

Informal vs Formal Support Mobilisation

By Lone Mothers

In Germany And The United Kingdom

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is concerned with the question of what role informal support networks play in the welfare mix of contemporary welfare states. Informal support is provided by family and friends on the one hand, and by voluntary organisations on the other. Using data from 116 semi-structured interviews with lone mothers, in the United Kingdom and Germany, the question of whether different welfare systems influence individual support mobilisation strategies is investigated. Lone mothers were selected because of their limited earning capacities which often result in a life in poverty and social exclusion – for them and for their children. It was shown in this research that informal and formal support alleviates these effects and the research project is guided by four main objectives: (1) to map ways in which lone mothers mobilise support from different sources; (2) to investigate whether lone mothers develop support mobilisation strategies in turning to formal and/or informal support sources; (3) to analyse whether differences in welfare state systems result in variances in informal support mobilisation behaviour; and finally, (4) to evaluate the role and importance of voluntary organisations as support providers for lone mothers. Empirical evidence is provided to demonstrate that informal support networks influence the utilisation of formal support. In contrast, variations in welfare state provision do not appear to have a significant impact on support mobilisation behaviour. Indeed, formal support mobilisation is a function of demographic characteristics, influenced by receipts from means-tested benefits and the extent of informal support. The utilisation of informal support was dependent on network structural and demographic variables, as well as reciprocity norms. The main finding of this research is that individual support mobilisation of lone mothers is determined by their specific circumstances, and not by their residence in different welfare states.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Families play an extremely important role in the future of modern society. In the year 2000, 680,000 and 780,000 children were born in the United Kingdom and Germany respectively (Eurostat 2001). These children are dependent on a positive social environment for their health and well-being. Families need external support in order to prosper. With this in mind, one of the most challenging characteristics of raising a child in today's society is having to do it as a lone parent. Whatever the basic necessity of life for that child may be, they serve as the sole provider. Almost always, they are lone mothers.

The support that families receive can come from a variety of sources. Although state support is very important for many families, most lone mothers rely on the everyday help of individuals who are emotionally or geographically close. This is the focus of the research. Whereas results of the social support research indicate the crucial importance of informal support for individual well-being their specific relevance for lone parent families is not as well documented. The concentration of this research focuses on four elements including services lone parents receive from informal and formal support sources, who are their supporters, how support helps them to adapt to daily demands, and how they mobilise this support. Informal support is often not sufficient in stabilising their families' welfare. Child poverty is a consequence of diminished parental earning capacities (Piachaud/Sutherland 2001). For children, poverty means a restricted adolescent experience, childhood development, and positive learning opportunities (Armutserbericht 2001). Lone parenthood is accompanied by a high risk of being dependent on means-tested benefits. Childcare and health care are equally important.

Informal vs. formal support

Social security transfers and in-kind benefits are common features shared by all contemporary western European welfare states. Complex bureaucratic agencies distribute these formal means of support. Funds needed to cover these expenses account for a major proportion of annual public spending, often the single largest post of public budgets. Hence, the cost of state provision of social welfare is known annually. However, this focus on the *formal* side of welfare provision neglects the fact there are

informal sources as well. While the annual costs of state provision can be accounted for, there is hardly any evidence how much the informal sector contributes. Typical examples of informal welfare provision include care for children, the elderly, and the sick which are usually provide by women. Informal sources include elements of the voluntary sector on one hand, and family and friends support networks on the other. Although it has been estimated that families bear the largest burden of welfare provision, they are hardly recognised as major welfare provider (Heinze et al. 1988; Lewis 1997).

This research project is primarily concerned with the way lone mothers mobilise support from informal and formal sources. Support is thereby defined by operation. That means that all actions and services by others that contributed to the solution of a problem were understood as support. This includes services that need to be paid for (e.g. childcare) as well as those that do not require payment. This approach exclusively considers the respondent's perspective. Not all of these actions may be regarded as support by an external observer though.

Most social researchers would probably agree that personal relations constitute *informal* networks and the state serves as a *formal* supporter. However, there are support sources that cannot be classified in either of these categories unequivocally. For example, if I have a personal relationship with my landlord and he helps me to repair my refrigerator – is this informal or formal support? Does he help me on the basis of our friendship – which would be informal – or is this formal support because this relation is ultimately based on a tenants agreement? Other ambiguous cases include voluntary organisations. A voluntary organisation is “...a formal organisation, self-governing, independent of government, not profit-distributing, and voluntary.” (Kendall/Knapp 1997: 268) This definition already stresses the formal aspect. But what about self-help groups, the smallest units of lone parent organisations – a specific type of voluntary organisations that is particularly relevant for this research? Self-help and mutual aid are essentially informal activities. It is difficult to draw clear boundaries between these sectors (Willmott 1986).

Next, it will be clarified how informal and formal support are understood within the scope of this research. *Formal support* is provided on the basis of private law contracts or social welfare legislation. Moreover, all support forms that are provided by professional supporters belong in this category. This includes doctors, counsellors, health visitors, but also staff of nurseries, churches, banks, etc. All these supporters are

paid for their work. Thus, services by lone parent organisations that are provided by professional staff are formal. Among these are advisory services concerning legal and benefits issues which are offered by solicitors and other legal professionals. They are paid for by lone parent organisations. Professionally guided therapy groups also belong to this category. This definition is in contrast to d'Abbs (1991) who classified all support sources other than state agencies as informal ones.

Informal support is based on personal relationships. It includes forms of assistance that family, friends, acquaintances, neighbours, colleagues, ex-partners and their families give each other. As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, kinship networks are the most reliable support sources. We are born into kinship relations that can encompass many individuals. Close and distant relatives are commonly distinguished because different degrees of normative obligations result from these relationships. Close relatives from a lone mother's perspective are her parents and her brothers and sisters. Other kinship relations, such as to grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles are less committing to mutual help (Willmott 1986; Diewald 1991). Another important source of informal support are friends, acquaintances, and neighbours. Friendship relations can withstand the strain and are more likely to offer support. Acquaintances and neighbours may help occasionally – but this does not normally exceed small favours. Neighbours can be important support sources due to their geographical proximity. But it is equally likely not to have any supportive relations to neighbours at all. The children's fathers also play a specific informal support role. They are legally required to support their children. Beyond that many maintain informal supportive relations to their children and their former partners. Lone parent organisations also provide informal services. Thereby, direct and indirect effects can be distinguished. Direct informal support include exchanging advice, information, and emotional support in self-help groups and informal gatherings (e.g. Sunday afternoon cafe), indirect effects include their network generating capacity.

Comparing individual support mobilisation in Britain and Germany

A main concern of this research beside the proposed interdependence of informal and formal support is the effect of macro-structures like welfare state systems on individual action, i.e. the micro-level of society. In order to test this correlation empirically it was necessary to select at least two countries with different welfare state systems, thereby creating different incentive structures for individual action. For this purpose, the United

Kingdom and Germany were selected. Both countries are suitable for this comparison since they represent two distinctive ‘worlds of welfare capitalism’ (Esping-Andersen 1990) which nevertheless are similar enough for a viable comparison. For example, both use similar categorical social security benefits.

Furthermore, when the idea for this research was developed in the mid 1990s social policy debate in Germany was dominated by demands for retrenchment of the comprehensive social security provided by the German *Sozialstaat*. Beside general demands for saving public expenditure calls for more individual responsibility – that, in fact, translates into more family responsibility – were common. In other words, conservative and liberal political actors in Germany joined forces in calling for less formal support provision at the expense of informal support sources. German retrenchment proponents frequently cited Britain and the neo-liberal rhetoric of British governments as a model for the future German welfare state. Thus, seeing it from a German perspective, the selection of the United Kingdom as comparative model carries a special meaning in this context.

However, the political context in which this research was started changed dramatically while it was realised. The fieldwork in 1998 coincided with the start of nationwide pilot projects for the New Deal for Lone Parents in the UK, following the landslide victory of Tony Blair and New Labour in 1997 after almost two decades of Conservative rule. In Germany, a Social Democrat government resumed office after 16 years of Christian Democrat rule under Helmut Kohl. Family policy reform has been high on the agenda ever since. Using data from 116 interviews with lone mothers in both countries the following questions will be answered: How do lone mothers mobilise support from informal and formal support sources? Do they make strategic decisions between informal and formal support sources? What impact do different welfare states have at their individual circumstances?

Thesis outline

This thesis consists of three parts. In the first part, circumstances of lone mothers in the UK and in Germany are examined. First, a general overview of different aspects of their lives as lone mothers is given based upon previous publications of the lone parent research and relevant national statistics in chapter 2. Following that, relevant services of the British and German welfare states for lone mothers are identified in chapter 3.

The second part contains theoretical and methodological foundations required to realise this research. In chapter 4 it is shown that basic assumptions of action, exchange, and social support theories in combination with those of social network analysis can be utilised to explain individual support mobilisation behaviour. These theoretical approaches were combined into an integrated model of support mobilisation from which the central research hypotheses of this thesis were deduced. These hypotheses are introduced in chapter 5 together with an outline of research methods and sampling procedures used to realise the ambitions of this research.

The third and most extensive part is devoted to the empirical results of this research. The descriptive chapter 6 serves the purpose of placing the data in a broader context of lone parent research. Aspects of the well-being of lone mothers in both samples are presented. An important source of support for lone parents are lone parent organisations. These voluntary organisations act as advocates of lone parent interests in the public and offer concrete support for lone parents in need. In chapter 7 two of these organisations are introduced and their services for lone parents are analysed. The interdependence between informal and formal support is examined in chapters 8 and 9. First, the utilisation of informal support is investigated in chapter 8. There, the controversial question of whether families or friends are the most important supporters is addressed. Secondly, in chapter 9 the utilisation of formal support is explored. Here, an overview of relevant state support and other formal supporters is provided. Finally, all results of this research are combined to prove the proposed interaction between informal and formal support mobilisation. In conclusion, implications of these findings for future policies are suggested. Considering the variety of information from the interviews, supplementary expert interviews, and content analysis it was my goal to select the most intriguing aspects of this research.

CHAPTER 2

LONE PARENTS IN GERMANY AND THE UK

Chapters 2 and 3 introduce the circumstances of lone parents in two contemporary welfare states. The importance of these chapters is the description of the research background that were crucial for the theoretical conceptualisation of this research. First, lone parents are defined as family form and relevant socio-demographic trends of the previous 30 years are outlined. The rapid growth in lone parenthood resulted in increased public and academic attention. Thus, knowledge of their specific circumstances is well established in the social sciences. Data that are relevant for this research are presented in chapter 2.

2.1. Defining Lone Parents

Cross-national comparative research has suffered from different national concepts of lone parents which results in different categorisations of statistical data (Roll 1992; Bradshaw et. al. 1996, 1998). There are two kinds of definitions that rely on different concepts. The first describes lone parenthood as a family form by stressing characteristics of social relatedness, of relations among individuals. The other perceives lone parent families merely as a distinct household type that is characterised by a particular way of pooling and sharing resources (Galler/Ott 1993).

The first official lone parent definition in Britain that is still widely used was proposed by the Finer Committee on One-Parent Families in 1974. It described lone parent families as "...a mother or father living without a spouse (and not cohabiting) with his or her never-married child or children aged either under 16 or from 16 to (under) 19 and undertaking full-time education." (DHSS 1974, quoted by Millar 1994: 40) Roll (1992) extended the Finer Committee's definition to include other adults as well. According to her, a lone parent "...is not living in a couple (meaning either married or a cohabiting couple); may or may not be living with others (for example friends or own parents); is living with at least one child under 18 years old..." (Roll 1992: 10) A similar definition can be found in Bradshaw et. al. (1996). Kiernan et al. (1998) agree that "Lone mother families may form a discrete household or they may be

living as part of a larger household...” (Kiernan et al. 1998: 23) but they distinguish very clearly between the concepts of family and household at the same time.

Millar (1994) claimed that it has become increasingly standard among British researchers to define lone parents as living with children, regardless of whether they live alone in the household or share with somebody else apart from their children. Advocates of such broad definitions usually claim that this approach comes closer to the complexity of real life circumstances of lone parents. Furthermore, it is often argued that lone parents' children belong to the family, regardless of whether they share the same household, as long as some sort of socio-economic dependency continues, for example, when their children go to university.

In contrast, many German researchers prefer precise definitions surrounding the notion of households. Mother with child or father with child respectively are regarded as basic household unit. That concept emphasises exclusion of individuals who are somehow related but do not “...live together and manage a joint budget...” (Lefranc 1994: 19) Nave-Herz/Krüger (1992) define lone parents in a sense that the terms ‘Alleinerziehende’ (i.e. someone who brings up children alone or following Ostner’s (1997) suggestion ‘lone carers’) or ‘Ein-Eltern-Familie’ (one-parent family) refer to families where only one parent has the responsibility for raising the children with whom s/he lives together in a household community. This concept is shared by the majority of German researchers (see, for example, Galler/Ott 1993; Klar/Sardei-Biermann 1996) and will also be used in this research. Thus, a parent whose children do not live in the same household will be regarded as single person rather than lone parent, regardless whether s/he has financially dependent children or not. The strength of this approach is that it gives a clear-cut definition of who belongs and who does not. Its weakness is that it does not take fully account of the variety of life forms in ‘real life’.

2.2. Demographic and social change

The subject of this section is the description of demographic trends that have occurred over the last 30 years. These trends include increasing divorce rates, extramarital births, and rising numbers of lone parents as well as children living in a household headed by one adult only.

