

**A SELF HELP GROUP PROGRAMME
FOR SINGLE MOTHERS**

by

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE DEGREE MASTER OF ARTS IN CLINICAL

PSYCHOLOGY IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

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KWA-DLANGEZWA

JANUARY 1992

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the following individuals and institutions for their valued support in making this project possible :

- My supervisor, Professor S.D. Edwards, Head of the Department of Psychology, University of Zululand, for his invaluable encouragement, assistance and support throughout my study.
- The library staff at the University of Zululand for assisting in securing inter-library loans.
- All the research participants who made this project possible.
- Mrs D. Viljoen, who typed this manuscript.
- Most of all my gratitude goes to my family and friends, for their support and encouragement.

I hereby declare that this is my own work and all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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SIGNATURE:

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my son Lwazi Banguni for sacrificing his mother's love for all the years of my university education. My grandfather, Jackson Tinise who taught me the love of knowledge.

ABSTRACT

Single parenting is becoming much more common today for a variety of reasons. The single parent family is a result of divorce, desertion or separation, death or having a child illegitimately. Some women make this choice for politico-feminist reasons, wanting parenthood but being unwilling to cohabit with a man. It may well reflect a deep seated need to prove her independence.

The present study has been motivated by the fact that becoming a single parent is usually a traumatic process with much heated and confused emotion in relationships over and above the basic problem of just one adult figure having to cope with small children.

The aim of the study was to elicit from a group of single mothers their needs, to prioritize these needs, then form an on-going self-help group programme. It was hypothesized that a self-help group programme for single mothers would improve parental attitudes, parenting skills and interpersonal functioning. Parental attitudes, parenting skills and interpersonal functioning were assessed over three assessment periods, i.e. pretest, post test and follow up. The following psychological measures were used: Maternal child-rearing attitude scale, Parenting skills qualitative and quantitative ratings and Carkhuff scales for levels of interpersonal functioning.

The project consisted of meetings with the group of single mothers at weekly intervals over two months. The group meetings were videotaped for evaluation by independent judges, for levels of interpersonal functioning. A short written qualitative evaluation of the programme was required of the mothers.

After the programme was instituted there was no significant change in parental attitudes and parenting skills. One can assume that this group of single mothers had an extensive knowledge of child-rearing practices and parenting skills. This might be so because the group was composed of educated and professional mothers. At the same time one cannot conclude that educated and professional mothers have good parental attitudes and parenting skills because there is no available literature or research findings to support that conclusion.

Interpersonal functioning improved remarkably in terms of empathy, respect, genuineness and self-disclosure. The single mothers evaluated the programme as good and helpful to their children. They all wished that the programme could continue.

One of the limitations of the study was the fact that the sample was small. But the number met the requirements for a group. Another limitation was that the group only comprised of one category of single mothers, i.e. educated and professional mothers. Perhaps if the group has a mix of categories, i.e. lay mothers and teenage mothers, results yielded would show a significant change in child-rearing attitudes and parenting skills.

Single motherhood is very stressful. Single mothers find it difficult to cope with the role strain, isolation and loneliness. Even though some single mothers might be financially adequate they still need emotional support. Interpersonal functioning is improved if people with a similar problem are put in a group. Members recognize that they are not alone in having an emotional problem. The simple sharing of experiences is an important human need.

OPSOMMING

Vir 'n verskeidenheid van redes word enkel ouerskap deesdae al hoe meer algemeen. Dit volg na skeiding of egskeiding van die ouers, na dood van die man (of vrou) of na die geboorte van 'n buite egtelike kind. Sommige vroue maak 'n keuse vir politiko-feministiese redes; hulle verlang ouerskap maar is onwillig om met 'n man te kohabiteer. Dit kan ook 'n weerspieëling wees van 'n drang om haar onafhanklikheid te bewys.

Die huidige studie is gemotiveer deur die feit dat die ontstaan van enkel ouerskap gewoonlik 'n traumatiese proses is. Dit gaan gepaard met emosies in verhoudings wat vurig en deurmekaar is, asook met die basiese probleem dat daar net een ouer figuur is wat help met die grootmaak van kinders.

Die doel van die studie was om die behoeftes van 'n groep enkel ouer moeders te bepaal en dit volgens prioriteit te rangskik, en dan om 'n self-help groep program te vorm, en evalueer. Daar is gedink dat so 'n program houdinge jeens ouerskap, interpersoonlike funksionering en ouerlike vaardigheid sou beter. Houding jeens, ouerskap, ouerlike vaardigheid en vlakke van interpersoonlike funksionering, is oor drie periode gevalueer nl. voor-toets, na-toets en opvolg. Die volgende sielkundige maatstawwe is gebruik: 'Maternal Child-Reading Attitude Scale', 'Parenting Skills Rating Scale' and 'Carkhuff Scales for Levels of Interpersonal Functioning'.

Die projek het bestaan uit weeklikse ontmoetings met die groep enkel moeders, oor 'n periode van twee maande. Die ontmoetings is op videoband opgeneem vir evaluasie. 'n Kort geskrewe kwalitatiewe evaluasie van die program is van die moeders vereis.

Na die instelling van die program was daar nie 'n betekenisvolle verandering in houdinge jeens ouerskap of ouerlike voordigheid nie. 'n Mens kan aanvaar dat dié groep enkel moeders 'n uitgebreide kennis van opvoedings praktyke en ouerlike vaardigheid het. Dit mag so wees aangesien hierdie groep bestaan het uit opgevoede en professionele moeders. Terselfdetyd is daar geen literatuur of navorsing om te bewys dat opgevoede en

professionele moeders goeie, of beter ouerlike vaardigheid het nie.

Interpersoonlike funksionering het noemenswaardig verbeter in terme van empatie, respek, egtheid en openbaar. Die enkel moeders het die program as goed, and van hulp aan hulle kinders bestempel. Hulle het almal hul wens uitgespreek dat die program kon voortgaan.

Een van die beperkinge van die studie was die feit dat die getal moeders wat deelgeneem het redelik klein was, alhoewel dit aan die vereistes vir 'n 'groep' voldoen het. Nog 'n beperking, was dat die groep enkel moeders slegs bestaan het uit opgevoede en professionele vroue. As die groep 'n meer heterogene samestelling gehad het, en b.v. tiener moeders bevat het, sou die uitskei moontlik 'n betekenisvolle verandering in kinderopvoedings praktyke en ouerlike vaardigheid getoon het.

Enkel moederskap hou baie stres vir die vrou in. Dit is vir die vrou moeilik om die isolasie, eensaamheid en 'ouerlike-rol' stres te hanteer. Alhoewel sommige moeders finansiell onafhanklik is, het hulle steeds emosionele ondersteuning nodig.

Interpersoonlike funksionering verbeter as mense met dieselfde probleem saam in 'n groep geplaas word. Hulle besef dat hulle nie die enigstes is met die probleem nie. Die eenvoudige deel van enaringe is 'n belangrike menslike behoefte.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

Single parenting is becoming much more common today for a variety of reasons. Divorce and abandonment, particularly in lower economic classes, account for a large number of single parent homes. In the overwhelming majority of cases it is the father who is the missing parent. Divorce may have an adverse effect on children. Young boys, especially, may have some difficulty developing their sex roles without someone with whom to identify and imitate (Manning, 1977:123; Moeno, 1988:11).

According to Russel (1989:147) ... a number of other women find themselves in the journey of single-parenthood because of their husband's political convictions and their own commitment in the liberation struggle in South Africa.

The increase of marital disruption has altered the experience of parenthood in several ways; it has led to the formation of single parent families, which are subject to numerous forms of economic and psychological stress to the creation of non-custodial parents, whose contact with their children is often irregular and unrewarding (McLanahan and Adams, 1987:240).

Whitfield (1980:47) states that despite the increased availability of contraceptives, family planning advice and other health education efforts, about one in six live births are conceived outside marriage, and in only about half of these cases does marriage between the partners result.

Between 50 and 60 percent of children (and an even higher percentage of first children) are illegitimate (Thomas, 1982:19; Duncan, 1983:38; Van de Vliet, 1984:10; Renvoize, 1985:17). De Villiers (1985:301) and Rip and Schmidt (1977:23) further note that "no other country has such an alarming increase of young teenage mothers".

According to Price (1988:110) a number of studies following up the fortunes of single-parent mothers have concluded that it is the quality of the interpersonal relationships, particularly with other women that makes the difference to coping or not during the first five years. It represents a major emotional problem to be both the sole source of love and comfort and the sole source of discipline (Knowles, 1989:199).

