I have to look for...baby."

Respondent 8: "Yes I spent a lot of time with him... ."

Although these women did not have work they did however have enough time for their children as was stated by respondent 4:

“When they come from school I am there...I am free at home.”

These findings are similar to those by Paterson (2001:102) who did not say anything about single mothers not working, but mentioned that their time management had changed since becoming parents.

- **Housing**

According to Table 4.5, four (40%) respondents stated that there had been a change in their housing. One of the respondents was living with her boyfriend and the other one had moved from her parent's house to a shack in the backyard. Although most of these single mothers still lived with their families they mentioned a desire to live on their own, but because of financial difficulty and for the safety of themselves and their children they realised that it was not possible. This corresponds with Mulroy (1990:542) who found that the prime concern for a single mother and her family is probably adequate housing.

4.3.5 Social support networks

Single mothers need social support outside the home seeing that they struggle to find it inside their homes. The respondents in this study were fortunate in this regard for most stayed with their families. But even this was not enough, for as seen in Table 4.6 not even family always provided great support. In this section the different support systems will be examined, as well as how the respondents rated the support they received.

TABLE 4.6: SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS

SYSTEMS	NO SUPPORT=1	LITTLE SUPPORT=2	SUFFICIENT SUPPORT=3	f
Family	2	7	1	10
Other family	7	3	0	10
School	10	0	0	10
Day care	6	3	1	10
Work	9	0	1	10
Organisations	8	1	1	10
Friends	6	2	2	10
Formal services	8	2	0	10

N=10

The findings of Table 4.6 are discussed below:

- **Family**

Table 4.6 illustrates that although immediate family gives support it is only a little. Also most of the support the single mothers received was concrete and not emotional. Below are some of the statements of the respondents regarding family:

Respondent 1: “She [mother] gives me money just to buy food.”

Respondent 5: “Why I say two, I only get support from my mother, because my mother is the bread winner of the house. She is only one working looking after our kids.”

Respondent 6: “She [mother] only works two days a week... .”

From the above it is clear that most of the respondents saw support and their need for support from family only in terms of the money they received from family members. It was also mostly the grandmothers who gave the support. This is the opposite of Chinkanda’s (1994:190) viewpoint who saw emotional support as the prime support single mothers wanted from their families. None of the respondents named the father of their children as providing any support. This finding is in

contrast with a study by Arosi (1992: 23) who found that most single mothers still viewed the other parent as a most valuable supportive figure. So even if the single mother lived with her family in the house, it was no guarantee that they would act as an efficient social support system.

- **Other family**

The reason that seven (70%) of the respondents said they received no support from other family, was because there was no family. Another reason was that other family members could not help them because they had problems of their own, like unemployment. This correlated with the findings of Chinkanda's (1994:185) study that not all families could provide support for their members, and McDade (1997:71-72) who stated that single mothers were not always able to access this support. Here are the statements of the three respondents who did receive a little support from the family:

Respondent 3: "Like money. Ja, for buying food."

Respondent 5: "Yes but not so much money."

Respondent 10: "He [brother] mostly give to the child. When I want something for the child."

It can be concluded from the statements above that the support the single mothers relied on was more concrete than emotional, but that not even the concrete support was always sufficient.

- **School**

All of the respondents said that they received no support from the school. This is the opposite of Chinkanda's (1994:193-196) experience that the school helped the single mother in socialising the children, developing a positive self-image and empowering the child. Below is the statement of respondent 1 regarding her child's school:

"...because, if I go to the school nè, the problem is in the multi racial school, so when I go there nè, the principal, the secretary

nè, if I said I don't have money, like for instance the example nè, my child losted his pair of shoes, so I said go to school, barefoot, and then they phone to me and they ask me why you send the child without his shoes? I said I don't have the money to buy the shoes because ...and then he said you are supposed to keep the child at home...".

For the single mother it is important that her child(ren) go to school, for some of the responsibility is taken of her shoulders when it comes to caretaking. The main problem these respondents had was keeping their children in school due to financial difficulties. In the literature that was studied, this problem was not discussed.

- **Day care**

The respondents got more support from day care, mainly because the crèche provided two meals a day. Still they had the financial problem of keeping the child there, and were very dependent on the monthly child support grant. The respondents also relied on concrete rather than emotional support from the crèche. The study by Chinkanda (1994:193-196) did not discuss the type of support at the day care or school, but more on the roles they provided for the child like socialisation and empowerment.

- **Work**

Seeing that none of the respondents were employed at the time of the study, support from the workplace was not a factor. Authors like Kissman (1995:151) paid no attention to single mothers that were unemployed, but only mentioned that they were at risk of losing their work if a child became sick. The one respondent who indicated sufficient support (3) was referring to her job as a volunteer. All the respondents did however voice their desire to have a paying job.