The decline of marriage

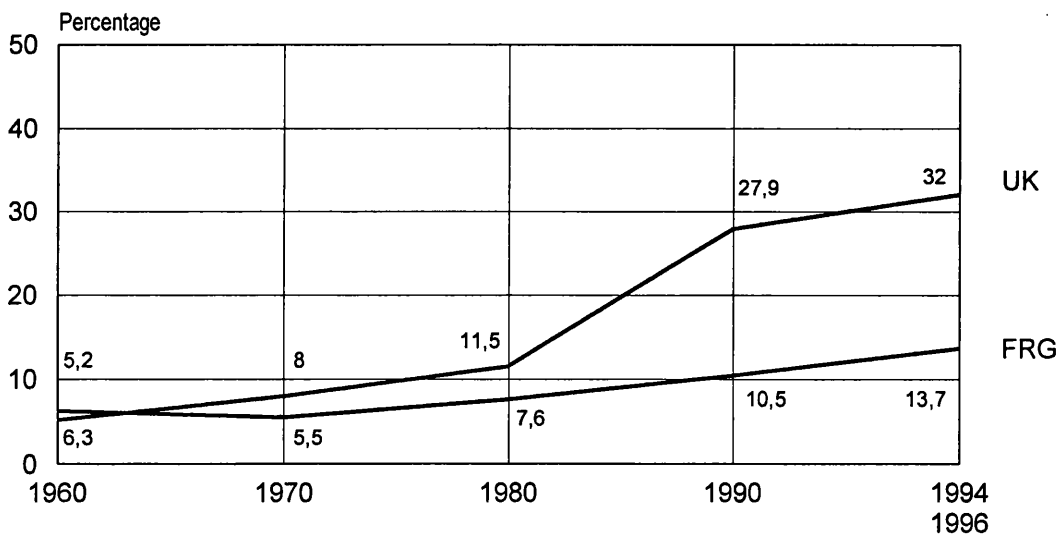
After the Second World War it was normal for most people in the Western world to get married before having children. Even if an unexpected pregnancy occurred marriage typically followed. The notion of 'modern bourgeois family' or 'Christian family' – which required a woman and a man to be married, to live in monogamy, and to have made a clear-cut division of labour with the husband adopting the role external to the household as male breadwinner and the wife the internal one as family carer had enjoyed great popularity. Nowadays this 'normality' has been extensively eroded. Parenthood has become increasingly detached from the institution of marriage. Marriage rates have steadily decreased in both West Germany and the UK since the early 1970s (Ostner 1997; BMFSFJ 1998; Kiernan et al. 1998). Not only did marriage occur less frequently than in the 1960s, there has also been a trend towards postponement. The median age at first marriage among British women increased from 21.4 years by 1970 to 25.3 years in 1993 (Kiernan et al. 1998). A similar trend occurred in West Germany where the marriage boom of the post-war years with women and men getting married at younger and younger ages reached its turning point in the mid 1970s. At the lowest ever marriage age after the Second World War in 1975 West German women got married at 22.7 years on average which increased to 27.7 years in 1996 (BMFSFJ 1998). Finally, higher further education participation rates of women have had an effect as well. Women spend more time in education nowadays, thereby deferring the birth of their first child (Blossfeld/Rohwer 1995; Ostner 1997).

The last 30 years have witnessed not only a substantive decline in marriage rates but also significantly increased divorce rates. Increasing divorce rates have been a crucial factor in the emergence of lone parenthood as a mass phenomenon. West German divorce rates in the late 1980s were almost three times higher than in 1960, whereas British divorce rates reached a six times higher level within the same period (Lewis 1993). British crude divorce rates are the highest in Europe (3.0 divorces per 1,000 average population), followed by the Scandinavian countries (2.5 to 2.7). The equivalent rates for West Germany are at 2.2 which places it in a middle position (Kiernan et al. 1998). Mounting divorce rates are not simply an indicator of increasing numbers of lone parents, they point towards rising numbers of people experiencing the circumstances of 'ever-married' lone parenthood which is different from the 'never-married' equivalent.

Another indicator of the decline of marriage are extramarital births. Increasing numbers of extramarital births are likely to indicate rising numbers of single, 'never-

married' mothers. Figure 2.1 gives an account of the rise of extramarital births in both the United Kingdom and West Germany. Whereas extramarital birth rates in the UK were at about the same level or even slightly lower than in West Germany in 1960/61 they increased at a higher pace during the 1960s and 1970s. The 1980s witnessed an explosion in numbers of births outside wedlock in the UK, almost trebling within a decade and reaching a stable plateau of about one third of births during the 1990s (Kiernan et al. 1998) which means that the rate is now more than six times higher than in 1960. West German extra-marital birth rates have increased at a steady pace, almost doubling by 1990 compared to 30 years earlier. Nevertheless, it is now three times lower than the equivalent rate in the UK.

Figure 2.1: Extramarital birth rates in West Germany (FRG) and the United Kingdom, 1960 – 1990 (in per cent)



Sources: Familienbericht 1994; Land/Lewis 1997; BMFSFJ 1998

The initial rise of extramarital birth rates in the 1950s and 1960s was mainly due to greater sexual activity prior to getting married. Sexual behaviour in the late 1960s/early 1970s was largely influenced by improvements in contraception. But unlike in the UK or the United States, early sexual experience did not result in large numbers of teenage mothers in West Germany. The 15 to 19 year olds account only for slightly more than five per cent of all West German single mothers – which means, in fact, even a slight *decrease* since the early 1960s (Schwarz 1995).

Since the early 1980s the emergence of widespread cohabitation was the main driving force behind the dramatic increase in extramarital births in Britain (Kiernan et al. 1998) – which also emphasises the point not to draw the oversimplified conclusion

that there is a monocausal relationship between extramarital birth rates and numbers of lone parents. In West Germany, however, cohabitation is a phenomenon predominantly popular among the very young that is characterised by short duration (median duration: three years (Ostner 1997)). Cohabiting partners either marry within few years or split up again. Fewer than three per cent of West German cohabitation households contain children (Peschel-Gutzeit/Jenckel 1996). But since divorcees tend not to re-marry soon, their numbers are likely to increase. Cohabitation after dissolution of previous marriage is not exactly a new phenomenon – but it is now far more widespread. Even more important, there is no pressure to find a new marriage partner soon after divorce because cohabitation offers a feasible economic and social alternative. What is new, though, is the prevalence of cohabitation amongst never-married, young people in their twenties and early thirties who either have increasingly accepted cohabitation as alternative to marriage or see it as test period with fewer commitments that precedes future marriage. The latter has become norm rather than exception amongst the under 35s (Kiernan et al. 1998). All these diverse trends contributed to the separation of marriage and parenthood, thus making cohabitation a publicly recognised alternative to marriage. Postponement of marriage, decreasing propensity to get married in the first place, and a higher likelihood of getting divorced have increased ‘the risk of an out-of-wedlock birth’ (Kiernan et al. 1998) because both women and men are sexually active outside marriage for a longer period.

The rise of lone parenthood

According to Statistisches Bundesamt (the Federal Statistics Office in Germany), more than 1.3 million lone parents with children aged under 18 lived in West Germany in 1998, that is 17.4 per cent of all family households (Statistisches Bundesamt 2000a). Compared to 1970 numbers have almost doubled (Peuckert 1996; BMFSFJ 1998; Statistisches Bundesamt 2000a). Nearly 1.6 million children¹ live with a lone parent in West Germany (Bauerreiss et al. 1997). That means, nearly 13 per cent of children aged under 18 in West Germany were living with a lone parent. This is significantly less than in Britain where one in five dependent children were living in one-parent families in 1995 (Haskey 1998). Lone parents in the UK have almost trebled in numbers within the last 20 years, from 570,000 in 1971 to almost 1.7 million in 1996, caring for 2.8 million

¹ children aged under 18

children (Haskey 1998). That means that nearly one in every four British families with dependent children is a one-parent family (Ford et al. 1998). Being a lone parent is a predominantly female problem in both countries: 82 per cent in West Germany and 95 per cent in the UK are lone mothers (Statistisches Bundesamt 2000a; Ford et al. 1998). That means, that the proportion of households headed by a lone mother in Britain has quadrupled between 1961 and 1994, from around five per cent of all households to more than 20 per cent (Kiernan et al. 1998).

These figures are the best estimates currently available based on national official statistics in both countries. However, they are not based on equivalent populations – and, thus, are not strictly comparable. Whereas official statistics commissioned by the Department of (Health and) Social Security in Britain have used the Finer Commission's definition of lone parents since 1974, German official statistics have suffered from the deficiency that they make no clear distinction between lone parents and cohabiting parents with children (Klar/Sardei-Biermann 1996; BMFSFJ 1998; Statistisches Bundesamt 1998). This fact has long been recognised and was criticised by the authors of a recent German parliamentary report on the situation of families, the so-called '*Fünfter Familienbericht*' (1994) (Fifth Family Report) but to date has not been changed. Consequently, it is difficult to get a clear idea of how many lone parents there are in Germany at any point in time. The above mentioned number of 1.3 million lone parents for West Germany is, thus, a conservative estimate based on Microcensus data using a narrow definition of lone parenthood.

Table 2.1: Lone parent families and children in one-parent families in West Germany (1998) and the UK (1996)

	West Germany	United Kingdom
Number of one-parent families	1,307,000	1,690,000
Proportion of families with dep. children	17 %	24 %
Proportion of lone mothers	82 %	95 %
Dependent children in one-parent families	1,600,000	2,800,000
Proportion of dependent children	13 %	20 %
Proportion of lone mothers on IS/SH ²	25 %	67 %

Sources: Bauerreiss et al. 1997; BMFSFJ 1998; Ford et al. 1998; Haskey 1998; Kiernan et al. 1998; Statistisches Bundesamt 2000a

It is important to be aware that being a lone parent is a dynamic process. Only few lone parents have lived in this family form for more than ten years, the majority of lone

parents re-partner at some stage of their lives. Some of them may divorce or separate and become lone parents again. Thus, lone parenthood has become a *life-cycle stage* (Ford/Millar 1998) many more individuals pass through than there are lone parents at any point in time. In other words, an entirely cross-sectional perspective can be misleading because it ignores any person who was a lone parent or a child of a lone parent prior to the observation period. Not only has the absolute number of lone parents at a particular point of time increased, the proportion of individuals who have ever been lone parents at any time of their lives has risen as well. Ermisch/Francesconi (2000) estimated based on BHPS data that 40 per cent of all British mothers will have sole responsibility for raising their children at some point. There are even more children who will pass a phase of lone parenthood once in their lifetime. This is an important indicator for child poverty because many lone parents have a disposable income below the poverty line (Piachaud/Sutherland 2001). Furthermore, these children have experienced family life that is quite different from that in two-parent families, regardless of whether that means negative aspects, such as the trauma of experiencing one's parents separation or the absence of a (permanent) father figure or more positive ones like a closer relationship to the remaining parent.

2.3. Structural characteristics of lone mother families

The subject of the following sub-chapter are structural characteristics of lone parent families headed by women. The first section focuses on their marital status, age and duration of lone parenthood, as well as number and age of their children. Lone mothers can be distinguished according to their marital status (never-married vs. ever-married) and their age which indicate differences in lifestyle and previous work experience or access to a wider support network and resources. Number and age of children give further hints regarding the amount of support needed as well as support and resources available within their own families.

Demographic characteristics of lone mothers

Never-married vs. ever-married lone mothers

Basically speaking, there are three different routes into lone motherhood: death of partner, partnership breakdown, and having a child without having a partner. Whereas

² IS stands for Income Support, SH for the German equivalent 'Sozialhilfe', i.e. Social Assistance.

death of the partner was the most frequent cause of lone motherhood at the beginning of the 20th century (Rosenbaum 1978; Kiernan et al. 1998) it has rapidly diminished in the second half of that century and today only plays a minor role in terms of numbers. What matters most nowadays is whether lone motherhood was caused by the breakdown of a long-term relationship or whether a woman got pregnant while being on her own. The term ‘never-married’ was originally dedicated to women who got pregnant without being married. It now also includes women who separated from cohabitation. As noted earlier, cohabitation has become a widespread phenomenon since the early 1980s, particularly among younger people who prefer to ‘test’ a long-term relationship before committing themselves to marriage (Kiernan et al. 1998). Women who separated from long-term cohabitation may be in similar circumstances to those of divorced or married, separated mothers. However, cohabiting couples tend to have lived together for a shorter period and tend to be younger than married couples. Post-marital motherhood carries the mark of emotional crisis following partnership breakdown. Divorced women may have got to terms with their new situation better than married, living separated women whose partnership breakdown experience tends to be more recent and who tend not to have reached an agreement with their former partners concerning maintenance, custody, and other related issues yet.

The next table contains information regarding the marital status of lone parents. It is unfortunate that neither German official statistics nor major surveys in Germany like GSOEP, Family Survey, or Microcensus subdivided the common category ‘single, never-married’ into separate sub-categories ‘separated from cohabitation’ and ‘separated, never partnered’ – as the authors of the DSS/PSI commissioned PRILIF survey did (see, for example, Ford et al. 1995; Ford et al. 1998).

Table 2.2: Marital status of lone mothers (in per cent of all lone mothers)

Marital status	United Kingdom (1994)	West Germany (1994)³
Single, never married	38	26
Divorced	33	45
Married, living separated	24	18
Widowed	5	10

Sources: own calculations based on Kiernan et al. 1998; Klar/Sardei-Biermann 1996

³ Both BMFSFJ 1998 and Statistisches Bundesamt 2000a contained more recent Microcensus data but distinguished only three categories (single, married-separated/divorced, widowed) (tab. 21, p. 57) that thus do not provide satisfactory accuracy.

Almost half of German lone mothers are divorced. That compares with only a third of British lone mothers. The single largest proportion of British lone mothers are single, never married mothers, accounting for 38 per cent and thus significantly more than in West Germany where never-married mothers only account for a quarter of all lone mothers. If one was using PRILIF categories instead of the common, uniform category for single, never-married mothers – using the same proportions as Ford and colleagues (1998) in tab. 2.1, p. 18 – those 38 per cent would translate into 26 per cent ‘separated from cohabitation’ and 12 per cent ‘separated, never partnered’. The number of mothers who are still married but live apart from their husbands is smaller but still significant in both countries: almost a quarter in the UK and more than a sixth in West Germany. Unsurprisingly, widowed mothers form the smallest proportion in both countries, with twice as many in West Germany as in the UK.