Weiss (1973:235) noted the contribution of "Parents without Partners" an organization of single parents to the well-being of its members. It provides a complex of support systems responsive to the special problems of single parents. Some of these, including discussion groups where individuals can seek support and advice of others in the same situation, are responsive to inadequacies in the on-going lives of single-parents.

1.1 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The terms which formulate the title are defined as follows :

1.1.1 Single-parent mother

From various explanations of single-parent families given by Bigner (1985:361), Manning (1977:123), McLanahan and Adams (1987:240) one can arrive at a

composite definition of a single-parent mother as a woman who is heading a family in the absence of the husband-father because of divorce; desertion or separation; death; having a child illegitimately.

1.1.2 Self-help group

Self-help groups, traditionally have been defined as being composed of members who share a common condition, situation, heritage, symptom or experience (Lieberman and Eorman, 1979:2). They are largely self-governing and self-regulating. They emphasize self-reliance and generally offer a face-to-face or phone-to-phone fellowship network, available and accessible without charge. Self help groups have been seen as support systems, as social movements, as systems of consumer participation, as alternative care-giving systems adjunct to professional helping systems and as organizations of the deviant and stigmatized (Humble and Unel, 1989:52).

1.2 MOTIVATION

The present study has been motivated by the following factors :

1.2.1 My own personal situation is of being a single parent and experiencing a sense of isolation. The feeling of being alone often arises when there is no other adult to offer help in emergencies and advice or support in raising a young child.

1.2.2 Pre-marital sex has become common-place in our contemporary modern world resulting in an increased incidence of single parent families (Craig and Richter-Strydom, 1983:452).

1.2.3 Becoming a single parent is usually a traumatic process with much heated and confused emotion in relationships over and above the basic problem of just one adult figure having to cope with small children (Price, 1988:108).

1.3 AIM

The aim of this project is to elicit from a group of single-parent mothers their needs, to prioritise these needs, then form and evaluate an ongoing self-help group programme.

1.4 HYPOTHESES

A self-help programme for single-parent mothers will result in the following significant changes :

1.4.1 Improved parental attitudes.

1.4.2 Improved parenting skills.

1.4.3 Improved interpersonal functioning.

Before subjecting the above hypotheses to rigorous empirical research the literature review related to self-help groups, parenting groups and the single-parent family will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The researcher's aim in this chapter is to review relevant literature concerning self-help groups, parenting groups, social support and the single parent family.

2.2 SELF-HELP GROUPS

Philosophers, psychologists, sociologists and others have often commented on man's inherent social character - the fact that she/he is a social animal with strong social urges and needs. It is this desire to band with others to act for survival and for the gratification of group needs that is the basis on which organized groups have formalized the concept of mutual aid and helpfulness (Barish, 1971:1163).

Barish (1979:1164) states that the complex self-help groups of today have evolved because of basic needs for group living, sociability, and mutual helpfulness. Self-help ordinarily refers to the provision of aid to oneself. Collectives of individuals formed into "self-help groups" provide mutual aid to each other around common problems and operate under such concepts as self-determinism of the group and joint responsibility.

According to Wolberg (1977:99) groups oriented around objectives of education and of social rehabilitation deal with various problems. They are composed of members seeking support, companionship and opportunities for discussion as in "Parents Anonymous", WIDOWS' clubs, etc.

Barish (1971:1164) has pointed out that the group is the central component where everyone works with others for the further development of the group. During the process individual needs are met, and a way of life is structured. Self-help groups differ from other types of groups as they represent, socially, emotionally or physically stigmatized individuals. As the wider society rejects them, these individuals can satisfy their personal and other needs through groups especially set up to accept them.

Lieberman et al (1979:2) state that there is need to focus on groups that effect change in their members, as well as enabling them to adapt to life changes. There is emphasis on adaptation and coping through internal behavioural, attitudinal or affective changes.

2.2.1 Historical development

According to Barish (1971:1164) the earliest group organized as a specifically self-help group was formed in the early 1800's. This was the Washingtonians, a prototype of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). The group was started by six drinkers who pledged to abstain and who tried to recruit other drinkers in order to reform them as well.

According to Lighty and Bowman (cited by Barish, 1971:1164), parents' associations date back to a Public Education Association started by a citizens organisation in 1896. They sponsored lectures concerned with common problems of parents and attempted to foster co-operation with teachers. In the 1930's groups appeared in increasing frequency.

In 1931, a co-operative self-help movement was begun in California and other states to combat the effects of unemployment during the Great Depression. In 1936 a small group of refugees from Nazi-occupied areas in Europe came together in the United States to help each other. Former concentration camp victims formed an organization, Self-Help, to aid newcomers with jobs, advice and emotional support (Barish, 1971:1164).

In the late 1930's the Self-Help group concept was extended to areas in which the emphasis was upon emotional and physical disabilities, rather than on social problems alone. Recovery Inc., formed in 1937, aimed to prevent relapses and chronic conditions among former mental patients (ibid).

Another organizational trend, in which patients and professionals were combined began in 1938, when Joshua Bierer in London began the Social Club Movement which was the forerunner of the therapeutic community (Barish, 1971:1165).

Hurley (1988:64) states that an estimated 12 million people now help themselves and their neighbours by participating in roughly 500,00 self-help groups.

These groups range from such nationally established organizations as Recovery Inc. founded 50 years ago by psychiatrist Abraham A. Low to help people with debilitating psychological problems, to Mistresses Anonymous, Bald-Headed Men of America and Fundamentalists Anonymous.

Kaplan and Sadock (1988:478) further reiterate that self-help groups are composed of persons who want to cope with a specific problem or life crisis. Self-help groups have improved the emotional health and well-being of many people. A distinguishing characteristic of the self-help group is its homogeneity. The members suffer from the same disorders, and they share their experiences - good and bad, successful and unsuccessful - with one another.

By so doing they educate one another, provide mutual support and alleviate the sense of alienation that is usually felt by the person drawn to this type of group (ibid).

In South Africa there are quite a number of self-help groups, e.g. Cancer associations, Cripple care associations (e.g. "Olympia" - Northdale Pietermaritzburg), Cerebral Palsy association (e.g. H.S. Ebrahim Training Centre - Pietermaritzburg). Such groups provide mutual support and emotional assistance for parents of children suffering from various physical and disease disabilities.

2.2.2 Purposes of self-help groups

Barish (1971:1165) states that one of the major purposes of a self-help group is to counteract the isolation and alienation that result from being "different", by creating a place in which a member can belong.

Most self-help groups emphasize that they provide a "world within a world" where the "deviant" is given a voice that can be heard and accepted as part of the collective. In this he has the security of finally being one of a majority and a movement, rather than individual and alone (ibid).

Another major purpose of self-help groups is to help the individual develop incentive and motivation, which can lead to a great sense of personal identity and greater health. Now the self-despising "deviant" can feel that he is part of a strong, collective identity. Once internalized, this identity can help provide him with a stronger personal sense of self-identity with which to combat society's view of him (Barish, 1971:1165).

Barish (1971:1165) contends that one of the inherent conditions of differing from others is not having been given the full opportunity to give to and help others. Instead, the deviant is personally passive and expects to receive from others. Given the chance to be active and helpful, he gains an enhanced self-esteem and "worthiness".

2.2.3 Common characteristics and techniques of self-help groups

According to Barish (1971:1167) most self-help groups share common characteristics and use similar techniques. The use of members to help other members of the group is an essential characteristic of self-help groups. Also the use of self-determinism and self-government are common characteristics.

Self-determinism refers to the right of the self-help groups to decide their own purposes and goals, their own treatment modalities and their own guidelines and rules for behaviour (Barish, 1971:1167).

2.2.4 Criticisms

Barish (1971:1168) states the following criticisms of self-help groups :

- i) A prime criticism leveled at self help groups is that few statistics exist to support and give validation to the effectiveness of the approach.
- ii) Recently, some groups have demonstrated empirical self-scrutiny of their programs, which may be added to the scrutiny of interested professionals studying the programs.
- iii) The criticism has also been made that many such programs do not provide a strong enough transition back to an integrated life in the

community, but on the contrary, encourage a perpetuated way of life as part of the group subculture.

iv) Many self-help programs especially those actually originated and run by former deviants themselves, often develop a strong bias against professional help. As a result, a vital avenue of exploration and experimentation with new treatment concepts and techniques can be seriously curtailed.

2.3 SOCIAL SUPPORT

According to Sarason et al. (1983:127) social support contributes to positive adjustment and personal development and also provides a buffer against the effects of stress. Social support is usually defined as the existence or availability of people on whom we can rely, people who let us know that they care about, value and love us.

Cobb (1976:300) defines social support as information leading the subject to believe that she/he is cared for and loved, esteemed and a member of a network of mutual obligations.