- **Organisations**

Organizations were explained to the respondents as being a community organization, clubs or church that could provide support to them. As can be seen in Table 4.6 eight (80%) said they got no support from any sort of organization.

Respondent 1, who belonged to an HIV support group, declared that she received great emotional support from them. Respondent 2 belonged to a social club, consisting of friends who go dancing on occasion. Both respondents said that the organisations offered a lot of help to them. These findings correlate with those of Maguire (1991) who stated that belonging to an organization could be a great release of stress for the single mother. It is therefore unfortunate that only two of the ten respondents belonged to an organization, seeing that at least one type of organization will be functioning in their community.

- **Friends**

According to table 4.6, two (20%) respondents mentioned sufficient support (3) for support from friends, two (20%) respondents noted little support (2) from friends and six (60%) respondents received no support (1) from friends. These findings contrasted with those of Maguire (1994:100) and Bacon (in Henderson *et al.*, 1981:11) who stated that friends gave sufficient emotional and concrete support. Below follow four statements of the respondents concerning friends:

Respondent 2: "Both [concrete and emotional], ja."

Respondent 4: "Yes very little support [concrete]. I can do that [borrow] once, but it is difficult."

Respondent 5: "From the one friend I get [emotional and concrete] it."

Respondent 7: "No. I don't have friends."

It can be concluded then, that for these single mothers their friends (when they had any) are not a great source of support to them. It is also in contradiction to Tracy and Whittaker (1990) who identified friends as a social support system.

- **Formal services**

Formal services were explained to the respondents as being a social welfare society, clinics or a doctor, for example. Eight (80%) respondents said that they received no support from formal services, and the two respondents that mentioned little support (2) were thinking of the child support grant. The others considered formal services as no support (1). Below follow statements about formal services:

Respondent 4: “No, they [Child Welfare] only deal with the problems in children, like orphaned children who’s parents died because of AIDS...they only deal with children. If maybe my sisters’ kids stay with me I can get the foster money...”.

Respondent 7: “No, I don’t go there. Sometimes I need to go, but where must go?”

Respondent 8: “Only the grant”.

Tracy and Whittaker (1990:461) did not mention anything about single mothers not using formal services, only that it was important that they did. Kissman (1995:152) however did state that practitioners needed to advocate for policies and welfare programmes which would empower families to cope with the problems that could arise with single parenthood. It can thus be concluded that formal services did not offer sufficient support to the single mother.

4.4 CONCLUSION

During the empirical study it became clear how important it was to conduct the study through interviews, for if only questionnaires were used valuable personal information about being a single mother would have been lost.

In the study none of the respondents had ever been married, were unemployed and had one to three children. Their monthly income consisted of only R160 from the child support grant. This is of great need for concern, seeing that no family can live on R160 per month.

It was however positive that 90% of the single mothers mentioned no issues concerning their relationship with their children. Most issues stemmed from their lack of money, family and ex partners who did not support them financially and emotionally.

All the respondents agreed that their lives had changed since having their babies. But from the empirical study they seemed to be struggling with functional changes rather than emotional changes.

Knowledge on how to use social support networks efficiently was not evident in the study, and is a matter of concern. The greatest need of these respondents was for another source of income.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to present guidelines for social workers to empower single mothers who need social support networks to fulfil their roles as parents. The aim was achieved because the objective which required a description of the nature and demands of single parenthood was covered. The second objective requiring an explanation of what social support networks entail, with an emphasis on social support networks for single mothers and the support that single mothers receive in Guguletu was also covered. This was done by means of a literature study and empirical study. Conclusions will now be drawn which can be used to formulate guidelines for social work regarding how social support networks can be used by single mothers.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

In terms of the findings of this research, the following conclusions can be drawn:

5.2.1 Identifying personal information

The respondents consisted of ten single mothers in the Guguletu area. Respondents' ages ranged from early twenties to late forties. The ages of the respondents' children ranged from two years to twenty-one years, of which the maximum number of children per single mother was three. Only one of the respondents had finished high school, and they were all unemployed at the time the interviews were done. Nine of the single mothers received an income of only R160 per month from the child support grant.

From the above it can thus be concluded that these single mothers were unable to find viable employment for they did not have sufficient education. Also, they could not

provide sufficiently for their children, because they were unemployed and the whole family had to live on R160 per month.