Age

Age is another important demographic characteristic that influences the circumstances of lone mothers. Table 2.3 on the next page gives an overview of the age distribution among lone mothers. As a general trend, lone mothers in the UK are younger than those in West Germany. 17 per cent of British lone mothers are aged under 25, whereas only five per cent of West German lone mothers are that young. This reflects the relatively high numbers of teenage mothers in the UK, compared with other European countries that was documented in all major publications concerning lone motherhood in the UK. The single largest block in both countries are mothers in their 30s, accounting for a third in the UK and 43 per cent in West Germany. Remarkably, almost a third of West German lone mothers are in their 40s whereas only 13 per cent of British lone mothers fall into the same category. This high proportion among West German lone mothers is an account of those women who decided to advance their career first before having children. Most of them did not envisage lone motherhood as solution but found themselves in partnerships that ended in dissolution once the child was born. Unsurprisingly, only few lone mothers are older than 50. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that their proportion is four times higher in West Germany than in the UK.

Table 2.3: Age distribution of lone mothers (in per cent of all lone mothers)

Age cohort of lone mothers	United Kingdom (1995)	West Germany (1994)
< 25	17	(5) ⁴
25 – 29	21	19
30 – 39	33	43
40 – 49	13	30
50+	2	8

Sources: Haskey 1998; Klar/Sardei-Biermann 1996; BMSFJ 1998

Age of lone mothers does not only matter as indicators of different circumstances. Age is also an important determinant of duration of lone parenthood spells. Generally speaking, the younger a woman, the more likely is she to remarry or to re-partner. The likelihood to do so decreases with age as well as age of her youngest child (Klar/Sardei-Biermann 1996; Ford et al. 1998; Kiernan et al. 1998). Ermisch (1991) showed that single parents are more likely to move together with a new partner. Ford et al. (1998) found that 60 per cent of lone parents⁵ interviewed for the PRILIF survey were still lone parents four years later. Two thirds of those 40 per cent who managed to leave lone parenthood had re-partnered, another third's children had left home. Ermisch/Francesconi (2000) found that half of British lone mothers re-partnered within less than four and a half years.

Rowlingson/McKay's (1998) findings from in-depth interviews with 44 never-married and post-marital mothers indicate that never-married mothers are significantly younger than ever-married ones, with an average entry age into lone parenthood of 22 years compared to 29 years for post-marital mothers. Among them, single women who never cohabited before were youngest with an average entry age of 19 years, whereas the average entry age for mothers who either cohabited in the past or separated from cohabitation was similar at 25 years for the former and 27 years for the latter. By far the oldest were those who separated from marriage, with an average entry age of 31 years. This general trend of single, never-married women being younger than separated and divorced ones who, in turn, are younger than widowed ones is confirmed by Kiernan et al. (1998) (median age of never-married mothers 26, separated/divorced 35, widowed 41 years).

⁴ Lone parents aged 18 to 55 were interviewed in the Family Survey. The youngest age category was under 30. The estimate of 5 per cent falling into the category of lone mothers aged under 25 resulted from own calculations based on tab. 5, p. 25 in BMFSFJ 1998 (1996 Microcensus data).

⁵ 95 per cent of lone parents in the PRILIF survey were lone mothers (Ford et al. 1998).

Duration of lone parenthood

As mentioned in the previous section, lone parenthood is a dynamic process. Only few people remain lone mothers until their children grow up and leave their mothers' home. Most lone mothers re-partner at some stage. A significant proportion of the population is likely to experience being a lone parent or living with a lone parent at some point of their lives, with all its consequences in terms of potential lifestyle, social and economic deprivation. Employing the method of life-history analysis at longitudinal BHPS data Ermisch/Francesconi (1996) calculated a median duration of lone parenthood for post-marital mothers of approximately four years while that for never-married mothers was less than two years – provided entry rates into lone motherhood as they existed during the 1980s would prevail. Based on these findings they estimate that every third mother in the UK would have experienced lone motherhood by the age of 45 and every fourth mother would have left lone motherhood again by forming a cohabiting or married couple.

As shown in table 2.4 below Klar/Sardei-Biermann's (1996) analysis of Family Survey data produced a bizarre pattern of an entirely even distribution. This can only give a rough idea of cross-national differences. British lone mothers seem to experience a higher degree of fluctuation in their partnerships: almost a third remains a lone parent for less than two years, two thirds for less than five years (Ford et al. 1995) – compared with a quarter of West German lone mothers remaining lone parents for less than two years and half for less than five years.

Table 2.4: Duration of lone parenthood (in per cent of all lone parents)

Duration of Lone parenthood	United Kingdom (1993)	West Germany (1994)
Less than 2 years	32	25
2 to < 5 years	34	25
5 to < 10 years	22	25
10+ years	12	25 ⁶

Sources: Ford et al. 1995; Klar/Sardei-Biermann 1996

Only slightly more than ten per cent of British lone mothers continue to be that for more than ten years, compared with a quarter of West German lone mothers. Whereas Klar/Sardei-Biermann (1996) could not identify a correlation between marital status and

⁶ Almost 5 per cent indicated to have been a lone mother for 15 years or more, with a maximum of 28 years.

duration of lone motherhood for West German lone mothers Ermisch/Francesconi (1996) found that never-married British lone mothers remained lone parents for less than two years and thus less than half as long as ever-married lone mothers. Lone parents in the UK are not only younger than German ones they also tend to leave lone parenthood earlier.

However, these estimates do not necessarily mean that a third of the British population is likely to experience lone motherhood. Formation of new partnerships is even more problematic after having gone through lone parenthood before. Prospective partners are likely to bring in children of their own – which makes new relationships potentially more fragile. Problems with new partners' children as well as having had the experience to be able to cope on one's own results in these partnerships carrying an even higher risk of getting dissolved again. Ermisch/Francesconi (1996) provide evidence that every fourth step-family dissolves within a year and that cohabiting couples are twice as likely as married couples to break up soon again.

Lone mothers' children

Two other crucial determinants of a one-parent families circumstances are number and age of children in the household. Number of children affects availability and distribution of resources. There are going to be less resources per capita if they have to be distributed among more children. The following table 2.5 gives an indication of the number of children living with lone mothers in West Germany and the UK.

Table 2.5: Number of dependent children living with a lone mother
(in per cent of all lone mothers)

Dependent children living with lone mother	United Kingdom (1995)	West Germany (1996)
1 child	47	67
2 children	34	26
3+ children	19	7

Sources: Ford et al. 1998; BMFSFJ 1998

The results are in line with general fertility trends in both countries: women in the UK tend to have more children than West German women. Two thirds of West German lone mothers have only one child, compared with nearly half of British lone mothers. Another third of lone mothers in the UK have two children but only a quarter of West German lone mothers do. The difference becomes most obvious with lone mother

families having three and more children. Whereas their proportion in the UK is still significant with nearly a fifth of all lone parent families they are the rare exception in West Germany where they merely account for seven per cent of all lone mothers. What is noteworthy, though, is the fact that in most Western countries couples are twice as likely to have three or more children than lone mothers – only in the UK there is no difference between mothers living in partnerships and lone mothers in this respect (Bradshaw et. al. 1996).

British lone mothers tend to have more children than West German ones. This is true for all types of post-marital as well as single motherhood. Contrarily, all types of West German lone mothers account for higher proportions of one-child families. Looking at each category separately, differences between never-married mothers in both countries are particularly striking. The vast majority of almost three quarters of West German single mothers – twice as many as British single mothers – have one child only whereas the percentage of West German single mothers having three and more children is much smaller than in the UK. Once again, West German lone mothers in general and single mothers in particular have far fewer children than West German couples, a trend which does not hold for the UK. Another striking difference between both samples can be observed when looking at lone mothers who separated from marriage: more than half of West German mothers in this category have two children, compared with only slightly more than a third in Britain (Klar/Sardei-Biermann 1996; Ford et al. 1998).

Children's age is perhaps even more important because it determines a lone mother's likelihood of taking the opportunity for employment. If a lone mother cannot rely on her informal support networks for childcare or is unable to purchase childcare she cannot take up employment. Even if she manages to get a job for a couple of hours only, part-time employment tends to be poorly paid. Thus, the age of a lone mothers' youngest child becomes the crucial determinant of her capacity to work (Bradshaw et. al. 1996). Table 2.6 below contains an overview of the proportions of lone mothers' children in pre-school, primary school, secondary school, and higher education age.

Table 2.6: Age of dependent children living with a lone mother
(in per cent of all lone mothers)

Age of dependent children living with lone mother	United Kingdom (1995)	West Germany (1996)
pre-school age ⁷	43	36
primary school age	31	21
secondary school age	20	22
older and in full-time education ⁸	5	22

Sources: Ford et al. 1998; own calculations based on Microcensus data in BMFSFJ 1998

There is a striking difference in numbers of older children (aged 16 to 18 years) in full-time education: the proportion of all children in lone mother families in West Germany is, at 22 per cent, more than four times higher than in the UK. This largely reflects differences in the age distribution of lone mothers themselves or differential further education take-up in general.

2.4. Packaging income – income sources available to lone mothers

Earned income is the most important source of income for many households in contemporary Western societies. Lone mothers, however, face a number of obstacles to enter the labour market. Thus, many of them have to look for alternative sources of income. Some authors have used the term of ‘income packaging’ (see, for example, Finlayson/Marsh 1998) to describe lone mothers’ attempts to increase their household’s incomes from a number of different formal and informal sources, including employment, social benefits, and support provided by friends and family. The subject of the following section are lone mothers’ use of formal income sources: labour market participation and receipt of social benefits.

Employment and earned income

Women’s labour market participation has much increased since the 1960s. As a consequence, many couples increased their incomes significantly by having two incomes rather than one. At the same time, there are many households that do not even have a single earner. Lone mothers are in a particularly difficult situation since they have to be both breadwinner and family carer at the same time. Labour market participation of mothers with very young children is particularly low. This section

⁷ Preschool age in the UK means under 5 while German children start school when they are aged 6.

explores characteristics of lone mothers' labour market participation as well as obstacles towards it resulting from household structural factors, such as age of the youngest child or number of children. These problems are faced by British and West German lone mothers alike. Nevertheless, there are significant differences in labour market participation rates in both countries. These are particularly striking when compared with employment rates of married women. The following table 2.7 compares the employment status of lone vs. married mothers in both countries.

Table 2.7: Full-time vs. part-time employment of lone mothers (LM) compared with married mothers (MM) (percentages of all lone/married mothers)

Employment status	United Kingdom (1995)		West Germany (1996)	
	LM	MM	LM	MM
Full-time employed	19	21	44	25
Part-time employed	18	37	13	27
All employed	37	58	57	52

Sources: Duncan/Edwards 1997b; BMFSFJ 1998

The most striking difference between both countries is found when comparing employment rates of lone mothers. Not only is the proportion of employed lone mothers in West Germany 20 per cent higher than in the UK, it is even higher than that of married mothers in West Germany. This comparative advantage in labour market participation rates of lone mothers is generally the case in West Germany, regardless of number of children and age of the youngest child (Bauerreiss et al. 1997; Ostner 1997). Contrarily, labour market participation rates of British lone mothers are much lower than those of married mothers in Britain. Also in sharp contrast to the UK, the high percentage of West German lone mothers in employment is mainly due to a relatively high proportion in full-time employment.

The question is how these results are to be interpreted. Do they mean that West German lone mothers enjoy a much higher degree of economic independence than their British contemporaries? West German lone mothers and voluntary organisations campaigning on their behalf are very reluctant to confirm any judgement describing lone mothers in West Germany as being in an economically good position. Lone mothers are the sole breadwinners of their families while incomes earned by women in married

⁸ This number includes 17/18 years olds in full-time education in the UK and Germany. It does not include students in higher education.

couples mostly supplement their husbands income⁹ – a claim which is supported by relatively high part-time employment rates among married women with children. Moreover, as recent research pointed out lone mothers in West Germany face many obstacles to work. Many employers prefer not to employ lone mothers because they expect them to be out of work several times per year due to illness of a child. Therefore, lone mothers are not in the position to make great demands. They generally work longer and less favourable working hours than married mothers, even if in part-time employment. Twice as many lone mothers than married or cohabiting mothers work more than 40 hours per week (Niepel 1994a). Even lone mothers with higher qualifications often reduce their ambitions and settle for relatively low paid jobs that can be more easily combined with the demands of family life (Niepel 1994a). Lone mothers also see themselves more at risk of being sacked than married mothers (Schilling/Groß 1992). Thus, the high proportion of West German lone mothers working full-time appears to be a result of need as much as of lone mothers' desire to become independent of men and to liberate themselves from patriarchal structures. Their position in the labour market only appears in a favourable light compared with others in an even worse position – such as the average lone mother in Britain.

Although British lone mothers face the same structural challenge of being the sole breadwinner of their families their employment rates are much lower. As recently as in the early 1970s more single and divorced mothers were in full-time than in part-time employment. Nowadays, the opposite is the case. British mothers in couples have much higher employment rates than lone mothers, even more than double the rate of lone mothers with children in pre-school age (Ford 1998). Many lone mothers are keen on getting employed but the high costs of childcare in Britain as well as the prospect of getting caught in the poverty trap between low wages to gain and benefits and subsidies to lose deters them from taking up a job. This view was confirmed by a number of studies (see, for example, Bradshaw/Millar 1991; McKay/Marsh 1994; Bradshaw et. al. 1996; Bryson et al. 1997; Ford et al. 1998).

Bradshaw et al. (1996) isolated several demographic characteristics of British lone parents that make them particularly unlikely to be employed, including the large proportion of single, never-married women aged under 25 and the relatively high

⁹ According to Ostner (1997), the strong male-breadwinner focus of German society has been shifting towards a more flexible approach in recent years that expects women to contribute to a household's income. In times of increasingly insecure jobs it would be too risky to rely entirely on one income.

proportion among them who have very young children and/or more than one child. The major determinant of lone mothers' likelihood to get employed is the age of her youngest child (Bradshaw et al. 1996), followed by the number of children. Employment rates of West German and British lone mothers in dependence from their children's age are summarised in the following table.