When social support, in the form of an attachment figure, is available early in life, Bowlby believes children become self-reliant, learn to function as supports for others, and have a decreased likelihood of psychopathology in later life. Bowlby cited by Sarason et al (1983:127) has also

concluded that the availability of social support bolsters the capacity to withstand and overcome frustrations and problem-solving challenges.

Valiant (1974:1977) cited by Sarason et al (1983:127) found that a supportive early family environment was correlated with positive adult adjustment and lack of psychiatric disorder. In addition to evidence that the availability of childhood social support is related to personality development and adult behaviour patterns, there is also evidence of the detrimental effects of lack of support in adults.

According to Caplan's theory (1974), social support implies an enduring pattern of continuous or intermittent ties that play a significant part in maintaining the psychological and physical integrity of the individual over time. For Caplan, a social network provides a person with "psychosocial supplies" for the maintenance of mental and emotional health (Sarason et al, 1983:128).

Regardless of how it is conceptualized, social support would seem to have two basic elements :

- a) the perception that there is a sufficient number of available others to whom one can turn in times of need, and
- b) a degree of satisfaction with the available support. People high in social support seem to experience more positive (desirable) events in their lives, have higher self-esteem and take a more optimistic view of life than do people low in social support (Ibid).

According to Wandersman and Wandersman (1980:333) new parents are often socially isolated and lack appropriate norms or models for parenting. As in other transitions, social support is limited because the parent is undergoing new experiences, thoughts and feelings with which others in the social network may have difficulty identifying and empathising. This is true with the increasing number of teenage pregnancies in our South African communities.

Developing, gaining access to, and using appropriate social supports are central processes in the coping strategies and interventions identified by crisis theorists, clinicians and researchers (Wandersman et al, 1980:333 and Feldman et al, 1987:143).

Barish (1971:1164) believed that the major function of affiliation is to counteract isolation and alienation, while Ablon (174:121) emphasized identification. The use of groups as a supportive intervention has been highly regarded. Groups can create an atmosphere of trust, caring and mutual aid, and can offer the opportunity to share feelings and experiences. This enables the person to obtain reinforcement and empathy, try out new perspectives and ideas, and to develop an appropriate reference group to evaluate his or her own performance. In my personal experience with group psychotherapy this is true.

Power and Champion (1988:349) developed a measure of social support: **The Significant Other Scale (SOS)** which measures different functional resources of social support that may be provided by a number of significant role relationships within an individual's social network. The functional types of support were divided into the general categories of emotional support vs practical support.

2.4 PARENTING GROUPS

According to Wandersman (1978:121) the aim of the parenting group is to make the difficult job of parenting less isolated and more rewarding through information, sharing experiences, and social support. The groups are not simply to teach parents the "right" way to parent but rather to provide support for the parent's own development of competence in their adjustment to parenthood.

To develop new skills, the groups support the parents' development of new strategies for fulfilling their own needs and the needs of their family; increase their repertoire of skills by providing information about child development and parenting skills, and by the sharing of other parents alternative strategies (Wandersman, 1978:122; Abidin, 1982:11).

Fine (1979:6) states that the turbulence in our society and the shifting of values regarding families and childrearing have increased the challenge for parents. He further says, we are more "psychologically minded" now than ever before and eager to do the "right thing" for our children.

It is interesting to note that government documents of over 40 years ago informed parents of the importance of meeting their children's nutritional and safety needs. In contrast, more recent government documents emphasize as well the quality of parent-child relationships and the importance of handling and responding emotionally to the young infant (ibid).

Topping (1986:15) states that encouraging parents to participate, usually in a minor way, in activities which are essentially school-based is a far cry from a structured programme of parent training which is skill-oriented and home-based and designed to raise the attainments of children. This is further reiterated by Patterson (1976:33).

Arnold (1978:114) contends that the natural tendency of parents to discuss childrearing problems with other parents can be channelled into a constructive process through group discussion facilitated by professional leadership and appropriate goals.

The stresses of parenting and the lack of basic knowledge of parenting skills has been implicated in the pervasive problem of child abuse described by Fried and Holt and they suggest a number of innovative parent education programs as useful preventative measures (Fine, 1980:17; Powell, 1986:60).

Guerney and Guerney (1989:344) describe methods they developed to allow parents to create a therapeutic family system that would help to prevent child problems and enrich their relationships with their children. They also designed a parenting skills training program as a response to the needs of parents who have children with less complex problems or parents who want to prevent problems.

Sadler and Seyden (1974:3) also formed groups for parents to create a means to help parents manage and care for their children. Sadler et al (1976:162) evaluated the groups for parents and outcome measures indicated that the course was somewhat successful in teaching some new ways of altering

problem behaviours and in general enhancing the quality of family life insofar as parents put what they have learned into practice.

2.5 THE SINGLE-PARENT FAMILY

The single-parent family is becoming increasingly common and the majority of such families are led by women. Single-parent families are usually born out of the decay and collapse of a marriage, a time that is psychologically exhausting for all the participants (Knowles, 1989:193; Manning, 1977:123).

Gerdes (1988:232) further states that single parents may be either unmarried, widowed or divorced. They are single parents in the sense that they bear the major or entire responsibility for bringing up their children.

The single-parent family is becoming such a general phenomenon that it may soon be regarded as a particular type of family - one with a higher risk factor and with needs for which society will have to provide particular services (HSRC Newsletter No. 172:1986).

Morawetz (1984:572), Morawetz and Walker (1984:373) contend that the term "Single Parent Family" is misleading because it encourages us to think of the family as being composed of only one parent, when in the case of divorce, the non-custodial parent and, in other cases, the deceased parent "continue to play significant roles in the life of the family".

Teyber and Hoffman (1987:36) maintain that the shared act of conception entitles children to both a mother and a father but in an unspoken tragedy, the natural birthright to two parents is lost to most children in the aftermath of divorce.

Price (1988:108) states that there is also a large but forbidden group of women who parent alone inside of marriage, women married to sailors, for instance.

According to Knowles (1989:193) and Michell (1990:44), a small but increasingly significant group of women choose to mother alone. Some make this choice for politico-feminist reasons, wanting parenthood but being unwilling to cohabit with a man. It is probably difficult for any woman to be sure of her reasons for making the decision to parent alone. It may well reflect a deep seated need to prove her independence.

Van der Vliet (1984:3) states that despite the economic and social disadvantages of single-parenting it seems everywhere to be a growing phenomenon.

Certainly women who make this decision seem to do so from a position of psychological strength and can begin the single parent journey with inner resources and advantages that women who are thrown into the situation do not, at least initially, possess, finding themselves unprepared psychologically or financially (Knowles, 1989:194).

Van der Vliet (1984:4) studied single mothers in Grahamstown to look at the reasons women give for remaining single or not remarrying. Their "reasons" are of course not the whole explanation of the single motherhood phenomenon; their

decisions are made within the social framework of rapid industrialization, the migrant labour system and the deliberate policy of excluding women from towns which all operate against the development of stable nuclear families (despite the belief that such families are held to be functional to capitalism).

Van der Vliet (op cit) found that women who opted to remain single were by no means rejects - all were wage earners, often educated, keen to have children and with eligible suitors lined up. Their unmarried state was a real and deliberate choice (ibid).

Hellman cited by Van der Vliet (1984:5) talks of this as a middle class phenomenon, and certainly there seems to be evidence that the marriages of more highly educated women are potentially less stable because of their financial independence. Many of these advanced and independent women find it difficult to marry.

Tcheng-Laroche and Prince (1979:35) conducted a study in Montreal that showed that there are at least some divorced/separated women who can very satisfactorily cope with the female head of family role, provided they have adequate financial means.

It was concluded that the role of head of family is perfectly acceptable for many economically viable women, though not necessarily ideal (ibid).

Another study was conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council on the single-parent family, as a particular type of family - one with a higher risk factor and with needs for which society will have to provide particular services (HSRC Newsletter No. 172:1986).

The aim of the investigation was :

- i) to describe the circumstances of a group of such families;
- ii) to determine their most important needs and problems;
- iii) to determine the most important facilities they felt were lacking in the community;
- iv) to determine the positive factors in their situation.

It was found that the following three matters could be singled out as the most important :

- i) the need for financial support in respect of housing, for example, more favourable subsidies and rent allowances;
- ii) the need for counselling services in order to discuss children's problems;
- iii) the need for after-school centres and/or weekly hostels (ibid).

2.5.1 Problems experienced by single mothers

2.5.1.1 Financial difficulty

Bigner (1985:363) states that single-parent mothers can expect to experience financial difficulties. In the USA in 1977 single parent

families headed by a woman had the lowest median income of all other family types. Another economic consequence is the shift to becoming the primary wage-earner for the family. Those with marketable education and skills usually have fewer problems in securing some type of employment compared with those in need of further education.