5.2.2 Issues faced by single-parent families

Issues faced by single mothers were investigated, these issues ranging from lack of concrete resources, unresolved family of origin emotional issues, unresolved separation or divorce issues, to the effects of single parenthood on the relationship between the mother and children and the functioning of the family. All ten of the respondent claimed a lack of concrete resources. The reason for this however was because they were unemployed and were not able to buy food and clothes for their families. Only half of the respondents said that they had unresolved emotional family issues, mostly because their families were upset with them for falling pregnant when they had no work. All ten of the respondents admitted to having unresolved separation issues. The biggest problem they had with the fathers of their children was that the fathers did not help financially with the cost of raising the children. Nine of the single mothers said that the fact that they were single mothers had no negative effect on the relationships they have with their children or the functioning of their family.

From the above it can be concluded that issues regarding single parenthood are compounded for the single mother, and that these put strain on the role of the single mother.

5.2.3 The nature of single parenthood

All ten respondents had never been married, and thus had been single mothers from the day their children were born. This period from two to twenty-one years.

It can be concluded that these single mothers never had the chance to experience what it would have been like to have had the support of a partner when raising children. The sole responsibility for parenthood had always lain with the mother.

5.2.4 Emotional and functional changes experienced

Based on the findings of the study it can be concluded that single mothers experienced emotional and functional changes. It is however important to realize that these changes were due to them becoming pregnant and not because of separation. The conclusions pertaining these changes will be discussed below.

5.2.4.1 Emotional changes

- **Anxiety, depression and health problems**

Only three of the respondents said that they had problems with anxiety, depression or health. This could be that they found joy in their children even though they experienced hardship most of the time. The conclusion is therefore that single motherhood did not affect mental or physical health.

- **Fear for the emotional and physical safety of self and the child**

More than half of the respondents said that they experienced fear. It can be concluded that this was due to the fact that they were unemployed and did not have sufficient income, rather than emotional or physical fears.

- **Loss of friends and adult support**

Less than half of the respondents experienced changes in the support they received from friends or other adults. The reason most of them did not experience any changes was because they did not have friends even before they got married. It can thus be concluded that little change in the loss of friends and adult support could take place, because of lack of adult support even before the respondents became single mothers.

- **Changes in self-image**

Most of the respondents said that changes in their self-image took place when they became single mothers. Most of these changes were negative. It can thus be concluded that becoming a single mother did generally have a negative influence on self-image.

5.2.4.2 Functional changes

- **Sexual behaviour adaptation**

The majority of the ten respondents stated that there had been a change in sexual behaviour since becoming a single mother, mostly due to the fact that during

pregnancy the fathers of the children left them. The conclusion is that sexual behaviour does change when becoming a single mother. Because the respondents had trouble responding to this question, it is possible that the conclusion might be incorrect.

- **Changes in everyday life style**

Most of the respondents stated that their everyday lifestyle did change when becoming pregnant. Thus it can be concluded that single motherhood does have an influence on everyday life style.

- **Discipline of children**

Only a few of the respondents claimed that they had experienced changes with the disciplining of their children. It can be concluded that the reason why more than half of the respondents experienced no change was because they always had to do the disciplining themselves.

- **Handling of loss of privacy and time**

All the respondents stated that change had taken place regarding the loss of privacy and time, but more in relation to time because they could not do what they wanted any more since becoming pregnant. The conclusion thus is that falling pregnant causes a change in the handling of time.

- **Work and finances**

Most of the respondents' said that negative change had taken place in their financial situation since becoming single mothers. Work related change however, did not take place work related though seeing that they did not have work before they fell pregnant. It can be concluded that becoming a single mother has a negative influence on financial circumstances.

- **Day care and/or school**

Only one of the respondents had to arrange for the child to attend a different school when she had to send her to her father, for she could not support her and her brother any more. It can thus be concluded that being a single mother does not necessarily bring on change when it comes to school or day care.

- **Labour around the house**

The majority of the respondents said they did not experience change when it came to labour around the house. The reason for this was that they had never lived with the father of the child, but with their families where the male figures always

handled the labour around the house. It can be concluded that becoming a single mother does not cause change in this respect.

- **Time management**

The majority of the respondents experienced change when it came to time management, because they always had to take the child into consideration when it came to time management. The conclusion can thus be made that becoming a single mother will influence time management.

- **Housing**

Less than half of the respondents described a change in their housing situation. One reason was that they previously lived with their boyfriends and that they had to move from the house to the back yard. It can thus be concluded that although not significant, becoming a single mother has an influence on housing.

5.2.5 Social support networks

It was found during the study that the support systems of the single mother were almost non-existent, and where they did exist, offered minimal support. The conclusions regarding the nature of the social support systems of the single mother will be discussed below.