Table 2.8: Employment rates of lone mothers by age of youngest child
(percentage of all lone mothers in that category)

	United Kingdom (1993)	Germany (united)¹⁰ (1994)
pre-school age	23	53
primary school age	49	67
secondary school age	59	67 ¹¹

Sources: Kiernan et al. 1998; Bauerreiss et al. 1997

These results confirm the universal trend that lone mothers' employment chances increase with age of their youngest child. Less than a quarter of British lone mothers with children in pre-school age go out for work, compared to more than half of German ones. The gap in employment rates narrows with increasing age of the child – but does not close. Since the enormous differences in labour market participation cannot be attributed to cultural factors like different attitudes towards employment, structural variables gain explanatory power. Bradshaw et al. (1996) identified cost differentials in childcare provision as crucial factor determining low or high labour market participation cross-nationally. Following a decision by the *Bundesverfassungsgericht* (German Constitutional Court) every child in pre-school age older than three years old is entitled to a place in a public kindergarten or nursery. Although West German local authorities still face difficulties to realise this there has been widespread provision of subsidised – and, thus, affordable – public childcare. Nevertheless, many West German lone mothers still face difficulties in finding childcare (Klett-Davies 1997).

In Britain pre-school childcare has always been seen as an entirely private matter. Pre-school public childcare never played a major part in childcare provision and even

¹⁰ German data used here refer to the united Germany rather than West Germany. This is unproblematic because lone mothers' employment rates in West and East Germany have approximated by the mid 1990s – though by contradicting trends. Whereas Eastern rates dropped sharply by nearly 20 per cent – due to the effects of mass unemployment that has affected women in the East even more than men – those in most Western federal states have increased since the 1980s (for more details see Bauerreiss et al. 1997). The major difference between both parts is in employment structure with even more women in East Germany working full-time (BMFSFJ 1998).

¹¹ Bauerreiss et al. (1997) do not differentiate between primary and secondary school age.

decreased during the 1980s and 1990s. Whereas childcare provision in the private and voluntary sectors has increased at rates of several hundred per cent the public sector lost more than 50 per cent of its playgroups and a fifth of its day nurseries between 1987 and 1992 (Kiernan et al. 1998). Following that, the majority of British lone mothers, particularly those with pre-school age children who could not afford to purchase childcare in the private market have had to rely on their parents or other relatives for regular childcare. Those whose relatives could not provide that kind of support because they were either employed themselves or too old or too sick did not have much other choice than to stay at home. On the other hand, Ford (1996, 1998) pointed out that the particularly low employment uptake of lone mothers with pre-school age children is partly due to choice. It is a widely respected social norm that mothers of very young children are expected to stay with them until they reached a certain degree of independence. However, this norm applies universally to all women in the UK and Germany. Though Ford is right in warning of oversimplified monocausal explanations focusing on childcare alone it does not explain cross-national differences.

Other crucial factors that may explain differences in employment rates are related to wage levels and certain structural features of welfare regimes. A lone mother will certainly consider how much she is likely to gain from employment. The actual wage, however, is only part of a complex individual decision making process involving many aspects related to each other. Wage levels may give incentives or disincentives to find a job. But employment does not only result in financial gains – it also involves losses of benefits (most notably Housing Benefit), higher childcare rates and loss of other, so-called ‘passported’¹² benefits. These losses take immediate effect while the first salary is paid later. Moreover, social benefit payments come in regularly and reliably – which is not necessarily the case with earnings (Rowlingson/McKay 1998). Therefore, the transition period to employment is particularly difficult for lone mothers. Many lone mothers in the UK have come to the conclusion that it is not worth taking a part-time or any other low-paid job because it cannot counterbalance the parallel loss of benefits – they are caught in the poverty trap.

The case of West German lone mothers gives an example of how built-in structures of social welfare regimes can influence long-term decisions on employment. The

¹² *Passported* benefits are provided based upon proven need – therefore the term ‘passported’. They include Housing Benefit and childcare disregards for recipients of Income Support but also free school meals, free school uniforms, or free entry to some public facilities, such as leisure centres, etc.

German welfare state provides relatively generous retirement pensions based on life-long social insurance contributions which advantages the continuously employed, skilled and well-paid worker who can afford the monthly contributions – typically the male breadwinner of the past. The non-working wife would be entitled to an, in fact, contribution free old age pension that is derived from her husband's contribution record whereas single and divorced women have to earn their own contribution record in order to get a pension in old age. The *Bundesverfassungsgericht* recently ruled that the state has to pay social insurance contributions on behalf of mothers in recognition of their family work which means that mothers will be compulsory insured for three years after birth per child without having to pay contributions. Nevertheless, this mechanism still provides a very powerful incentive for many women in Germany to return to work sooner rather than later.

Ford (1998) isolated potential gains and potential losses involved in making decisions on work. Gains are net wage, social benefits encouraging employment, in-work benefits, a positive impact on the child's development by giving an example and, of course, by increasing opportunities thanks to a higher disposable income. Potential losses, apart from 'good mothering' include 'the stress of reconciling childcare and work', children's dislike of childcare away from home, and loss of social benefits. It is important not to underestimate the impact of passported benefits (see footnote on previous page) which are lost once a certain earnings or working hour threshold was passed, such as Housing Benefit, childcare disregard, etc. Ford (1998) argues based on data obtained from interviews with lone mothers that none of these factors are sufficient on their own to determine the outcome of whether one gets employed or not. It is the combination of all these factors whereby change in any of these factors can tip the balance. Thus – as Duncan/Edwards (1997b, 1999) pointed out – the more pressing issue in the British debate is how to get lone mothers into decently paid jobs rather than getting them into employment at all.

Trapped in poverty?

Not only has the absolute number of lone parents at a particular point of time increased, the proportion of individuals who have ever been lone parents at any time of their lives has risen as well. There are even more children who will pass through a phase of lone parenthood once in their lifetime. This trend has far-reaching implications. Having experienced life of a lone parent is related to particular living conditions that are very

often characterised by a high degree of socio-economic deprivation and social isolation. In the UK, the proportion of children living in one-parent families disposing of an income below the poverty line increased from one in ten in the late 1970s to one in three in the early 1990s (Kiernan et al. 1998). Using data from the Luxembourg Income Survey, Bradshaw (1998) estimated that even nearly half of British children living with a lone parent are living in poverty, a percentage that rises to 64 per cent if the lone parent does not earn any income whereas still 28 per cent of employed lone parents' children live in poverty. This dramatic situation is worsened by the aftermath of partnership breakdown (Bradshaw/Millar 1991; Ford et. al. 1995).

Everyone involved in either family or poverty research in Germany has stressed the particularly poor economic circumstances lone mothers face (see, for example, Neubauer 1988; Nave-Herz/Krüger 1992; Wingen 1997). Lone parents in Germany are the family type with the lowest disposable income. About 50 per cent in West Germany lived on an income of less than DM 2,000 per month in 1996, more than a third had to cope with less than DM 1,000 per month (BMFSFJ 1998). Deprived economic circumstances are also reflected in the lack of consumables that are part of the standard equipment of average family households (Neubauer 1988).

The correlation between employment status and poverty is long established. Employment patterns among British lone mothers are characterised by low employment rates, combined with high levels of poverty. British lone mothers received 63 per cent of their income from state benefits in 1993. Only 24 per cent of their income came from earnings income, with maintenance almost insignificant in real terms, accounting for just 9 per cent of lone mothers' household incomes (Ford et al. 1995). Noticeably in case of part-time employed lone parents working more than 16 hours per week was the impact of Family Credit¹³ payments on top of their earnings. Income Support is, by far, the most important income source for economically inactive lone parents as well as for those in part-time employment up to 16 hours per week. It covers about 80 per cent of income of the former and still nearly two thirds of that of part-time workers. Noticeably high is the proportion of income of part-time employed lone parents in Britain that is derived from other sources (more than a quarter in case of those working up to 16 hours and about a sixth in case of those working more than 16 hours). This may be an indication of informal support networks. Some authors argue that there are in-built

¹³ Fieldwork for this research was conducted in 1998 when Family Credit was still relevant.

mechanisms that effectively discourage lone parents from taking up work (Bradshaw et. al. 1996).

In West Germany too, household income of lone mothers correlates with employment status – which, in turn, is determined by the age of the youngest child. Most mothers with very young children stay with them until their third birthday when they are old enough to go to kindergarten. This decision is largely influenced by the German *Erziehungsurlaub/Erziehungsgeld* (parental leave/parental leave benefit) legislation that provides mothers of very young children with a powerful incentive to stay at home with their children until their second (in some federal states until their third) birthday. Generally speaking, the older the youngest child, the greater the likelihood that the lone mother is in employment and the higher her household income. Part of the problem is, however, that lone mothers of very young children tend to be younger themselves and, thus, either not having completed training or study yet or lacking experience in the job which results in lower wages. Hence, single mothers who tend to be youngest and also are most likely not to be employed dispose of lowest household incomes. Three quarters of West German lone mothers dispose of a monthly income below DM 3,000 (Klar/Sardei-Biermann 1996) – but compared to an average net household income of DM 5,880 (BMFSFJ 1998) for families with children it looks rather poor. Seven per cent have even less than DM 1,000.

Using receipt of *Sozialhilfe* (Social Assistance) as indicator of poverty¹⁴, slightly more than a fifth of children in West German lone mother households lived in poverty in 1994 (Ostner 1997). Bradshaw (1998) speaks of a quarter of all West German lone mothers who were on Sozialhilfe in 1993, compared to more than two thirds dependent on Income Support at the same time in Britain. Data from the German Socio-Economic Panel appear to indicate that poverty among West German lone mothers was significantly reduced within a decade from more than a third in 1984 to a quarter in the unified Germany in 1994 – despite of much higher poverty rates among East German lone mothers (Ostner 1997). Weick (1996) explains this unexpected result as consequence of increasing Sozialhilfe use combined with other benefits¹⁵ by lone parents. In contrast, poor employed or unemployed families who were not in receipt of these benefits remained in poverty.

¹⁴ Sozialhilfe payments in Germany roughly match the EU wide poverty threshold of 50 per cent of median equivalent household income (Ostner 1997).

¹⁵ The in 1986 implemented parental leave legislation is likely to have had an effect here.

Deprivation of financial means is only one side of poverty. Lack of money means, in fact, that many lone mothers who are excluded from a lot of social activities due to difficulties in organising childcare, are further constrained because they cannot afford to go out or to invite guests. Many lone mothers have to move following separation. Lone mothers are often discriminated against by private landlords who fear problems with other tenants (Swientek 1989). In this social climate, the urgent need to find a new home as soon as possible combined with the trauma of separation they have been going through leads many to accept comparatively high rents (Niepel 1994a)¹⁶. As a consequence of insufficient financial means many lone mothers live in flats that are too small (Neubauer 1988; Mädje/Neusüß 1996). They are over-represented in social housing (Flade et al. 1991) which often means living in a family unfriendly environment with poor infrastructure and relatively high levels of criminality and deviant behaviour (Neubauer 1988; Mädje/Neusüß 1996).

Lone mothers in Germany and the UK are affected by income poverty in varying degrees. Various sources come to different conclusions where poverty rates are higher. Bradshaw (1998) provided evidence that post-transfer poverty rates for British lone mothers were lower than those in Germany although pre-transfer measures indicate the opposite. Behrendt (2000) confirmed the more powerful effect of means-tested benefits in alleviating poverty in the UK. On the other hand, Weick (1999) provided evidence that children in the UK are far more affected by poverty than German ones.

2.5. Lone motherhood – a case for state intervention?

Lone parenthood is almost synonymous with poverty of women with children. “Lone parent families are one of the most disadvantaged groups in society. Two-thirds rely on income support equivalent to half the amount estimated as necessary to achieve a modest but adequate living standard” (Ford/Millar 1998: 13) A broad variety of research regarding socio-economic circumstances of families showed that to have children means a significantly increased risk of being affected by poverty (Kiernan et al. 1998; Armutsbericht 2001; Piachaud/Sutherland 2001). Jones/Millar (1996) speak of 14 million people on incomes lower than 50 per cent of an average income in the UK. 4.3 million or a third of these are children. Moreover, Bradshaw’s (1993) findings indicate

¹⁶ Additionally, landlords in Germany are entitled to increase rents substantially when they make a contract with a new tenant.

that relative poverty of families has sharply increased over the last 15 years and absolute poverty has not diminished.

Some studies point out the immediate effects of deprived circumstances on children (see, for example, Kempson et. al. 1994; Middleton et. al. 1994) and long-term effects in terms of diminished life chances due to knock-on effects in school and labour market, others suggest that it may cause learning difficulties (Burghes 1994) and deviant behaviour (Morgan 1995). Poverty means more than lack of money. It refers to a general lack of resources without which the poor are effectively excluded from society (Cochrane 1993).

Changes in the division of labour within family households have been much less significant than those in public life. Paid productive work is emphasised as being productive whereas non-paid household work is regarded as inferior (Land 1989). This situation is paradoxical because the ascription of responsibility for household matters to women was the precondition for the emergence of modernity, thus enabling the division of living and working place which is seen as a constitutional moment of modernity (Beck 1986; Beck/Beck-Gernsheim 1990; Leibfried et. al. 1991; Fox Harding 1996). In the long run birth and upbringing of children is precondition for any formal provision of social welfare. The sophisticated social security systems of modern welfare states rely on a generation contract – be it through PAYG social insurance schemes or taxes to fund non-insurance based benefits. Moreover, basic education as well as emotional needs are satisfied in families. Especially the latter cannot be realised elsewhere. Lewis (1989) argued that families have always provided the largest proportion of overall welfare. Families reproduce society as such as well as norms and values which belong to a distinct social system. Therefore modern societies should have an interest in providing formal support in order to maintain their standards of social welfare provision (Kaufmann 1990; Huinink 1995).