Knowles (1989:194) contends that many women fear coping alone with the practicalities of finance and housing more than they fear the unhappiness and violence of their marital homes. Overcoming that fear is the first major hurdle.

Price (1988:109) and Knowles (1989:200) further state that many single mothers have to live within severe financial constraints because their work is low-paid and menial. They may have no marketable skills because they had limited education and no training.

Even for a woman who has a career, there are problems with child care that are increased if she is the only responsible parent. It makes good practical sense, therefore, to encourage women who become single parents to retrain, qualify or re-engage in careers as quickly as possible.

2.5.1.2 Role strain

The single-parent 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. As a result the individual is unable to perform any of the roles efficiently and effectively. The single mother must perform both parenting roles as well as the primary wage-earner role (Bigner, 1985:364).

Knowles (1989:199) states that arranging christmas or birthdays can be the saddest part of single mothering. At such times, the sense of being alone becomes acute and the responsibility of creating the expected happiness and surprise single-handed seems impossible.

The strain of being both the caregiver and the disciplinarian, the comforter and the one who sometimes has to say no, is great. It is difficult to find the energy to discipline older children, who may become "wild" and get into trouble. The worry about failing to meet all her own high standards leaves the mother even more depleted and less able to cope (ibid).

2.5.1.3 Isolation and loneliness

According to Bigner (1985:364) the single parent mother experiences feelings of isolation and loneliness. She lacks the sympathy and understanding of others in her community. I personally have observed a definite decline in social activities, particularly with friends who remain married, when a woman becomes a single parent.

Studies of loneliness suggest that there are great differences in individual vulnerability. John Bowlby, cited by Weiss (1979:193) whose work has been fundamental to the understanding of loneliness, has suggested that loneliness may be most acutely felt by those whose earlier lives left them with an inheritance of insecurity, and also by those whose recent experiences have made them doubt their own capacity to meet challenges.

Some single parents choose to make themselves unavailable to new relationships, perhaps only for an interval, perhaps indefinitely. Alternatively it may not be the case that a single parent chooses to be unavailable; there may be no one of interest in sight, or the single parent's ambivalence may make others wary (Weiss, 1979:206).

Weiss (1979:196) states that the remedy for loneliness is establishing a new attachment. But until this happens, the single parent will now and again be reminded that evolution has ensured that we humans are not content to be emotionally alone.

Many find loneliness to be manageable, so long as there are tasks to be done or others to talk with. The loneliness is not ended - it remains at the edge of awareness - but is not so painful, not so near to being overwhelming (ibid).

2.5.2 Support systems for the single mother

2.5.2.1 Friends as supportive figures

Price (1988:108) states that in the early days of being alone most women find that it is within their network of female friends that salvation lies. Not only does this provide a source of adult support, conversation and humour, it also provides hope of practical help and advice.

Weiss (1979:284) further notes that the single parent's friends constitute a kind of community, a social world outside the single parent's home. Friends are enormously valuable in supporting the single parent's activities outside the home, providing ideas and company and initiating social events.

2.5.2.2 The other parent as a supportive figure

For those single parents who are separated or divorced, the other parent remains potentially a most valuable supportive figure. The potential can be realized only if the parents are able to continue their parental partnership despite having ended other forms of partnership. A good working relationship with the other parent can be called on whenever there is a new demand on the single parent's resources (Weiss, 1979:283).

2.5.2.3 The family as support system

Sanger and Kelly (1988:129) advised that single mothers should try to involve their parents more intimately in the grandchildren's lives.

Weiss (1979:281) further states that family nearby can provide an outside-the-household reserve resource. The children's grandmother may be willing to baby-sit or to make her house available to the children for the hours between the ending of school and the parents arrival from work.

The single parents' brothers and sisters may also provide auxiliary homes for the children. Brothers sometimes will act as "man of the family" for a single mother, making repairs around the house, speaking sternly to children who have gotten out of hand, and coaching the children in sports or taking them to games (ibid).

2.5.2.4 Formal groups as supports

"Parents without Partners" is by far the largest and best known organization of single parents. It provides a kind of instant community in which there are people of the same sex who may become friends and people of the other sex who may be potential dates (Caplan and Killilea, 1976:177).

Sanger and Kelly (1988:129), Weiss (1979:288) state that by joining such groups a single parent can learn from others in the same situation through sharing and comparing their experiences.

It can be reassuring for single parents to learn that their histories are not very different from those of others and that, indeed, they have suffered less than some.

Knowles (1989:195) further reiterates that single-sex therapy groups, in their various forms, can often provide a haven of support. They allow women a safe and confidential forum in which to discuss their fears without feeling that they are about to be condemned or rejected.

2.5.2.5 Counsellors as supportive figures

According to Weiss (1979:286) many single parents at some point find it useful to engage the services of a counsellor: a social worker, a psychiatrist or psychologist, perhaps a minister or priest. They can take their problems to this person and together work out how to cope with them.

Sometimes they provide advice, sometimes they help the single parent to make connections between what is happening in the present and what happened in the past. However, counsellors primarily seem to provide support and guidance and the opportunity to take stock (ibid).

CHAPTER THREE

INVESTIGATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to elicit from a group of single mothers their needs, then form and evaluate an ongoing self-help group programme.

3.2 THE SAMPLE

The researcher called for volunteers to join the Self-Help Group Programme for Single Mothers from the Administrative and Academic staff of the University of Zululand. A circular constituting an appeal for volunteer single, widowed, divorced or unwed mothers was distributed to all the internal boxes in the postal services of the University of Zululand, see appendix A(I).

A response form was attached for volunteers to fill in and send back to the researcher. Out of a 1 000 circulars distributed only 9 mothers volunteered to participate in the project.

3.3 APPARATUS

3.3.1 Biographical inventory

The biographical inventory was constructed by the researcher. The following information was obtained from the single mothers:

- i) Identifying details of the mother
- ii) Occupational and educational status of the mother.

According to Mueller and Parcel (1981:15) occupational status represents the most valid measure of socio-economic status, while education provides important supplementary information on the family's socio-economic level.

- iii) Number and age of siblings. See Appendix A(II).

3.3.2 Maternal child-rearing attitude scale

The above scale used items derived from PARI (Parent Attitude Research Instrument)(Triandis, 1971 cited by Magwaza, 1987:63). The maternal child rearing attitude scale measures attitudes which are theoretically relevant to personality development in children. It consists of a set of thirty items to which the individual responds. The pattern of his responses provides a way of inferring something about his attitude. The items are general opinions with

which the subject is asked to strongly or mildly agree or disagree on a four point scale. A score of 4 is assigned to "strongly disagree", a score of 3 assigned to "disagree", a score of 2 assigned to "agree" and a score of 1 is assigned to "strongly agree". See Appendix A(III).

3.3.3 Parenting skills rating scale

This rating scale was constructed by the researcher and it consisted of a set of ten items. The researcher wanted to know how single mothers think children should be brought up. Also, how single mothers perceive their effectiveness in parenting skills. Mothers are supposed to rate themselves from poor through fair, good and excellent. See Appendix A(IV).

3.3.4 Carkuff scales for assessment of interpersonal functioning

From the scale developed by Carkuff (1967) for assessment of interpersonal functioning the researcher used four scales to assess interpersonal functioning amongst the group of single mothers. Each scale has five levels of functioning. The scales assess the following :

- Scale 1 : Empathetic understanding
- Scale 2 : Communication of respect
- Scale 3 : Facilitative genuineness
- Scale 4 : Facilitative self-disclosure

The researcher modified the scales to fit the group setting. See Appendix A(V).

3.3.5 Programme evaluation interview guide

Most intervention programmes have some impact on the participants of the programme. The programme evaluation interview seeks to determine whether the service offered by the programme actually does help the people in need of such a service (Magwaza, 1987:65).

Programme evaluation by participants has several advantages. Firstly, the person who actually receives the service is often in an excellent position to evaluate different aspects of the programme. Secondly, only participants have access to their own feelings about the programme. Thirdly, the programme is designed for the participants and they are therefore the best people to assess whether the programme actually meets their needs (ibid).

For the purpose of this study, an open-ended focused interview evaluation guide was developed and used. According to Young (1956) cited by Magwaza (1987:66) an open-ended interview makes it possible to secure precise details of personal reactions and allows the respondent wide responses based on his perception and frame of reference.

The interview guide developed in the present dissertation consisted of items related to the overall impact of the programme on the mothers, as well as their own suggestions about the programme.