- **Family**

The single mothers did not receive sufficient support from their families, although they lived with them. The support that they did receive however was more concrete than emotional. It can thus be concluded that even if the single mother lives with her family it is not a guarantee that she would receive efficient functional or emotional support to cope with parenthood and everyday living experiences.

- **Other family**

Family members outside the family also supported the single mother more on a concrete basis than emotional. The conclusion is thus that extended family does not always act as a substantial resource of support for the single mother.

- **School or day care**

In the study it was evident that the single mother received more support from day care (crèche) than from the school. But even the support received from day care

was not enough. It can thus be concluded that single mothers do receive support from day care, although insufficient for everyday experiences.

- **Work**

Because none of the respondents were employed at the time the study was undertaken, no support was indicated from the workplace. The conclusion thus is that when single mothers are unemployed they cannot rely on support from the workplace and have no income from work.

- **Organizations**

Organizations were sub-divided into community organizations, clubs and the church. Only a few respondents indicated that they received emotional support from a community organization and a club. It can thus be concluded that generally, single mothers do not rely on organizations for support.

- **Friends**

More than half of the respondents stated that they received no support from friends, mostly because they had no friends. From the study it can be concluded that single mothers often get no support from friends mostly because they have no friends.

- **Formal services**

Most of the respondents said they received no support from formal services, which included social welfare agencies, the clinic and doctors. The conclusion is that although the majority of the respondents received the child support grant from social welfare, more than half still did not consider it as a substantial kind of financial support.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section contains recommendations based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the research.

5.3.1 The role of the social worker

It is recommended that the social worker should realize that the more sufficient the single mother's social support network, is the better parent she would become. To achieve this it is recommended that social workers should

take the following actions to enlarge the social support network of single mothers. But for this to happen the social worker will have to start by empowering these single mothers, by offering workshops for them to improve their self-esteem, and to enable them to utilize their social support systems.

- **Family and other family**

-The social worker will have to help the single mother to communicate with her family, in order for the family to understand that she needs emotional and concrete support from them.

- **School or day care**

-The social worker will need to help the single mother to communicate effectively with the school or day care, so that they can understand the single mother's circumstances. This way the school or day care can understand the single mothers situation and be more tolerable to her.

Work

-The social worker needs to help the single mother to acquire skills through free community projects, like tending vegetable gardens and doing needle work.

-The social worker will need to help the single mother to work out a monthly budget, so that the mother will be able to utilize her income efficiently.

- **Organizations**

-The social worker will need to establish which community organizations, clubs and churches exist in a community and then inform the single mother about them. In accordance with her special circumstances, the single mother can then decide which ones she wants to belong to.

- **Friends**

-The social worker will have to help the single mother find some kind of adult support outside the family. This can be done joining in projects and support groups.

- **Formal services**

-The social worker has to explain to the single mother how to get free legal aid through Legal Aid, for her to obtain some financial support from the father of her children.

-The social worker can also help the single mother apply for state support, for example for housing.

-The social worker will have to inform the single mother of the formal services available to single mothers in the community. This will help the single mother to get the professional help and support that she may need.

5.3.2 Areas for future research

It is recommended that the following five areas need more research:

- The reason single mothers leave school early (none of the respondents in the study gave pregnancy as a reason for leaving school early).
- Why single mothers end up never getting married, when it is not by choice.
- What happens to the family when the child reaches the age where he or she are not eligible for the child grant, and the unemployed single mother loses the only financial income of R160 per month.
- Investigate what measures single mothers take to find work, in order to help them find work efficiently.
- Why do women choose to become single mothers, when their financial circumstances are negative, and not opt for abortion or adoption.

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Annexure A

University of Stellenbosch

Department of Social Work

Enquiries: A. Nel

2003

THE SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORK OF SINGLE MOTHERS IN GUGULETU

DECLARATION OF THE RESPONDENT

A I confirm that:

1. I, the respondent was invited to take part in the above mentioned research project which is to be undertaken through the Department of Social Work of the University of Stellenbosch, directed by Ms A Nel.

2. It has been explained to me that:
 - 2.1 the goal of the study is to get an better understanding of the support networks single mothers use in order to be able to empower them.
 - 2.2 the procedure will take place in a semi-structured interview that will not exceed one hour.
 - 2.3 there will be nine other respondents taking part in this study.

3. I have been informed that the information that is gathered during the interview will be treated confidentially, but will be applied to the findings as contained in Chapter 4 of the Master's Thesis.

4. The information above has been given to me in the language (.....) of my choice.

B I herewith confirm that I participate voluntarily in the abovementioned study.