Lone mothers have four potential sources of income: the labour market, the welfare state, the child's father, and informal support networks. Although absent fathers have a legal obligation to support their children financially and otherwise their contribution to lone mothers' families accounts for the smallest proportion in all European countries. By the end of the 1980s absent fathers contributed a mere seven per cent to lone mothers' household incomes (Lewis 1997). Attempts to enforce their obligation towards their children, such as the establishment of the Child Support Agency in the UK have not radically changed this picture. Informal support networks, especially a lone mother's

parents form another potential source of income. Their support, however, tends to be more short-term focused and targeted at emergency situations. This leaves lone mothers with two alternatives: either to get a job or to live on state benefits.

What sounds relatively straightforward is complicated by the fact that lone mothers have sole responsibility for both securing their household's income and caring for their children, a task that cannot easily be combined. Their children always come first, are their prime concern as mothers. On the other hand, earned income is the most important source of income in Western societies, contributing the largest component of material well-being (Kaufmann 1996). Moreover, having achieved the same level of education and qualification as men, women have the same incentives to pursue an occupational career. Also, earned income may enable them to provide much better circumstances for their families. But once they consider to look for a job there are a number of potential obstacles. First of all, they need to find reliable childcare. Unless someone belonging to their informal support networks – most likely their mothers – can look after their children they will have to find affordable public or private childcare that provide a quality standard of childcare they are prepared to submit their children to. The consequence is that many lone mothers rely on a combination of work and social benefits.

CHAPTER 3

LONE MOTHERS AND THE WELFARE STATE

Lone mothers' relationship to the welfare state is twofold: they provide welfare for their children, thereby contributing to the long-term survival of society. But their children are twice as likely to be affected by poverty as children from a two-parent family (Piachaud/Sutherland 2001). Therefore, they rely on state support to prevent the emergence of disadvantages for their children. The object of this chapter is to outline social policy measures and their practical relevance for lone mothers. Thereby, it is of particular interest to compare the impact of different policies in the United Kingdom and Germany. At the beginning, the main themes of public discourse on lone motherhood that influence these policies are discussed. This is followed by an evaluative audit of means-tested benefits available to lone mothers in both countries. Finally, maintenance regimes in theory and practice are discussed.

3.1. Perceptions of lone motherhood

Lone motherhood – and teenage motherhood in particular – has been the subject of intense public, political, and academic debate. Discussions are often highly emotional and arguments based on different norms and values of discourse participants. Different perceptions of lone motherhood held by political actors have resulted in different approaches and policies towards lone mothers in the past 30 years. Policies ranged from the provision of state support based on a perception of particularly urgent need to policies intended to discourage lone motherhood because it was seen as endangering the prevailing social order. In the following section the attempt is being undertaken to conceptualise contemporary themes of debate as well as to recapitulate debates of the past that have been influential in shaping social policy towards lone mothers.

According to Duncan/Edwards (1997b, 1999) there are four dominant discourses on lone motherhood: lone motherhood as a *social threat*, as a *social problem*, as a *lifestyle change*, and as a way of *escaping patriarchy*. The notion of perceiving lone motherhood as *social threat* is linked to the so-called underclass debate. It is based on the fear of an emerging class whose members have no stake in the existing social order and do not

respect its institutions. According to this view, alienation from society results in deviant and criminal behaviour, eventually undermining society and leading to social breakdown. A second concern within this debate is the state's role in society. The welfare state is seen as encouraging state dependency by providing social benefits in the first place, thus undermining both work ethic and traditional family values (Duncan/Edwards 1997b).

The underclass debate became an increasingly popular theme of public debate in the United States and, with a slight delay, in the United Kingdom. The American author Charles Murray first used the term *underclass* in his book 'Losing Ground: American Social Policy 1950-1980' (1984) where he described growing parts of American population, initially from a lower working-class background as moving towards norms and values separate from those widely accepted in society. In 1989 and 1993 he was invited to present his ideas to a British audience in two article series in *The Sunday Times* (Murray 1990, 1994). He argued there that an underclass had also emerged in Britain and at an even higher pace than in the United States. Murray based his argument on the rise of three social phenomena: property crime rates, illegitimacy, and economic inactivity.

The underclass were pictured as taking fully advantage of a flawed welfare system that invited misuse and fraud. Morgan (1995, 1999) constructed the example of a young woman who accidentally got pregnant. She demonstrated that the young couple would be considerably better off financially if the young woman claimed that she did not to know the child's father. The welfare state would then step in and provide her and her child with an income which would commensurate with their need. Thus, they would, in fact, almost double their weekly income because the child's father could keep his income as well¹⁷. Many proponents of the *social threat* discourse in Britain found it entirely plausible and convincing that the welfare state was being abused in this way. Murray (1994) quoted the example of a man he allegedly met at a Liverpool council estate who regarded honesty towards the state as weakness. In a public speech in 1988 the then British prime minister Margaret Thatcher famously accused young single women of deliberately getting pregnant to jump the housing queue (Macaskill 1993).

Evidence that the occurrence of lone motherhood correlated with low social class was used to support the link between lone motherhood and underclass (Murray 1994).

¹⁷ less £ 10 taxes for being a single person rather than a parent (Morgan 1995)

Murray tried to predict future rises of an underclass based on the growth of illegitimacy rates during the 1980s. Outcomes of the resulting scenarios were illegitimacy ratios of approximately 60 per cent in the underclass, compared with much lower illegitimacy ratios in the professional middle-class. Lone mothers have been held responsible for undermining traditional family values by giving bad examples to their children, thus passing 'scrounging attitudes' on from one generation to the next. This would ultimately lead their sons who could not learn male role models due to the absence of their fathers "...to drift into delinquency, crime and the drug culture, while their daughters learn to repeat the cycle of promiscuity and dependency." (Duncan/Edwards 1997b: 56) Some even blamed them for "...the selfish and irresponsible behaviour of their children's fathers who lacked the civilising influence of being part of a family." (Morgan 1995: 65). One of the most influential British scholars writing on lone parenthood, Jane Lewis, explained that this "...extraordinary backlash against lone mothers spearheaded by politicians and large tracts of the media is founded on anxieties about the end of marriage and the traditional family, the sexual autonomy of women and the irresponsible behaviour of men, which results, it is believed, in the failure adequately to socialise children." (Lewis 1997: 50)

Lone mothers do not feature nearly as prominently in public debate in Germany as they do in the UK. Ostner (1997) explains lone mothers' invisibility in public debates as effect of a public norm for mothers to stay at home and care for their children during the first three years of their lives since receipt of social benefits in this period carries little or no stigma. "Moral panic in Germany, where it exists, targets male shirking and free-riding within the social security and welfare system, not lone mothers." (Ostner 1997: 29) Even a more conservative author like Wingen who co-authored the government commissioned Fünfter Familienbericht (1994) stressed repeatedly lone parents' status as families, according to article 6 paragraph 1 of the *Grundgesetz* (German constitution). This is even more remarkable considering his otherwise stark defence of 'marriage based family as target unit of German family policy' (Wingen 1997; author's translation).

German public attitudes towards lone mothers are dominated by a perception of lone motherhood as a *social problem*, resulting from a temporary emergency situation characterised by economic deprivation and social exclusion. Lone mothers are seen 'as poor, overworked women' (Heiliger 1993) that 'are to be pitied' (Schülein 1994), suffering the consequences of unfortunate circumstances leading to a crisis situation.

Lone motherhood is not entirely free of stigma, though. Families headed by lone mothers represent a distortion from the institutionalised family norm of married couples with children (Wingen 1994, 1997) and are thus seen as *incomplete*, lacking the male breadwinner. Until the early 1980s lone parenthood was not recognised as separate family form (Gutschmidt 1986; Niepel 1994a). Lone motherhood was seen as dysfunctional, depriving children of the other parent and thereby endangering a proper socialisation of children with potential negative consequences, including low achievements in school and an alleged higher propensity to deviant behaviour (Niepel 1994a). Contrary to Duncan/Edwards' (1997b) claim, German lone mothers are not pictured as *social threat* in contemporary public discourse. Hauser (1999) addressed the question whether an underclass is emerging in Germany. He identified four trends (high long-term structural unemployment, strong influx of immigrants with low qualifications, decreasing efficacy of national policy instruments in the wake of globalisation, strong political forces opposing social welfare state intervention) that have the *potential* to result in disadvantaged groups, including lone parents forming an underclass. However, he expects the German welfare state to shoulder the burden of higher expenses resulting from increasing numbers of long-term unemployed and lone parents, thus counteracting the threat. Nevertheless, German family policies entail 'patronising and patriarchal elements' (Klett-Davies 1997) which are typical of conservative welfare regimes. Mothers on means-tested benefits tend to experience a higher degree of stigmatisation, though this is due to their status as Sozialhilfe recipients rather than lone mothers.

In the UK, the *social problem* discourse has been influential as well – albeit somehow overshadowed by force and hostility of *social threat* rhetoric. The more recent *social exclusion* debate can be seen as revival of this discourse. Perceptions of lone mothers as social problem have been more current among academics and practitioners concerned with social policy issues as well as what Duncan/Edwards (1997b) call 'the liberal establishment' than with Conservative British governments. Key themes of this perspective are to picture lone mothers and their children as economically and socially disadvantaged. The phenomenon of growing numbers of people living in poverty is seen as result of changes in the socio-economic structure of society, such as increased unemployment, devaluation of low educational attainment and low-skilled jobs, and demographic change. *Social problem* proponents range from fierce opponents of the *social threat* perspective to those who see lone motherhood as social problem, though as result of flawed or incoherent policies giving wrong incentives (see, for example, Parker

1995). Parker's concern is with all families suffering from poverty. She is not particularly sympathetic towards lone mothers – unlike most other authors within the *social problem* discourse – and sees the problem as lying with the state rather than lone mothers.

It is interesting to note crucial differences in perception of human behaviour between these two discourses. Whereas the *social threat* discourse assumes lone mothers to be active agents creating their own circumstances driven by selfish cost-benefit-calculations – reflecting very much the basic assumptions of human behaviour as manifested in neo-liberal ideology – *social problem* analysts assign lone mothers the role of passive victims of circumstances, i.e. social structures and processes beyond their control. Both perspectives represent examples of a chicken-and-egg controversy on whether individual action causes changes in social structures or social structures determine individual action. Moreover, it seems that proponents of both discourses selected those types of lone motherhood that suit their own convictions best. While the *social threat* discourse focuses on single mothers the *social problem* discourse centres around ever-partnered mothers (Duncan/Edwards 1997b).

Perception of lone motherhood as *lifestyle change* is a more recent debate that has its origins in the academic world and is closely linked to notions of postmodernity and individualisation that have enjoyed much academic and public attention since the mid 1980s in both West Germany and the UK (see, for example, Beck 1986; Beck/Beck-Gernsheim 1990; Giddens 1991). Family is no longer seen as eternal, monolithic foundation of society. Equal access to education and subsequently improved access to the labour market have given women economic independence of men, thus giving them more choices about the way they want to live their lives. Family has become a fluid, flexible concept that can be adjusted to individual circumstances and constantly changes its meaning. Proponents of the *lifestyle change* approach adopt a dynamic vision of family life that is subject to change over the course of one's life. People enter relationships, have children, split up, re-partner again, and so on. There is no standard concept of family that applies to everyone. Hence, increasing numbers of lone mothers are seen as merely an element in broader family change.

This view also introduces a time dimension to current debate by offering a long-term perspective of lone motherhood. To take into consideration that lone motherhood was far from unusual – albeit for different reasons than today – in the first half of the 20th century, cuts the edge off accusations made by *social threat* proponents that lone

mothers were endangering the traditional social and moral order. *Lifestyle change* proponents acknowledge that the so-called nuclear or traditional family consisting of the married couple and their legitimate children emerged under exceptional circumstances which was 'standard', 'normal', or 'successful' for a historically very short period in the 1950s and 1960s only (Rosenbaum 1978; Lewis 1992; Meyer 1992). Probably the greatest virtue of the *lifestyle change* discourse is that it acknowledges positive aspects of being a lone mother by focusing on more choices (Duncan/Edwards 1997b). However, this enthusiasm about choice leads its proponents to overlook a number of obstacles that constrain these choices. Responsibility for children always comes first, thus effectively excluding many options. For example, lone mothers may be forced into low-skilled employment to earn a living rather than going to university, thus affecting their long-term career prospects. They may be forced to take up low-paid part-time jobs in an attempt to reconcile their breadwinner and mother roles.

The *social threat* discourse has viewed women as having to fulfil a duty in caring for their children (and husbands). The *social problem* approach is driven by the intention to support them doing exactly that. The *lifestyle change* approach is different because it perceives women as individuals who, in principal, have the same rights to choose a particular life-course as men. More recently, a feminist discourse – what Duncan/Edwards (1997b) called the *escaping patriarchy* discourse – has gained public support in the UK and Germany. Within this debate, positive aspects of lone motherhood, such as women's liberation and a more intense mother-child-relationship are emphasised (Gutschmidt 1994; Klett-Davies 1997). According to Heiliger (1993), children with a lone mother receive more time, care, and love and as a result become more independent and less aggressive.

This discourse takes the individualist perspective of the *lifestyle change* discourse a step further by challenging existing role distribution and power relations between women and men. Their explanation of increasing numbers of lone mothers is that women are no longer prepared to accept control over their lives by men (see the authors in Silva 1996). For example, women are more easily prepared to end a relationship which they see as unsatisfactory. Access to paid work, contraception, legalisation of abortion, divorce, etc. have enabled them to a much higher degree of freedom in making these choices. Most women still prefer to have children within marriage or cohabitation. But once they find themselves being lone mothers many do find advantages in it (Bradshaw/Millar 1991). Hardly any woman nowadays is prepared to share life with a

violent partner. Finally, feminist thinkers deem no longer acceptable what they call *public patriarchy* (Duncan/Edwards 1997b), i.e. paternalism through state and public. *Social threat* and *social problem* discourses of lone motherhood have been well established for a number of years and thus have been more influential in their impact on social policy making than the remaining discourses. Both discourses have been particularly influential in Britain because "...lone motherhood serves to highlight social expectations about gender roles and relations because of its social 'deviancy' from assumed or idealised norms." (Duncan/Edwards 1997b: 63) The *social threat* discourse has gained national influence in the UK during the 1980s and 1990s at the expense of the *social problem* perspective. Since the *lifestyle change* discourse does not view lone mothers as inherently different from other family types its proponents aim to improve conditions for all families to enable them to adapt to changing circumstances. In this drive towards improving families' circumstances its social policy ambitions are similar to those of the *social problem* discourse. Social policy from a feminist point of view aims at re-balancing power relations between women and men in a way that both men and women share the same rights and responsibilities. It should enable women to be equally well off as men. However, *lifestyle change* and *escaping patriarchy* discourses have had little impact on social policy making.