Also, a short written qualitative evaluation of the programme was required of the mothers. See appendix A(VI).

3.4 PROCEDURE

The project consisted of meetings with the group of single mothers at weekly intervals over two months.

3.4.1 Initial interviews

The researcher conducted individual interviews with the single mothers to elicit their needs. Details of the individual interviews will be discussed in the next chapter.

3.4.2 Group meetings

Initially there were nine single mothers who formed the group. As time went on some members could no longer join the group because of their duties and commitments in the various faculties and departments. By the third session only five members were left and these formed the group up to the end of the study.

According to Yalom (1985:283) the ideal size of an interactional group is approximately seven or eight, with an acceptable range of five to ten members.

Garvin (1987:74) also reiterates that small groups, such as those of about four to eight members, demand and produce more intimacy than a large group.

The group of single mothers met these group size requirements.

Two independent raters were requested to rate the videotapes in terms of the Carkhuff scales. See Appendix A (V). Themes emerging from the group meetings will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the results of the individual interviews with the mothers, emerging themes from the group meetings and the analysis of data are presented and discussed.

4.2 INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

In the individual interviews, the needs of the single mothers were elicited and prioritized. The following two issues emerged as the most important :

- i) *emotional support*
- ii) *practical support*

The single mothers were in agreement that it is a major emotional problem to be the main source of love, comfort and discipline and this ties up with what is stated by Knowles (1989:199).

They also expressed their need for practical support in terms of finance, education of children, maintenance of a car, etc. Knowles (1989:194) also reiterates that many women fear coping alone with the practicalities of finance and housing more than they fear the unhappiness and violence of their marital homes.

4.3 GROUP MEETINGS

Each group session had a scheduled/specific topic to be discussed and members were informed beforehand about the topic so that they could prepare issues to be discussed for the next meeting. However, it was observed that group members in each session generally deviated from the topic in order to discuss contemporary issues relating to their existence as single mothers. This was acceptable because preplanned programmes rarely fit exactly with the needs of the group.

Issues/themes that emerged

It was considered that general problems of single mothers are not insurmountable if the pregnancy was planned. Even though they were experiencing problems, some single mothers were able to cope because it was something for which they had planned and were ready.

The group unanimously agreed that single motherhood was overwhelming. Even though they were financially adequate, they could not cope with the role strain. This ties up with what Knowles (1989:199) stressed.

One other issue that was raised was that of coping with loneliness. The group stated that it was best to form relationships with the opposite sex, but in this regard they found problems. For them it was not easy to let children know about any relationship because they were not sure whether that could be a lasting relationship or not. Furthermore, they wanted to protect their children from any trauma in the event that such a relationship collapsed.

Even if they were extra careful, children seemed to be very jealous and always impinged on their parent's privacy. Although they thought that forming relationships would curb loneliness, they seemed to have ambivalent feelings about these relationships. They felt that prolonged intimacy suffocated them, that they did not need anybody to cling onto them. They needed all the possible space available. They wanted to be independent and they did not want to be dominated by the opposite sex.

When the group looked at the pros and con's of being a single mother the following issues were raised:

- i) Single mothers were at an advantage in bringing up children in the absence of a father because there was no competition or conflicting instructions that might have adverse effects in the development of the child. Here they considered the double-bind theory, which is one of the causal factors of mental disorders especially during childhood (Rowe, 1989:273).
- ii) Single mothers tended to project anger for the missing father onto their children because they were unable to cope with the situation. Also, single mothers tended to overcompensate, overinvest and spoil their children. This goes hand in hand with what was pointed out by Sanger and Kelly (1988:144).
- iii) Raising sons has been one of the major problems for single mothers according to literature (Prince, 1988:76; Michell, 1990:46). The group stated that women tended to cling to their sons and this raised problems when sons had to lead independent family

lives. This was not perceived as a syndrome of single motherhood in particular, but a problem of mothers generally.

4.4 ANALYSIS OF DATA AND RESULTS

To examine the effect of the programme on the mother's child rearing attitudes, parenting skills and levels of interpersonal functioning, the Friedman Test for more than two sets of data for one group was used (Mulder, 1988:168). Statistical analysis is presented in the tables below.

4.4.1 Mothers child rearing attitudes

See Appendix A (III)

TABLE I : MOTHER'S CHILD-REARING ATTITUDES

	RAW SCORES			RANK ORDER		
	Pretest	Post test	Follow-up	Pretest	Post test	Follow-up
Subject A	66	55	55	1	2,5	2,5
Subject B	42	58	57	3	1	2
Subject C	49	51	51	1,5	1,5	3
Subject D	55	51	59	2	3	1
Subject E	53	62	62	3	1,5	1,5
5 N				10,5 (R_1)	9,5 (R_2)	10 (R_3)

The following formula was used :

$$X^2 = \frac{12}{NK(K+1)} \sum (R_g)^2 - 3N(K+1)$$

where N = number of subjects

K = number of columns (assessment periods)

R_g = number of ranks for column G

The critical X^2 value for a two-tailed test with 2 degrees of freedom (according to Table F) is 5,99 (5% level) and 9,21 (1% level). The calculated value (0.1) is less than both these values and the null hypothesis can consequently be accepted at the 1% level of significance.

It can therefore be asserted with ninety nine percent confidence that there was no significant difference after the programme was instituted. This means that there was no change in the single mother's child-rearing attitudes.

4.4.2 Parenting skills

See Appendix A (IV)

TABLE II : PARENTING SKILLS

	RAW SCORES			RANK ORDER		
	Pretest	Post test	Follow-up	Pretest	Post test	Follow-up
Subject A	19	19	19	1	1	1
Subject B	22	21	21	1	2,5	2,5
Subject C	26	26	28	2,5	2,5	1
Subject D	20	21	21	3	1,5	1,5
Subject E	20	15	23	2	3	1
5 N				9,5 (R ₁)	10,5 (R ₂)	7 (R ₃)

The following formula was used :

$$X^2_r = \frac{12}{NK(K+1)} \sum (R_g)^2 - 3N(K+1)$$

where N = number of subjects

K = number of columns (assessment periods)

R_g = number of ranks for column G

The critical X² value for a two-tailed test with 2 degrees of freedom (according to Table F) is 5,99 (5% level) and 9,21 (1% level). The calculated value (-10,1) is less than both these values and the null hypothesis can consequently be accepted at the 1% level of significance.

It can therefore be asserted with ninety nine percent confidence that there was no significant difference after the programme was instituted. This means that there was no change in the parenting skills of the mothers.

4.4.3 Levels of interpersonal functioning

See Appendix A (V)

TABLE III : GROUP AVERAGE SCORES

	Group	Average	Scores	RANK ORDER		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Empathy	3.4	3.6	4	3	2	1
Respect	3	3.1	4	3	2	1
Genuineness	3.2	3.6	4	3	2	1
Self disclosure	3.1	3.5	4	3	2	1
4 N				12 (R ₁)	8 (R ₂)	4 (R ₃)

The following formula was used :

$$X^2_r = \frac{12}{NK(K+1)} \sum (R_o)^2 - 3N(K+1)$$

where N = number of scales

K = number of columns (assessment periods)

R_o = number of ranks for column G

The critical χ^2 value for a two-tailed test with 2 degrees of freedom (according to Table F) is 5,99 (5% level) and 9,21 (1% level). The calculated value (8) is greater than the first value (5,99), and the null hypothesis can consequently be rejected at the 5% level of significance.

It can therefore be asserted with ninety five percent confidence that there was a significant difference in levels of interpersonal functioning after the programme was instituted. This means there was a change in interpersonal functioning amongst the group of single mothers.

4.4.4 Evaluation of the programme

See Appendix A (IV)

To assess the overall impact of the programme on the mothers and on their relationships with their children, evaluative responses yielded by the programme evaluation guide were subjected to content analysis. Content analysis yielded themes and categories presented below:

a) Value of the programme

This refers to the single mother's attitude towards the programme, that is, whether the programme was excellent, good, fair or poor.

TABLE IV : VALUE OF THE PROGRAMME

PERCEPTION OF THE PROGRAMME	%
i) Excellent	-
ii) Good	100
iii) Fair	-
iv) Poor	-

All the mothers (100%) found the programme to be good and helpful in that, knowing that there are others who share the same feelings and similar problems gave security and comfort.

b) Benefits of the programme to children

This refers to the extent to which the programme was helpful or useful in managing children.