Signed.....on.....2003

.....
Signature of respondent

.....
Signature of witness

DECLARATION BY THE RESEARCHER

I, Annele Nel, declare that I:

- 1. Explained the information that is contained in this document to the respondent.
- 2. Encouraged her to pose questions on anything that is unclear
- 3. That this discussion was held in the language(.....)
of the respondent's choice, with the help of a translator
(.....).

Signedon.....2003

.....
Signature of researcher

.....
Signature of witness

Annexure B

University of Stellenbosch

Department of Social Work

Enquiries: A. Nel

2003

**THE SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORK OF SINGLE
MOTHERS IN GUGULETU****QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SINGLE MOTHERS****SECTION A. IDENTIFYING PERSONAL
INFORMATION**

Respondent:

1.1 Age :

Under 19		20-29		30-39		40-49		Over 50	
----------	--	-------	--	-------	--	-------	--	---------	--

1.2 Number of children:

1		2		3		4		5 or more	
---	--	---	--	---	--	---	--	-----------	--

1.3 Age of children:

Youngest	
Oldest	
Only child	

1.4 What are your highest qualifications?

Primary School	
High School	
Diploma	
Degree	
Other:	

1.5 Are you working/employed?

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

1.6 If answered yes, where do you work and what do you do?

.....

.....

.....

1.7 How does your working affect your single parenthood?

.....

.....

.....

1.8 What is your monthly income?

Less than R499	
R500-R999	
R1000-R1499	
R1500-R1999	
More than R2000	

1.9 How does your income meet the needs of your family?

.....

.....

.....

SECTION B. ISSUES FACED BY SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

2.1 Are any of the following issues applicable to you as a single parent? If yes, please explain?

2.1.1 Lack of concrete resources (e.g. food, accommodation):

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

.....

.....

.....

2.1.2 Unresolved family of origin emotional issues:

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

.....

.....

.....

2.1.3 Unresolved divorce/separation issues:

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

.....

.....

.....

2.1.4 The effect of single parenthood on the relationship you have with your children and the functioning of your family:

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

.....

.....

.....

SECTION C. NATURE OF SINGLE PARENTHOOD

3.1 Reason for being single:

Widow	
Separated	
Divorce	
Other:	

3.2. For how long have you been a single mother?

Less than 5 years	
5-9 years	
More than 10 years	

SECTION D. CHANGES EXPERIENCED

4.1 Did you experience any of the following, and if yes please explain how it is/was experienced:

4.1.1 Emotional:

4.1.1.1 Anxiety, depression and health problems:

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

.....

.....

.....

4.1.1.2 Fear for the emotional and physical safety of self and child:

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

.....

.....

.....

4.1.1.3 Loss of friends and sources of adult support:

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

.....

.....

.....

4.1.1.4 Changes in self-image:

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

.....

.....

.....

4.1.2 Functional:

4.1.2.1 Sexual behavior adaptation:

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

.....

.....

.....

4.1.2.2 Changes in everyday lifestyle:

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

.....

.....

.....

4.1.2.3 Discipline of children:

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

.....

.....

.....

4.1.2.4 Handling of loss of privacy and time:

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

.....

.....

.....

4.1.2.5 Work and finances:

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

.....

.....

.....

4.1.2.6 Day care and/or school:

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

.....

.....

.....

4.1.2.7 Labour around the house:

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

.....

.....

.....

4.1.2.8 Time management:

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

.....

.....

.....

4.1.2.9 Housing:

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

.....

.....

.....

SECTION E. SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS

5.1 Nature of support:

1= no support

2=little support

3=sufficient support

5.1.1

Support Network	Rating
Family	

Identify family member(s) and explain the support (e.g. concrete and/or emotional) they give:

.....

.....

.....

5.1.2

Support Network	Rating
Other family	

Identify other family member(s) and explain the support (e.g. concrete and/or emotional) they give:

.....

.....

.....

5.1.3

Support Network	Rating
School	
Day care	

Identify person(s) at school and/or day care and explain the support (e.g. concrete and/or emotional) they give:

.....

.....

.....

5.1.4

Support Network	Rating
Work	

Identify person(s) at work and explain the support (e.g. concrete and/or emotional) they give:

.....

.....

.....

5.1.5

Support Network	Rating
Organizations (i.e. community organizations, church and clubs)	

Identify organizations and explain the support (e.g. concrete and/or emotional) they give:

.....

.....

.....

5.1.6

Support Network	Rating
Friends	

Identify friends and explain the support (e.g. concrete and/or emotional) they give:

.....

.....

.....

5.1.7

Support Network	Rating
Formal services (i.e. social workers, clinic)	

Identify type of formal service and the support (e.g. concrete and/or emotional) they give:

.....

.....

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