3.2. Comparative analysis of social welfare for lone mothers

The next section looks at social security and benefits in kind made available to lone mothers in both countries. Functional equivalents as well as specifics of British and German welfare states in their treatment of lone mothers will be compared to identify means of formal support available to lone mothers in both countries.

Social benefits for lone mothers and their children compared

Benefits as well as services in kind will be addressed. The latter include health care, education, social housing, and social services. There has been some debate on whether benefits of kind should be considered as part of welfare state provision¹⁸. Non-contributory social security benefits play a particularly important role since they do not require any previous contribution record. Table 3.1 on the next page contains an overview of all non-contributory social security benefits lone mothers were eligible to in

¹⁸ Barr (1993) insisted on major contributions by health care, education, and housing sectors.

both the United Kingdom and Germany. Functional equivalents were attempted to match whenever possible.

Table 3.1: Non-contributory social security for lone mothers (UK, Germany)

United Kingdom	Germany
• Child Benefit	• Kindergeld
• Housing Benefit ⇒ for mortgage interest payment see Income Support	• Wohngeld - Mietzuschuß (rent supplement) - Lastenzuschuß (mortgage supplement)
<i>no equivalent</i>	• Erziehungsurlaub/Erziehungsgeld (parental leave/parental leave benefit)
• Income Support	• Sozialhilfe (social assistance) - Hilfe zum Lebensunterhalt (assistance towards living expenses)
- Single People Allowance	- Regelsatz (standard rate)
- Child Allowance	- Regelsatz für das Kind (standard rate for children)
- Lone Parent Premium	- Mehrbedarfszuschlag (additional need supplement)
- Family Premium	<i>no equivalent</i>
- Earnings disregard	- Earnings disregard
- mortgage interest payments	⇒ see Wohngeld
- some service charges	- Mietkosten, warm (heating)
- interest on loans for essential repairs	<i>no equivalent</i>
- <i>one-off payments:</i> cold weather payments	- <i>one-off payments:</i> clothing, major repairs, renovation/moving expenses, child's travel expenses to/from absent parent, TV-/radio licence, telephone line rental
• Social Fund: - Budgeting Loans, Crisis Loans, Community Care Grants	Hilfen in besonderen Lebenslagen (assistance for special circumstances): preventive health care, illness, pregnancy, family planning (contraception, abortion)
• NHS	- Krankenversicherungsbeiträge (health insurance contributions)
• free NHS prescription charges / optical costs / dental charges / fares to hospitals / milk tokens + vitamins	• free health care prescription charges / optical costs / dental charges / fares to hospitals
• Statutory Maternity pay or Maternity Allowance or Maternity payment from the Social Fund	• Mutterschaftsgeld (maternity allowance)
• Council Tax Benefit	<i>no equivalent</i>
• Family Credit	<i>no equivalent</i>

Sources: Benefits Agency (1993, 1999); BMA (1999)

However, some benefits are unique without any near equivalent, others are covered in a different way. Even equivalents may be structured in different ways or procedures may differ. Non-contributory benefits are more important for lone mothers because they do not require any advance contributions. Some of them are specifically targeted at lone parents (e.g. Lone Parent Premium within Income Support), others have been associated predominantly with lone parents because of their heavy reliance on these benefits (e.g. Income Support).

The closest match between both countries are Child Benefit/*Kindergeld* and Housing Benefit/*Wohngeld*. Child Benefit is the only benefit in both countries that is provided universally to all parents, without conditions attached. However, while *Kindergeld* in Germany is paid universally for all children until their 18th birthday, it is only paid for British 17/18 year olds who are studying full-time at school or college. On the other hand, British lone parents receive an extra top-up for their oldest child. *Wohngeld* is intended to assist those with low household incomes with rent payments but it does not normally cover someone's entire rent. In contrast, social and private tenants in Britain who are on Income Support can expect the maximum amount, i.e. 100 per cent of the eligible rent. *Sozialhilfe* (social assistance) recipients are not eligible for *Wohngeld* – they receive a housing supplement as part of *Sozialhilfe*. Unlike *Wohngeld*, this supplement covers the full rent. However, the *Sozialamt* (Benefits Agency) can require *Sozialhilfe* recipients to move into smaller, less costly accommodation. *Wohngeld* is available for both renters and home owners, provided their income does not exceed a certain limit.

Whereas German *Sozialhilfe* is calculated for parent and dependent children separately, British Income Support is paid as Single People and Child Allowances which is topped up by premiums, depending on individual circumstances. Lone parents are eligible for a special Lone Parent Premium¹⁹ and receive a slightly higher Family Premium than two-parent families. In Germany, the role of Lone Parent/Family Premium is taken by the so-called *Mehrbedarfszuschlag* (additional need supplement) within *Sozialhilfe* which amounts to 40 per cent of the ordinary rate for a lone parent with one child in pre-school age. Both Income Support and *Sozialhilfe* include earnings disregards for those employed in low-paid jobs.

¹⁹ Lone Parent Premium was abolished for new claimants in 1999.

Generally speaking, the subsidiarity principle on which the German welfare state rests requires next of kin – parents for their children and vice versa – to provide support initially. Eligibility for Sozialhilfe only comes into effect when these means of support are exhausted. However, according to the *Schwangeren- und Familienhilfegesetz* (Pregnant and Family Assistance Act) this does not apply to parents of expectant mothers and next of kin of parents who care for their pre-school age children. Contrary to Duncan/Edward's (1997b) claim, lone mothers who care for their pre-school age children are exempt from the general principle of subsidiarity, their parents are not liable to support them before Sozialhilfe payments are granted.

Finally, there are a number of unilateral benefits that only exist in the UK or in Germany respectively. Sozialhilfe recipients in Germany get their Health Insurance and Long-term Care Insurance contributions paid by the Sozialamt, thus providing them, in fact, with free health care. That makes their position in relation to free health care comparable to that of British lone mothers within the NHS. There is no need for a Council Tax Benefit in Germany since an equivalent to Council Tax does not exist there. A noteworthy difference was the provision of One Parent Benefit in the UK until very recently of which there is no equivalent in Germany. The closest German lone parents get to having a specific lone parent benefit is a *Haushaltsfreibetrag* (household tax allowance) which gives lone parents a tax allowance of DM 5,616 annually on income tax. Obviously, only those who are employed and whose earnings are high enough to pay income tax will gain from it²⁰.

The most significant differences in the provision of non-contributory social security benefits can be found considering two country specific benefits: Family Credit²¹ in the UK and *Erziehungsurlaub/Erziehungsgeld* (parental leave/parental leave benefit) in Germany. Family Credit was intended to encourage individuals to take up low-paid jobs by topping up their earnings. It also offered mothers the chance to re-enter the labour market despite having to care for their children by making short hours of employment a feasible option. Research shows that this policy was particularly successful in opening employment opportunities for lone parents (Finlayson/Marsh 1998). Finlayson/Marsh (1998: 194) established that "...lone parents working short hours, receiving family credit and maintenance payments together had levels of relative disposable income after housing costs that were 60 per cent greater than lone parents without work and receiving

²⁰ As part of future welfare reforms this tax allowance will be abolished in 2005.

²¹ Family Credit was replaced with the Working Families' Tax Credit in October 1999.

income support.” The introduction of Family Credit has resulted in an increasing proportion of lone parents taking up employment and a decreasing proportion claiming Income Support (Ford et al. 1995; Finlayson/Marsh 1998). However, Family Credit has been the subject of severe criticism for trapping poor families in a vicious circle of low-paid jobs rather than encouraging them to embark on training and qualifications courses to improve their long-term earning capacity and career opportunities (Bryson 1998).

In 1986 the then Christian Democrat led West German government introduced *Erziehungsurlaub/Erziehungsgeld*. This package of parental leave measures was emphasised as ‘social policy innovation’ (Lampert 1994). According to this legislation, parents can take up to three years parental leave from employment to care for their children at home. They are protected from unlawful dismissal by their employers in this period. Parental leave does not require parents to give up employment completely, part-time employment of up to 19 hours is possible. Parental leave is accompanied by *Erziehungsgeld*, a flat-rate payment of DM 600 per month which is paid universally to parents during the first six months. From seventh to 24th month it becomes means-tested. Lone parents, however, are exempt from this rule due to a hardship regulation even when their earnings exceed the upper earnings limit. Parents who are resident in Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria (both West Germany), Mecklenburg-Pomerania, Saxony, and Thuringia (all East Germany) can take advantage of ‘*Länder*’ specific parental leave benefits (*Landeserziehungsgeld*) after the 24th month²².

In the German context, it is important to keep in mind that *Erziehungsurlaub / Erziehungsgeld* (parental leave/parental leave benefit) and *Mutterschaftsurlaub / Mutterschaftsgeld* (maternity leave/maternity leave benefit) are two very different things. Every expecting mother in employment is entitled to *Mutterschaftsurlaub / Mutterschaftsgeld* for a period of six weeks prior to and eight weeks after giving birth. *Mutterschaftsgeld* is administered and paid by the German *Gesetzliche Krankenkassen* (statutory sickness funds) up to a maximum amount of DM 750 (£ 250) per month²³. If her salary exceeds this amount her employer has to pay the difference amount between her previous salary and this maximum amount. During that period she is considered as being employed and continues to receive her salary. She is regarded as being on leave from work for a limited period only.

²² They are entitled to DM 600 (Baden-Württemberg DM 400, Bavaria DM 500) for another 12 months (Mecklenburg-Pomerania, Thuringia for 6 months).

²³ *Mutterschaftsgeld* is subject to taxation and social insurance contributions like any other earned income.

After expiry of Mutterschaftsurlaub/Mutterschaftsgeld she can either return to work or continue to take advantage of Erziehungsurlaub/Erziehungsgeld. In the latter case she is no longer regarded as being available for work. Thus, her employment status changes from employment to non-employment. She does not get a salary then – instead, she lives on a combination of social benefits: Erziehungsgeld (parental leave benefit), Sozialhilfe (social assistance), and Wohngeld (housing benefit).

The Erziehungsurlaub/Erziehungsgeld package was hailed as securing a permanent and stable relationship between child and one parent – most often the mother – in the crucial first three years, as financial as well as public recognition of family work, and as relief of child related costs (Lampert 1994; Wingen 1997). Although it explicitly encouraged parents – which almost synonymously meant mothers – to renounce career opportunities for the sake of an optimal socialisation of their children, it was propagated to the public as a progressive achievement, using labels like ‘freedom of choice between family work and employment’, ‘acceptance of female life models’, ‘recognition of family work’, or ‘improvement of child and job’ (Gutschmidt 1996). Contrary to that, its Christian Democrat authors, Heiner Geißler and Norbert Blüm (then Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs) openly admitted encouraging women in particular to stay at home with their newborn children. Legislative implementation coincided with unprecedented numbers of highly qualified women entering the labour market at times of rising unemployment (Gutschmidt 1996).

Nevertheless, this programme has enjoyed wide acceptance among mothers and the public, despite initial protests. The subject of frequent criticism has been the flat-rate amount that has remained unchanged for nearly 15 years, thus decreasing in its real value by more than a quarter (Wingen 1997). Furthermore, a labour distribution typical for breadwinner families is clearly encouraged at the expense of any other work share²⁴. Gutschmidt (1996), however, noted a number of negative long-term effects for women who decided to have a break in employment for the sake of their children at times when men are busy establishing their careers.

This was partly changed in a recent amendment of parental leave legislation which was implemented in January 2001. The new package allows more flexibility in picking the most convenient time for taking parental leave: the entitlement period was extended

²⁴ A couple is eligible when one of them is employed for up to 19 hours per week, even if the other person works 40 hours or more. If both of them work 20 hours each, they are not eligible (Gutschmidt 1996 ; Wingen 1997).

to three years to be taken until the child's 8th birthday. Alternatively, the parent can restrict it to only a year and receive a flat rate of DM 900 instead. Moreover, the new legislation explicitly encourages a combination of part-time employment (up to 30 hours) and family work and extended upper earnings limits accordingly. Its perhaps most innovative aspect is that both parents are enabled and encouraged to take parental leave at the same time. However, the main points of critique targeted at the old programme remain unchanged: *Erziehungsgeld* is still paid as a flat rate that falls short of being a realistic compensation of family care – as it is demanded by a number of proponents of a so-called *Erziehungsgeld* (parental salary)²⁵ (for a summary of these proposals see Leipert/Opielka 2000; Opielka 2000; Wingen 2000).

Lone parents may be entitled to contributory benefits as well. Their importance as means of securing their livelihoods are much lower than that of non-contributory benefits, though. Unlike 30 years ago, only a very small proportion of lone mothers are widows who are, thus, entitled to receive relatively generous survivors benefits. Job Seekers Allowance/*Arbeitslosengeld* require payment of a certain minimum period of insurance contributions as precondition which automatically excludes those who have been out of work for a longer period. Furthermore, receipt of these benefits necessitate availability for employment. Although it is recognised that parents have to make provisions for childcare and therefore cannot be expected to accept any job it narrows down the number of potential recipients even further.

Only recently child upbringing times have been recognised as contributory reason, which means that mothers will be compulsory insured for three years after birth per child without having to pay contributions. These periods have been valued at 85 per cent of an average income in Germany which was increased to 100 per cent in 2000. The same applies for longer periods when someone has to be cared for because of disability or a long-lasting illness. Finally, there are benefits in kind that are likely to have an impact on lone mothers' and their children's well-being. The benefit for lone parents is part of the discussion in the following section.