TABLE V : BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAMME TO THE CHILDREN

BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAMME TO THE CHILDREN	%
i) Helpful to children	80
ii) Unsure	20
iii) Not helpful to children	-

A majority of mothers (80%) found the programme helpful in understanding their children. They became more conscious of their shortfalls and

found solutions to them. They also used advice and skills contributed by other members and in the literature that was provided. Of the rest of the mothers (20%) they were unsure whether the programme was helpful or not because they were not staying with their children during the time the programme was in progress.

c) Main problems of the programme

This refers to problems related to the programme itself.

TABLE VI : MAIN PROBLEMS OF THE PROGRAMME

PROBLEMS	%
i) Lack of commitment	80
ii) Too few sessions	20

A majority of mothers (80%) felt that members did not commit themselves to the programme. Another group of mothers (20%) felt that the sessions were few, the programme came to an end before the group had a chance to mature.

d) Continuation of the programme

This refers to the mothers' feelings about whether the programme should continue or not.

TABLE VII : CONTINUATION OF THE PROGRAMME

CONTINUATION OF THE PROGRAMME	%
i) Programme to continue	100
ii) Undecided	-
iii) Programme to discontinue	-

All the mothers (100%) felt that the programme should continue because it was useful.

e) Suggestions about the programme

The following suggestions were made about the programme :

- to recruit more members
- implementation of the suggested programmes of action, e.g. social functions for mothers and for children.

4.5 DISCUSSION

4.5.1 Parental attitudes and parenting skills

There was no significant change in parental attitudes and parenting skills after the programme was instituted. One can assume that this group of single mothers had an extensive knowledge of child-rearing practices and parenting skills. This might be so because this was a group of educated and professional

mothers. At the same time one can not conclude that educated and professional mothers have good parental attitudes and parenting skills because there is no available literature or research findings to support that conclusion. The pre, post and follow up test findings although not significantly different follow a similar pattern of improvement on all three measures. See Appendix C (I, II and III). The group of mothers in this study perceived themselves as effective in parenting skills as they rated themselves using the Parenting Skills Rating Scale. See Appendix A (IV).

4.5.2 Interpersonal functioning

There was a significant difference in levels of interpersonal functioning amongst the group of mothers after the programme was instituted. Interpersonal functioning improved remarkably in terms of empathy, respect, genuineness and self-disclosure. As stated by Knowles (1989:195) support groups provide a haven of support and allow women a safe and confidential forum in which to discuss their problems. They could learn from others through sharing and comparing their experiences. It can be reassuring to learn that their histories are not very different.

4.5.3 Evaluation of the programme

The single mothers evaluated the programme as good and helpful to their children. It was pointed out that members were not fully committed as at times one or two members did not turn up for the meetings.

They also expressed that they could benefit more if the programme ran for a longer time. They wished that the programme could continue.

4.5.4 Limitations of the study

One of the limitations of this study is that the sample was too small, but the number met the requirements for a group (Garvin, 1987:74).

Another limitation is that the group only comprised of one category of single mothers, i.e. educated and professional mothers. Perhaps if the group had a mix of categories, e.g. lay mothers and teenage mothers, results yielded would show a significant difference in child-rearing practices and parenting skills.

In the next chapter conclusions and recommendations will be presented.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

After reviewing literature, running the programme and testing the hypotheses, the following conclusions and recommendations are made :

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

Single motherhood is stressful. Single mothers find it difficult to cope with the role strain, isolation and loneliness. They need practical support in terms of finance, education of children, etc. Even though some single mothers might be financially adequate they still need emotional support.

Interpersonal functioning is improved if people with a similar problem are put in a group. Vinogradov and Yalom (1989:135) state that there is a long-lasting change if people are in an interpersonal and dynamic group.

Support groups normalize specific issues. Members recognize that they are not alone in having an emotional problem. The simple sharing of experiences is an important human need.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made :

- 1) The Self-Help Group Programme for Single Mothers could be implemented in a Community-based Health Service, e.g. Child Health Clinic, Child and Family Centre, Child Mental Health Care Unit, etc. In any of the above community centres single mothers who are lacking in parenting skills and parental attitudes could be identified by health professionals, e.g. community nurses, social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists. Identified single mothers could be put in an interpersonal and dynamic out-patient group over a period of time. According to Vinogradov and Yalom (1989:135) interpersonal and dynamic groups propose to effect character change, accompanied by long-lasting change in interpersonal behaviour.
- 2) Single mothers who had the experience of being with a spouse as head of the family and who suddenly find themselves on the journey of single motherhood should be encouraged to form groups for the divorced and the widowed. In these groups mutual advice and support is valuable in order to work through painful emotional experiences. In the group single mothers may gain skills and become more emotionally equipped to face single motherhood.
- 3) Mothers who find themselves in the predicament of single motherhood and are untrained should take up on-the-job training so that they can meet the demands of being a primary wage earner.

- 4) Single Parents' Associations should be formed in our communities, where single mothers can meet from time to time. In these associations they can plan various activities that would benefit parents and children as well.

Although single motherhood is stressful and emotionally draining, it can also develop one's inner potential as a parent especially if one gets the support of other single mothers, as is the case in support groups.

APPENDIX A - APPARATUS

- I Psychology Department - Research Project
- II Biographical Inventory
- III Maternal child-rearing Attitude Scale
- IV Parenting Skills Rating Scale
- V Carkhuff Scales for assessment of interpersonal functioning
- VI Programme Evaluation Interview Guide

I PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT - RESEARCH PROJECT

CALLING FOR VOLUNTEERS IN A SELF HELP GROUP PROGRAMME FOR SINGLE MOTHERS

The Psychology Department intends to conduct an applied therapeutic research study in order to develop and evaluate a self help programme for single mothers.

This circular constitutes an appeal for volunteer single widowed, divorced or unwed mothers, who wish to be involved in such a programme.

Should you be willing to participate in this project, please fill in the following response form and send it to Miss N Arosi or Prof SD Edwards of the Psychology Department, Internal Box 85.

R E S P O N S E F O R M

I,, volunteer to be a member of the Self Help Group Programme for Single Mothers.

DEPARTMENT :

ROOM NO. :

PHONE NO. :

II BIOGRAPHICAL INVENTORY

1. IDENTIFYING DETAILS (MOTHERS)

1.1 Name:.....

1.2 Address:.....

..... Code:.....

1.3 Date of Birth:.....

1.4 State whether divorced, widowed or single:.....

1.5 Standards of Education:.....

1.6 Occupation:.....

1.7 Income:.....

1.8 Ethnic group:.....

1.9 Religion:.....

2. FAMILY DETAILS

2.1 Number and age of siblings:.....

2.2 Number in the home:.....

III MATERNAL CHILD - REARING ATTITUDE SCALE

DIRECTIONS

I am studying how mothers think children should be brought up. You can help in this study by expressing your opinions or feelings about each statement listed below. Mark with a tick (✓) the appropriate column.

Be frank and express your own personal views regardless of what others may think. There is no right or wrong, but just your opinion and feelings.

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1. The trouble with giving attention to children's problems is that they usually make up a lot of stories to keep the mother interested.				
2. A mother has a right to know everything going on in her child's life because her child is part of her.				
3. If parents would have fun with their children, they would lose respect.				
4. When you do things together with your children they will take advantage of you.				
5. Children should be considerate of their mothers, since mothers suffer so much for them.				

- 6. Children pester you with all their little upsets if you are not careful from the beginning.
- 7. A child should not disturb his/her parents by asking silly questions when the parent is busy.
- 8. Comparing your child with other children or siblings who are doing better will encourage and help the child to succeed in life.
- 9. Children from the same family should behave the same because they are brought up by the same parents.
- 10. A child should fulfil some of his/her parents needs which were not met as a child.
- 11. A child who is jealous of her younger sister or brother is bad.
- 12. A child should not compete with her baby sister or brother for attention because she/he has had her/his own time and share.
- 13. A child should not get angry at its parents.

STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

14. A child should control his/her feelings when he/she is upset. Crying annoys and disturbs the parent.
15. If a child is upset, it is better to leave him alone and not make it look serious.
16. There is no good excuse for a child to hit another child.
17. A child should be taught to avoid fighting no matter what happens.
18. A child will be grateful one day for strict upbringing.
19. Strict discipline develops a finer character.
20. A child who is disobedient should be given sever physical punishment until he mends his ways.
21. A child should fear his parents.
22. Praise makes the child feel proud.
23. The parent should praise her child only after he/she has succeeded in doing something.

STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

- 24. A child should not be allowed to disagree with his/her parents.
- 25. Some children are just so bad, they must be taught to fear adults for their own good.
- 26. Education belongs to school and is therefore the duty of the teacher not the parent.
- 27. A child is born with whatever brains or intelligence he has. There is nothing a parent can do to help the child develop intellectually.
- 28. A parent is often too busy. He/she will seldom find time to talk to his/her child or explain things.
- 29. It is better to speak to the child in very short sentences or baby talk. Longer explanations, no matter how clear they are, will always confuse the child.
- 30. Children seldom express worthwhile ideas.

STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

PARENTING SKILLS RATING SCALE

DIRECTIONS

I am studying how mothers think children should be brought up. I would like to know how mothers perceive their effectiveness in parenting skills. You can help in this study by rating your perception of your own effectiveness in each statement listed below; from poor through fair, good and excellent. You can tick (/) under the the appropriate column. Be honest and frank.

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
1. Treating your children with respect.				
2. Giving praise and attention.				
3. Rewarding appropriate behaviour.				
4. Enlisting children's help in rule-making.				
5. Exercising firm discipline.				
6. Being consistent in punishment.				
7. Being a model to your children.				
8. Encouraging your children to be unique.				
9. Maintaining a good parent-child relationship.				
10. Enjoying your children.				

V SUMMARY OF CARKHUFF SCALES FOR ASSESSMENT OF INTERPERSONAL FUNCTIONING

SCALE 1

EMPATHETIC UNDERSTANDING

- LEVEL 1 : The first person detracts significantly from the communications of the second person.
- LEVEL 2 : The first person subtracts noticeable effect from the communications of the second person.
- LEVEL 3 : Expressions of the first person are essentially interchangeable with those of the second person.
- LEVEL 4 : Responses of the first person add noticeably to the expressions of the second person.
- LEVEL 5 : The first person's responses add significantly to the feeling and meaning of the expressions of the second person.

SCALE 2

COMMUNICATION OF RESPECT

- LEVEL 1 : Verbal and behavioural expressions communicate a clear lack of respect for feelings, experiences and potentials of others.
- LEVEL 2 : Communicate little respect for feelings experiences and potential of others.
- LEVEL 3 : Communicates a positive respect and concern for others.

LEVEL 4 : Communicates a very deep respect and concern for others.

LEVEL 5 : Communicates the very deepest respect for others worth.

SCALE 3

FACILITATIVE GENUINENESS

LEVEL 1 : Verbalizations are clearly unrelated to feelings.

LEVEL 2 : Verbalizations are slightly unrelated to feelings.

LEVEL 3 : Appropriate responses that do not seem insincere but that do not reflect any real involvement either.

LEVEL 4 : There is no doubt as to whether what is said is meant.

LEVEL 5 : Freely and deeply in a non-exploitative relationships. Completely spontaneous in interaction and open to experiences.

SCALE 4

FACILITATIVE SELF DISCLOSURE

LEVEL 1 : Actively attempts to remain detached.

LEVEL 2 : While not always actively avoiding self disclosures, never volunteers personal information.

- LEVEL 3 : Volunteers personal information.
- LEVEL 4 : Freely volunteers information about his personal ideas, attitudes and experiences.
- LEVEL 5 : Volunteers very intimate and often detailed information.

VI PROGRAMME EVALUATION INTERVIEW GUIDE

Now that the programme has come to an end we would like you to tell us what you think of or feel about the programme. Be free to express your honest feelings; we want to know if the programme was of any help to you.

1. How would you rate the programme?

Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fair	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor	<input type="checkbox"/>

Why?.....
.....
.....

2. Do you think the programme was helpful to your child?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Why?.....
.....
.....

3. What would you say were the main problems of the programme?

.....
.....
.....

4. Would you like the programme to continue?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Why?.....
.....
.....

5. What suggestions would you make to improve the programme?

.....
.....
.....

6. Please give a short, written, qualitative evaluation of the programme.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

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APPENDIX B - READING MATERIAL

I Child management skills

- skills to increase appropriate behaviour
- skills to decrease inappropriate behaviour

II How to use punishment effectively

III Sensitive parenting

IV Special hazards to a single working mothers' maternal sensitivity

I SKILLS TO INCREASE APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

SKILLS 1: Praise and attention

Praise and attention serves as the foundation for many subsequent skills. Praise and attention includes positive statements, descriptions of behaviour, touching and physical affection. If you follow your children's behaviour with attention, the frequency of the behaviour increases.

Practising praise and attention

- Use praise and attention only during or immediately after behaviour you want to happen more often.
- Withhold praise and attention when children misbehave.
- Make your praise descriptive.
- Give praise for minor appropriate behaviour.
- Make praise sincere.
- Fit praise to each child's likes and dislikes.
- Vary praise each time you use it.

SKILLS 2: Rewards and privileges

Rewards and privileges are explicit consequences for specific behaviour.

Practising rewards and privileges

- Present rewards and privileges only during or immediately after desired behaviour.
- Do not use rewards and privileges to stop misbehaviour.
- Accompany rewards and privileges with descriptions of the rewarded behaviour.
- Use positive and encouraging words when giving rewards and privileges.
- Vary rewards and privileges each time you use them.
- Individualize rewards and privileges for children's likes and dislikes.
- Give rewards and privileges in proportion to the importance and difficulty of behaviour.

SKILLS 3: Suggestive praise

Suggestive praise commends children for not misbehaving. It reminds them of what they are doing appropriately and what they are doing appropriately and what misbehaviour they are avoiding.

Practising suggestive praise

- It requires phrases such as "for not" instead of "without".
- It should be given when children are not misbehaving.
- It must be descriptive and sincere.
- Combine it with praise and attention sometimes.
- Sometimes combine it with physical affection.
- It should be individualized.
- Vary it each time you use it.

SKILLS TO DECREASE INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

SKILLS 4: Ignoring

Ignoring is the systematic withholding of attention following some minor annoying or aggravating behaviour.

Practising ignoring

- Whenever your children are doing something that seems to be for your attention and you would like them to stop, ignore them.
- Use ignoring each time the bothersome behaviour occurs.
- When you ignore a problem, it may get worse before it gets better.
- Do something distracting to help you ignore.
- Use suggestive praise with ignoring.

SKILLS 5: Time-out

Time-out is the first skill we teach parents that focuses on stopping serious misbehaviour. Time-out involves making a child spend a few minutes in a corner or some other dull area where the child cannot find anything amusing or stimulating to do.

Practising time-out

- Use it to decrease dangerous or serious problems.
- Use it only during or immediately after the behaviour you want to decrease.
- Keep attention to a minimum during time-out.
- Children should be kept in it briefly.
- Praise children for their first desirable behaviour after time-out.

SKILLS 6: Withdrawing rewards and privileges

Withdrawing rewards and privileges is defined as removing an opportunity, activity privilege or tangible item the child desires, in response to some dangerous, serious or intolerable behaviour.

Practising withdrawing rewards and privileges

- Withdraw rewards and privileges during or immediately after the behaviour.
- Remove what is equal to the misbehaviour.
- Do not take away the same rewards and privileges all the time.
- When you tell children they are going to lose a privilege, follow through.
- Do not over-use it.
- Continue to use positive skills for desirable behaviour.

SKILLS 7: Physical punishment

We do not recommend or endorse the use of physical punishment. Physical punishment involves no more than three brief, firm swats of a parents palm on the child's buttock. Physical punishment has many negative side effects.

Practising physical punishment

- Physical punishment should be used for only dangerous or serious problems.
- Keep spanking brief but firm.
- Do not threaten, follow through.
- Once you decide to punish a behaviour physically do it every time it occurs.
- Never spank your children when you are uncontrollably angry.
- Remember to use the other methods, particularly those that increase behaviour.

II HOW TO USE PUNISHMENT EFFECTIVELY

Socialisation is one of the major parental tasks. A great deal of socialisation involves curbing and controlling the child's behaviour or getting the child to behave in a socially acceptable way. This suggests that punishment is necessary for socialisation. However more often punishment as used by parents is ineffective, and more recently professionals are concerned about how to increase the effectiveness of punishment.

There are several ways in which parents can introduce the most human effective behavioural management of their children. The most important of which will be discussed below.

1. Clarifying the purpose of punishment

Most parents may not be sure why they are punishing a child. They may have a vague sense of righteousness or that they should punish a child for given infractions in order to be a good parent. Such fuzziness often leads to a situation where the parent becomes intent on seeing evidence that the child is hurt such as crying or looking unhappy. However there are occasions when the parent is perfectly clear why he is punishing the child, unfortunately the child might not be equally clear. It is therefore important to clearly

state the reasons for the punishment, to help learn what is allowed and not allowed and also to accept the reasonableness of punishment.

2. Be consistent

Parents often fall into the trap of inconsistent punishment. Depending on mood, a parent will sometimes not punish a behaviour that is normally disapproved of. If a parent decides to punish for a behaviour, she must punish for it every time it occurs. Inconsistent punishment serves to confuse the children about what is wrong or right.