British and German lone mothers on benefits: an evaluative audit

The subject of the previous section was a comparison of social benefits available to lone mothers in both countries from a macro-level perspective. In this section a micro-level

²⁵ *Erziehungsgeld* proposals will be discussed as part of the policy implications of this research in the conclusions of this thesis.

perspective is adopted. The focus will be on actual outcomes for lone mothers. Benefit entitlements for two common cases of lone mother families are constructed to find out whether British or German lone mothers are better off as a result of the provision of social security benefits. All regular payments are considered. This includes Housing Benefit or the equivalent housing supplements within Sozialhilfe. The effect and uptake of one-off payments is too difficult to estimate and will therefore be omitted. Furthermore, Council Tax Benefit will be omitted here since it is intended to cover expenses that do not occur for German lone mothers.

The first comparison is that of a single, never-married mother with a one and a half year old son. The second is a divorced mother with two children – a six year old daughter and a two and a half years old son. The age of children was set at under seven, since this was the selection criterion for the fieldwork discussed later. Single and divorced women were selected because the majority of lone mothers fits into one of these two categories in both countries. Benefit entitlements for both cases will be calculated assuming that the lone parent is not employed and, thus, entirely dependent on social benefits. Some benefit rates differ depending on location (e.g. housing benefit, Sozialhilfe). In those cases benefit rates applicable at the interview locations (Greater London and West Berlin) were considered. Since all interviews were conducted in 1998 the relevant benefit rates for 1998/99 formed the basis of this calculation. All amounts were converted into so-called purchasing power standards using the purchasing power parity (PPP) method to increase comparability of results. Purchasing power parities take cross-national differences in price levels into account. Both examples are based upon the assumption that the families are entirely dependent on social benefits and do not have any other formal income sources.

In the first example (see table 3.2 on page 49) the German single mother ends up better off financially than her British counterpart. This is, however, entirely due to the effect of *Erziehungsgeld* which is paid until the child's second birthday. Disregarding that the picture changes completely and the British single mother is better off. Most notably, Income Support payments to British lone mothers and their children are higher than Sozialhilfe payments for their German contemporaries, mainly due to the combined effect of Lone Parent and Family Premiums. This confirms the findings of recent research (Daly 1996, 2000; Lewis 1997; Behrendt 2000). Housing Benefit payments in London are also higher than in Berlin.

Table 3.2: Rates of regularly paid social security benefits available to a single mother with a one and a half year old son (London, West Berlin) (in PPP²⁶)

Social security benefits	London (UK)	West Berlin²⁷ (Germany)
• Child Benefit/Kindergeld	24.29	29.56
• Housing Benefit/Sozialhilfe housing supplement	104.33	88.69
• Erziehungsgeld	-	70.96
• Income Support / Sozialhilfe	143.82	124.53
- Single People Allowance / standard rate	(73.01) ²⁸	(63.86)
- Child Allowance / standard rate for children	(28.69)	(35.12)
- Lone Parent Premium / additional need supplement	(22.37)	(25.54)
- Family Premium	(19.74)	-
SUM	272.44	313.74

Sources: Benefits Agency (1993, 1997, 1999), Statistisches Landesamt Berlin (1999)

Table 3.3: Rates of regularly paid social security benefits available to a divorced mother with a six year old daughter and a two and a half year old son (in PPP)

Social security benefits	London (UK)	West Berlin (Germany)
• Child Benefit/Kindergeld	37.93	59.13
• Housing Benefit/Sozialhilfe housing supplement	104.33	88.69
• Erziehungsgeld	-	-
• Income Support / Sozialhilfe	172.51	159.65
- Single People Allowance / standard rate	(73.01)	(63.86)
- Child Allowance / standard rate for children	(57.39)	(70.25)
- Lone Parent Premium / additional need supplement	(22.37)	(25.54)
- Family Premium	(19.74)	-
SUM	314.77	307.47

Sources: Benefits Agency (1993, 1997, 1999), Statistisches Landesamt Berlin (1999)

²⁶ The Statistical Office for the European Union (Eurostat) calculates PPP for all member states of the European Comparison Programme (ECP) annually. The relevant PPP for 1998 were: 1 PPP = £ 0.704 = DM 2.114 (Eurostat 1999 quoted by Statistisches Bundesamt 1999).

²⁷ Social benefits in Germany are paid on a monthly basis. They were converted into weekly rates here for the sake of better comparability with benefit rates in Britain.

The second example (see table 3.3 on page 49) sees British lone mothers slightly better off. Erziehungsgeld is not paid beyond the child's second birthday in Berlin. The gap between both countries is, however, much narrower than in the first example because of the accumulative effect of the regular Sozialhilfe rate for two children. In the case of part-time employed lone mothers Family Credit would have increased British lone mothers' income by nearly £ 60 (85,23 PPP adjusted), despite the potential 'losses' of Housing Benefit. However, it is hard to evaluate whether that gives them a comparative advantage over German lone mothers who can expect higher earnings in most jobs. More significant is the impact of benefits in kind. Services through the NHS contribute significantly to the general state of welfare of families in Britain. Free access to the NHS, for example, gives those lone mothers in Britain who are employed a significant comparative advantage over their German contemporaries who have to pay monthly health insurance as well as care insurance contributions which amount to approximately a fifth of their gross earnings.

The marginal utility of the provision of social housing is likely to be higher for lone mothers in London since rents in London exceed rent levels in West Berlin by far. However, this result is not representative of the UK. Housing costs in London are extraordinary high compared to other parts of the UK. Generally, housing related expenses including rent, electricity, and heating are on average much lower in Britain than in Germany. The housing related component of the 1997 ICP²⁹ price level index sets German expenses for housing (including electricity and heating) at 132 per cent of European Union average, whereas the UK's housing related price level is below EU average at 93 per cent (Eurostat 1998 quoted by Roemer 2000). On the other hand, the peculiarities of the British housing market – and the London housing market in particular – with the majority of people in owner-occupation and a rather small sector for private renting make the provision of social housing more pressing. The vast majority of the population in German cities live in privately rented accommodation. State support in the 1990s tended to focus on Wohngeld payments for those in need rather than construction of new social housing.

Public provision of childcare or public subsidies to private childcare facilities is a benefit that is an essential precondition for many lone mothers to become employed.

²⁸ Amounts in brackets are partial amounts of the total amount of Income Support/Sozialhilfe.

Unlike in most of West Germany, there has been plenty of affordable childcare facilities in West Berlin due to relatively generous public subsidies. The situation has significantly worsened since German unification following financial difficulties of the federal state Berlin. Nevertheless, childcare fees are still much lower than in London and the UK and generally speaking, lone parents – who are regarded to be in particularly urgent need of affordable childcare – have no problems finding it. The United Kingdom has the most expensive child care provision in Europe which has resulted in generally low employment rates among lone mothers which are also lower than those of married mothers (Ford 1996). In Germany, the opposite is the case. However, British lone mothers of four to six years olds have an advantage over their German counterparts in this respect because British children generally enter school one to two years earlier than German children, thus effectively entering free childcare.

In this section social benefits were considered from both a macro-level and micro-level perspective. Most non-contributory social security benefits are similar in terms of structure and targets. Exceptions are Family Credit/Working Families Tax Credit in Britain and *Erziehungsgeld/Erziehungsurlaub* in Germany. Not only are they the only significantly different non-contributory social security benefits, they also represent quite clearly contradictory ends of social policy making towards lone mothers, thereby reflecting fundamentally different policy logics. Whereas the German ‘social state’ has attempted to encourage lone mothers to withdraw from the labour market to become full-time carers, the British welfare state has tried to encourage lone mothers to return to employment as soon as possible to *earn* their living. Policies towards this end have remained inconsistent, however, by focusing on direct monetary incentives only and omitting other, more indirect ones, such as provision of affordable childcare facilities or extended entitlements to passported and other benefits in the transition period from non-employment to employment. Only recently this was changed. The British Labour government favours a welfare-to-work programme specifically targeted at lone parents, the New Deal for Lone Parents, which was implemented in 1998. Such programmes are only successful if they are accompanied by in-work support that make this step sustainable in the long run. If successful, it can relieve lone mothers of the immediate financial and material pressures. Success, however, hinges on a number of conditions:

²⁹ The so-called International Comparison Programme (ICP) was established by the United Nations and the University of Pennsylvania with support from the World Bank in 1968 to define a standard for cross-country comparisons of incomes (Wagner 1995).

financial incentives that make employment worthwhile compared to a life of social benefits, training opportunities, the provision of affordable and good quality childcare, and flexible working hours. The New Deal for Lone Parents addresses these issues through the implementation of supporting measures (National Child Care Strategy, Working Families Tax Credit, Children's Tax Allowance, national minimum wage)³⁰.

3.3. Maintenance regimes in Germany and the UK

As stated earlier, absent fathers' contribution to lone mother families' household budgets in Britain accounts for the smallest proportion in all European countries – less than ten per cent (Lewis 1997). The establishment of the Child Support Agency in 1991 was an attempt to change that by enforcing their obligation towards their children. The following section introduces two entirely different maintenance regimes in the UK and Germany whose objectives and procedures vary widely.

Between Child Support Agency and 'Unterhaltsvorschuß' – Maintenance regimes in Germany and the UK

The Child Support Agency was established in recognition "...that any system of maintenance should ensure that parents honour their legal and moral responsibilities to maintain their children wherever they could afford to do so." (Barnes et al. 1998: 13) The main components of legislation were the establishment of a *formula* for the assessment of child maintenance and the creation of the Child Support Agency whose task it was to trace absent parents, investigate their financial means, to assess the payable amount of maintenance, and finally to collect and, if necessary, to enforce child maintenance payments. According to the maintenance formula Income Support amounts for the resident parent with children provide the baseline of maintenance payment calculations. If the absent parent is better off, s/he is required to pay more, if s/he is worse off s/he may pay below that level. The minimum payment is £ 5.10 per week – which represents the amount payable for people on Income Support.

Unlike in the UK, there is no special provision for lone parents in Germany. All non-resident parents are obliged to pay child support. The resident parent is perceived as fulfilling her/his obligation in kind in form of care, provision, and accommodation. The guiding principle for maintenance payments is the statutory rule that child support

³⁰ For a review of the New Deal programmes see Millar 2000.

should be granted according to the parents' 'station in life' (BMFSFJ 2000a). However, recently priority has been given to children's needs rather than parents' financial abilities. This has led to the development of so-called 'support tables' ('Düsseldorf table' for West Germany and 'Berlin table' for East Germany and Berlin) used by courts to calculate a fixed amount according to the monthly net income of the absent parent and age of the child. Amounts due³¹ are set at the minimum for incomes below DM 1,800 (Berlin and East Germany) and DM 2,400 (West Germany), and increase in line with income up to DM 6,500 (Berlin and East) and DM 8,000 (West). Beyond that, no guidelines are suggested and maintenance payments are subject to negotiations. A minimum amount of DM 345 (Berlin) per child in pre-school age, DM 381 (Berlin) per child aged 7 to 12, and DM 450 (Berlin) per child aged 13 to 18 is set independently of the non-resident parent's income. These rates are updated every two years in line with the index used for pension rates.

Although these minimum rates provide only a very modest living standard there is an advantage in having them. They can be enforced relatively easily, thereby avoiding time-consuming confrontations in court. If, however, the non-resident parent refuses to pay at all or his whereabouts are unknown, lone mothers can apply for an *Unterhaltsvorschuß* (UVS) (maintenance advance payment) to the *Jugendamt* (Office of Child and Youth Welfare). Payments can be made for children aged under 13, for a maximum of six years altogether. *Unterhaltsvorschuß* expenses are shared equally between central government and 'Länder' governments. Responsibility for enforcement of recovery lies with district and municipal authorities in most 'Länder' but the recovery rate is rather low at around 15 per cent (Barnes et al. 1998).

Maintenance policy logics – supporting children or saving public expenditure?

The 1991 Child Support Act and the subsequent establishing of the Child Support Agency (CSA) were major social policy innovations thereby moving child support out of courts. Although intended to support lone mothers financially by making their children's absent fathers pay it has been subject to enormous controversy over its administrative failures, additional hardship they brought onto lone mothers who refused to 'co-operate' with the CSA, and its intention to save the state public expenditure. Until 1991 it was common policy to expect absent parents (usually fathers) to support their

³¹ 1998/99 rates

present family while the state was supporting their former families through social security benefits that were 'reasonably generous' (Maclean 1998). Mothers were not required to be employed until their children reached school leaving age. Deficiencies in the way the court system was assessing and awarding maintenance resulted in negligence of children's financial needs. Public interest started to focus more on the well-being of children. They were now viewed 'as capable individuals with rights' (Maclean 1998: 227) whose future life chances may be negatively affected by their parents' divorce or partnership breakdown.

At the same time, the explosion in numbers of lone mothers meant a sharp rise in public expenditure. Kiernan/Wicks (1990) estimated the costs of social benefits paid to lone parent households in 1990 at £ 3.6 billion which was more than double the figure of 1981. The Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher therefore was seeking a way to reduce expenditure. Margaret Thatcher also expressed her determination to strengthen parental responsibility on moral grounds (Maclean 1998). The CSA's establishment was targeted at absent fathers who often did not fulfil their duties in providing their children with sufficient financial support. Whereas the discussion prior to implementation was dominated by public concern with the well-being of mother and child, critics soon focused their attention on the hardship it meant for non-resident fathers, particularly those who had re-partnered and had new obligations towards their current families. 38 per cent of men were worse off with 15 per cent having improved their financial circumstances and about half whose circumstances remained unchanged (Davis et al. 1996). Many have also criticised the CSA's sole focus on financial responsibilities of absent parents without addressing other aspects of support (Clarke et al. 1994, 1998).