3. Punish immediately

Punishment has to be immediate to be effective. The old saying "when your father comes home" makes the father into a villain and causes the child to feel unjustly punished, especially as the child will often try to make up for the misdeed in the interim.

4. Make sure the punishment is really unpleasant

If you have decided that the behaviour merits punishment (and only you can decide that) then the only way of stopping the behaviour is to punish it in a way which is experienced as unpleasant and negative for your child.

5. Don't allow punishment to be reinforcing

This means that you should not allow children to gain something pleasant from a punishment. For example on finding that the child has done an obviously poor job, mother says "if you are not prepared to do it properly, don't do it. I will do it."

6. Find out what works

Punishment has to be individualised to the child's needs. Some children may respond only to corporal punishment, whereas other children might respond well to mild scolding (and may not respond at all to corporal punishment).

If you find yourself engaging in a lot of punishment, ask yourself if that punishment is working. If the answer is "yes" why then do you need to do it so often if it is really working. If you feel that it is not working, why then do

you keep on using it? It is also important to bear in mind that corporal punishment tends to lose its effectiveness when repeated. Ordinarily, corporal punishment should be reserved for very serious transgressions. Parents who find it necessary to resort to corporal punishment need to be aware of the physical dangers involved in using such punishment, and should try as much as possible to keep it safe.

7. Enriching the variety of punishment

Having a variety of punishment at the parents disposal helps to prevent development of "tolerance" and escalation of doses. It also tends to facilitate the parents' giving more thought to the punishment and the need for it, rather than impulsively dispensing the same time worn punishment repeatedly.

8. Always reinforce "good" behaviour when punishing "bad" behaviour.

If you decide to punish a child for a deed, always try to focus positively on something acceptable, on the next possible opportunity. This means that the aim of the punishment should not only be to tell and show a child how not to behave, but should also, in the process show a child

how he should behave in order to gain approval. Positive interactions show the child that the relationship between the parent and child is not damaged by the punishment.

9. Do warn but don't threaten

Always warn a child that punishment is forthcoming and warn the child about the nature of the punishment. However do not threaten the child with punishment which you are not prepared to carry out. This allows the child to feel that he can get away with his misbehaviour and future warnings are likely to be ineffective.

10. Don't recriminate

Like most of us, children would prefer to have punishment over and done with. It is humiliating to repeat the details of the misdeed to the child over and over again and at every opportunity in the future.

III SENSITIVE PARENTING

1. Treat the child with respect

The first principle - and this is crucial - is that we treat the child with respect. Many of us seem to have inherited a disrespectful attitude toward children. We tend to talk down to them, embarrass them, command them and order them around. We begin to build a wall that separates us.

2. Make sure that privileges are earned

Parents need to be tireless disciplinarians. Without discipline a child will be insecure, demanding, selfish and self-centred. Discipline means to teach and to train, it becomes the parents job to teach and to train the child. It requires the ability to set limits, say "no" and be willing to be unpopular with your child. One of the most important principles in effective discipline is to teach children that privileges and freedom go hand in hand with responsibility. It is crucial that children learn early that life is not a "free lunch". We want our children to be motivated to work hard for what they want in life, to be able to set realistic goals and meet them and to be able to delay gratification and wait for the pay off.

3. Reward appropriate behaviour

Children repeat the behaviour that win them attention and eliminate those that do not. Since we all learn by trial and error, it is especially important that we make it worth the child's while to behave in ways that are productive, age-appropriate, and socially acceptable.

4. Let children solve their own problems

Parents need to stay in charge and set limits when the child is very young. But as the child grows and matures, the wise parent gradually lets go of the decision-making process and let the child decide things for himself, and then learn from his mistakes. It is important for us to be able to distinguish between a child's "wants" and his "needs".

5. Enlist child's help in rule-making

Since children come into the world not knowing how to behave, they need guidelines and rules that are at first externally placed on them by someone who is older and wiser and able to be fair, firm and consistent. As the child matures he should be allowed to be a part of the rule-making process, and shown why rules are important.

6. Encourage individuality

One very important principle is to treat your child as an individual and encourage him to be unique. Find an area of expertise for each child. Do not compare children or force them to compete for your love and attention.

7. Feelings are important

Recognize that feelings are important and need attention. They cannot be ignored in the hope that they will go away. Help children express their feelings.

8. Enjoy your children

The last and most important principle for raising happy, well-adjusted and mentally healthy children is to enjoy them. Laugh with them everyday. Let them know without question that they are the source of your happiness, that they bring you pleasure, and make your life richer.

IV SPECIAL HAZARDS TO A SINGLE WORKING MOTHERS' MATERNAL SENSITIVITY

1. Overintensity

Adults need other adults, not only to support them on issues like discipline and moral training and to provide a sense of perspective when they over - or under react but to deflect a portion of the child's anger when he is angry or when he is upset.

Children need other adults to provide them with a sense of family, to serve as alternative sources of comfort and counsel, play and identification.

And both parent and child need other adults in their lives for the sake of their own relationship; otherwise the I-thou link which every mother and children share may become overstressed in ways that leave both individuals feeling misunderstood and alienated.

2. Overinvestment

While every mother dreams of a better life for her child, a single working mother's dreams have been shown to have a special intensity. The desire to be "all that I can be" is

the most precious gift a parent can give a child. But a danger arises when a parent uses her child to realize her own hopes for herself. Studies show that this is more likely to occur in homes where there is not another parent to offer perspective - to warn when the maternal agenda is in danger of superseding the child's.

3. Over-protectiveness

Every mother is acutely conscious of her child's vulnerability. In a single mother, this sense of a youngster's vulnerability is intensified further by the fact of her singleness. One consequence of this is that a single mother tends to be more restrictive about normal activities like exploration; at all times and in all places her child is encouraged to stay as close as possible to mother.

HOW TO COPE WITH THE RISKS ISOLATION POSES FOR A SINGLE WORKING MOTHER

1. Know how to recognize the signs of overinvestment and over-protectiveness:

- In overinvestment common indicators are:

the most precious gift a parent can give a child. But a danger arises when a parent uses her child to realize her own hopes for herself. Studies show that this is more likely to occur in homes where there is not another parent to offer perspective - to warn when the maternal agenda is in danger of superseding the child's.

3. Over-protectiveness

Every mother is acutely conscious of her child's vulnerability. In a single mother, this sense of a youngster's vulnerability is intensified further by the fact of her singleness. One consequence of this is that a single mother tends to be more restrictive about normal activities like exploration; at all times and in all places her child is encouraged to stay as close as possible to mother.

HOW TO COPE WITH THE RISKS ISOLATION POSES FOR A SINGLE WORKING MOTHER

1. Know how to recognize the signs of overinvestment and over-protectiveness:

- In overinvestment common indicators are:

(a) overdressing and over-grooming

(b) constantly comparing achievements against that of peers.

- Over-Protectiveness announces itself in unusual acts of defiance, the over-protected child's rebellion is constant and ongoing. It forms a behavioural pattern.

2. Reach out to others for help:

Try to involve your own parents and the people in your day-care centre more intimately in your and your children's lives. Or you can join a single-parent support group. No one understands the special problems or fears of a single mother as well as another single mother, which is why such groups serve as especially good sources of perspective, balance and reassurance.

A second reason reaching out is important is that you can transform other important adults in your child's life into surrogate authority figures whose names can be invoked in situations of reward and punishment.

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APPENDIX C - RAW SCORES

- I Maternal child-rearing attitude scores
- II Parenting skills scores
- III Levels of interpersonal functioning - group scores

I MATERNAL CHILD-REARING ATTITUDES

	PRETEST	POST TEST	FOLLOW UP
Subject A	66	55	55
Subject B	42	58	57
Subject C	49	51	51
Subject D	55	51	59
Subject E	53	62	62

II PARENTING SKILLS

	PRETEST	POST TEST	FOLLOW UP
Subject A	19	19	19
Subject B	22	21	21
Subject C	26	26	28
Subject D	20	21	21
Subject E	20	15	23

III LEVELS OF INTERPERSONAL FUNCTIONING

1ST RATER

	1	2	3
Empathy	3.17	3.4	4
Respect	2.83	3	4
Genuineness	3	3.6	4
Self disclosure	3.17	3.6	4

2ST RATER

	1	2	3
Empathy	3.6	3.8	4
Respect	3	3.2	3.8
Geuineness	3.4	3.6	4
Self disclosure	3	3.4	4

GROUP AVERAGE SCORE

	1	2	3
Empathy	3.4	3.6	4
Respect	3	3.1	4
Geuineness	3.2	3.6	4
Self disclosure	3.1	3.5	4

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