More recent research indicates that 20 per cent of women were better off financially following a maintenance claim through the CSA while eight per cent said they were worse off. For most their financial circumstances remained unchanged (Davis et al. 1996). Amounts arranged by DSS, Magistrate's Courts, or County Courts in the 1980s ranged from £ 15 to £ 20 per week. Average assessments through the CSA were much higher than that in 1994 but continued to fall until 1997 (from £ 27 to £ 21 per week) (Barnes et al. 1998). Particularly lone mothers on Income Support have hardly benefited at all since any maintenance payment has been deducted from their benefit on a pound for pound basis. Despite its draconian enforcement potential a balance of £ 438 million remained outstanding, particularly affecting Family Credit claimants whose

maintenance payments are not guaranteed through the Child Support Agency. Lone mothers whose former partners are self-employed face even more problems than others because assessment of their earnings and, thus, maintenance obligations is extremely difficult (Clarke et al. 1998). Despite the strong moral and rhetorical stress on children's interests – the preceding white paper's title was: 'Children Come First' – the Child Support Act did not address problems of child poverty and looked at maintenance predominantly as a problem of welfare dependency (Clarke et al. 1994, 1998).

Critics argue that the introduction of the Child Support Agency was mainly intended to relieve public budgets of expenditure. Maintenance payments by absent parents saved the Treasury an estimated £ 1.74 billion between April 1993 and December 1996 alone (Clarke et al. 1998). "The Child Support Agency costs in the region of £ 110 million per year to run. It was set a target of saving £ 530 million in social security benefits during its first year of operation." (Barnes et al. 1998: 16) This proposed sum was set as a benchmark of success or failure of the agency and increased pressure on the agency's staff. Marsh et al. (1997) concluded that the CSA had nothing more than a neutral effect on lone mothers' and children's well-being because assessments were only made in cases where: (i) maintenance was already in payment, (ii) maintenance would have been paid anyway, (iii) non-resident parents were exempt from payment, and (iv) payments would not have been made anyway. "In addition to objections to the content of the policy, there were a large number of administrative problems involved in its implementation, which further undermined public support. These included delays, incorrect assessments and incorrect handling of confidential data." (Barnes et al. 1998: 17)

The decision to take maintenance issues out of court may have seemed more efficient from the Treasury's point of view. However, the CSA and its tribunals have been ill equipped to deal with conflicting interests of two parties. Critics have persistently claimed that the CSA did not sufficiently take into account individual arrangements between former partners or financial difficulties, thus causing unnecessary conflicts that harmed relationships between the parents of children and thus affected children negatively. The subject of particularly severe criticism was the CSA's decision to ignore any prior achieved informal settlements between the former partners, for example involving the former family home. According to Maclean (1998), "The family home now represents the credit worthiness as well as the actual property of the couple, which neither can replicate separately. The home represents, if left with the mother,

compensation for her loss of earnings and pension entitlements, a substitute for wife support and even child support.” (Maclean 1998: 229)

The harshest criticism levelled at the CSA was for forcing lone mothers on Income Support into *co-operation* by threatening to or actually reducing their benefits. Lack of co-operation is defined as the refusal to fill in a maintenance application form. A mother who is deemed not to co-operate by the Child Support Agency loses 20 per cent of the adult Income Support rate for six months and another 10 per cent for further 12 months, creating in many cases severe hardship. Moreover, this enforced *co-operation* may also drive lone mothers and their children back into contact with former violent partners – although this is normally seen as so-called *good cause* which exempts lone mothers from co-operation.

But even in less extreme cases an otherwise working relationship between absent father and children may be endangered because of the additional financial burden that constrains his ability to take his children out for a day, or because they blame their mother for making a maintenance claim. Provision of such *help in kind*, “...such as assistance with holidays, buying children’s clothing or presents, or providing treats for them ... were highly valued by mothers as direct contributions to their children’s standard of living...” (Clarke et al. 1998: 238) About one-third of the lone mothers in Clarke et al.’s (1998) study lost this kind of support through their former partners after the CSA initiated the maintenance assessment process, leaving both women and children worse off. The way the Child Support Agency operates does not only indicate a strong, if not the predominant focus on curbing public expenditure, it also hints on certain perceptions of lone mothers and absent fathers. The fact that there are no positive incentives for co-operation offers insights into the CSA’s attitudes towards lone mothers that seem to be in line with the earlier discussed *social threat* and *underclass* discourses.

The German maintenance regime is very much in line with the underlying policy logic of perceiving lone motherhood as *social problem*. Paramount priority has been the well-being of the child. The resident parent relies on regular maintenance payments. Therefore, in cases where non-resident parents attempt to escape their responsibilities towards their children, the Jugendamt provide uncomplicated support in form of Unterhaltsvorschuß (UVS). Absent parents are liable to pay maintenance, as determined by family courts – but lone mothers and their children do not have to bear the burden of enforcement. That responsibility rests entirely with the state. Wingen (1997) estimated

that approximately 100,000 absent fathers tried to escape their responsibility to pay maintenance – which is a relatively small number considering a total number of more than a million lone mothers in West Germany.

A public debate concerning maintenance issues, let alone with the intensity and sincerity of the British debate preceding and following the establishing of the Child Support Agency is almost entirely missing in Germany. Although ‘male shirking’ (Ostner 1997) is denounced as such, non-payment of maintenance is not a big issue in Germany. Not even VAMV or other lone parent and family lobbying groups regard maintenance a topic worth campaigning for. VAMV merely informed its members and other lone parents about changes in the maintenance and UVS legislation implemented in July 1998. The information section of VAMV’s homepage contained the rather halfhearted comment that maintenance payments should cover the child’s subsistence level – at least as long as Child Benefit does not do the same (VAMV 2000). This logic – to see the amount of maintenance payments and Child Benefit payments as a combined issue – suggests that the state is the addressee of this demand rather than absent fathers. It seems, therefore, that the aim of this demand is an increase in Child Benefit payments to a realistic subsistence level – which has been a longstanding debate for a number of years already – rather than a genuine demand for a reform of the present maintenance regime. This is not really surprising since the present legislation benefits lone mothers and their children by providing a reliable source of income with hardly any conditions attached. There are other issues that have been hotly debated for a number of years, especially concerning new joint custody legislation (*gemeinsames Sorgerecht*) implemented in 1998. The joint custody legislation abolished the former practice that custody was automatically granted to the child’s mother. Both parents can apply for joint custody, if they both agree. In connection with this legislative act equal rights in the law of succession were granted to both legitimate and ‘illegitimate’ children.

3.4. Carers and/or workers? Lone mothers role in society

Social benefits available to lone mothers as well as maintenance regimes reflect very much policy logics and dominant discourses on lone motherhood in both countries under review. Whereas the United Kingdom as example of a liberal, residualist welfare state stresses individual responsibility to *earn* one’s livelihood – thus, perceiving any distortion from this norm as long-term *threat* to its principles, the German welfare state’s attitude towards lone mothers is dominated by the perception of lone motherhood

as *social problem* as well as its pro-natalist family policy. In other words, while British social policy attempts to encourage lone mothers to become *workers* rather than mothers, German family policy tries to convince them to devote themselves to the *mother/carer* role, not that of a worker.

Fox Harding (1996) places the establishment of the Child Support Agency in the wider frame of attempts by Conservative governments to curb public spending at the expenses of lone-parent families. Similar debates occurred in other Western European welfare states as well. Attempts to cut public expenditure lead the way to seek alternative welfare providers. Lewis/Hobson (1997) observed a similar drive towards passing on more responsibilities to families and the voluntary sector. The role of families as major welfare providers in the existing system tends to be underestimated in these debates. Facing a situation of increasing public deficits contemporary governments feel tempted to force families to rely more on their own resources. The decision by the British government to create the Child Support Agency and thus to 'hunt' fathers who are either not willing or not able to support their families is seen as an example of a wider government strategy to put an even larger burden on families' shoulders in order to relieve the welfare state of public expenditure (Wasoff/Morris 1996). Governments all over the industrialised world increasingly act according to the belief that "...formal social services can be made more cost-effective by linking them more closely with informal support networks which ... constitute a large, untapped ... reservoir of social support." (d'Abbs 1991: 7/8)

CHAPTER 4

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT MOBILISATION

In the previous sections general socio-demographic trends as well as lone mothers' position in the contemporary British and German societies, with particular reference to their role as recipients of state welfare were outlined. With chapter 4 starts the second part of this thesis that introduces the theoretical and methodological foundations of this research. This research is committed to the idea of integrated theory and empiricalness, as suggested by Popper (e.g. 1934) and as discussed by Lakatos (1970). Following this tradition of thought, "...the only relevant evidence is the evidence anticipated by a theory, and empiricalness and theoretical progress are inseparably connected." (Lakatos 1970: 123) Lakatos suggested to use theories as 'research programmes'. Research programmes in this sense consist of methodological rules that identify paths of research to avoid ('negative heuristic') and those to pursue ('positive heuristic'). Thus, theory becomes a heuristic device. 'Auxiliary hypotheses' specify the research programme and, at the same time, protect the 'hard core' of this theory which, thus, is not subject to falsification.

In this chapter it is shown that action and exchange theoretical as well as network analytical assumptions can be utilised to explain individual support mobilisation behaviour. An action theoretical approach was chosen since it is the objective of this research to identify, to understand, and to explain specific individual coping strategies to solve a crisis. Thus, it is necessary to focus at the analytical level of the individual. A so-called *rational choice* approach was used to explain the resource mobilisation behaviour of lone mothers. To begin with, the basic assumptions of rational choice theory will be introduced briefly. Subsequently, a specific variant of rational choice theory – Coleman's (1990) social theory – is applied to describe social exchange. Social exchange processes materialise in form of social networks that can eventually become social structures. Therefore, basic principles of social network analysis are introduced. In the end, rational choice, social exchange, social network, and social support approaches are combined in an integrated model of individual support mobilisation.

This model serves the purpose to provide a theoretical basis for the deduction of ‘auxiliary hypotheses’ as defined by Lakatos (1970) in the subsequent chapter 5 that form the research programme of this thesis.

4.1. Individual resource mobilisation and rational action

Basic assumptions of rational choice theory

Rational choice theory can be a useful instrument in explaining the emergence of social structures as outcomes of individual action. The origins of rational choice theory can be tracked back to the Scottish moral philosophers Adam Ferguson, David Hume, Bernhard Mandeville, and Adam Smith. It has been widely accepted in economic theory and has enjoyed increasing popularity (and critical reviews) in sociology, political science, and social psychology since the mid 20th century. Since then a variety of diverging variants have emerged. All these approaches share a number of basic assumptions that represent the nomological core of rational choice theory: preferences, constraints, and a decision rule.

Rational choice theories assume that individual action is purposive and intentional, and that it is guided by a well-ordered hierarchy of preferences. *Preferences* are goals, desires, and motives which are acquired by individuals during their lifetime. Crucial preferences relevant for this research include the interest to gain access to precious resources (Coleman 1990). In contrast, *constraints* are impediments to the satisfaction of preferences. Constraints are often also referred to as costs. Finally, it is expected that individuals will choose those actions that satisfy their preferences to the greatest extent, considering the constraints (Opp 1999).

These basic assumptions are reflected in the so-called RREEMM model. RREEMM stands for ‘Resourceful Restricted Evaluating Expecting Maximising Man’ and was first suggested by Lindenberg (1985). His intention was to cure the imperfections of both ‘economic man’ and ‘sociological man’ as well as to combine their analytical strengths. *Resourceful* refers to the property of individual actors to own resources. The term *restricted* refers to limited availability of resources that constrain individual action. *Evaluating* means that the rational actor judges the conditions of a particular situation s/he faces. Based on this evaluation s/he develops *expectations* about the likely outcome of a certain option. Finally, s/he chooses that way of action that s/he expects to enjoy the highest utility among all other available courses of action, i.e. s/he attempts to *maximise* benefits gained through this option (Lindenberg 1985).

Constraints and preferences which are admitted for explanation vary within rational choice theory. Generally speaking, narrow or hard interpretations (e.g. Olson 1965; Becker 1976, 1991; Lindenberg 1985; Elster 1989) can be distinguished from wide or soft ones (e.g. Coleman 1990; Opp et al. e.g. 1995; Goldthorpe e.g. 1996). Both approaches share the self-interest proposition, but they differ in the admission of certain preferences and constraints.

In this research the narrow interpretation will not be used since it is not agreed that explanations become tautological if they consider preferences that go beyond self-interest. The inclusion of norms – which was also stressed by Duncan and Edwards (1999) in their concept of ‘gendered moral rationalities’ – are seen as important preferences that influence individual decisions. A wide range of preferences which may vary depending on social and historical context are crucial to explain human behaviour. Furthermore, individuals do not have access to perfect information and, thus, make decisions based on subjective and objective constraints. Simon (1955) explained this association already using the term ‘bounded rationality’. An individual decides among alternatives available to her/him until s/he finds a satisfactory outcome and opts for this. Thus, s/he is a ‘satisficer’ (Simon 1955) and not an optimiser. In summary, this research adopts a so-called ‘soft version’ of rational choice theory – the concept of bounded rationality. According to this concept, it is assumed that individual actors evaluate their action alternatives which are known to them according to expected advantages and disadvantages and select the option that is associated with the highest utility. Contrary to narrow interpretations of rational choice theory, individual actors look for satisfying levels of utility rather than maximal utility.

However, this action theoretical approach is merely used to explain individual support mobilisation behaviour as outcome of strategic decisions – it is *not* understood as applying universally to *all* human behaviour. There are, of course, many situations where cost-benefit-calculations are not useful, or even harmful. Examples include situations that require immediate action (e.g. when a child scalded its hand) or routine actions that are not consciously reflected anymore (e.g. use of fork and knife) (for more details see, for example, Thibaut/Kelley 1959). Moreover, these assumptions are not helpful to explain individual behaviour which is guided by emotions, such as mother-child relations (Kirchgässner 1991).

Applying this approach to our problematic of making decisions between informal and formal support mobilisation alternatives that means in a simplified way: (1) We need to

know formal and informal support sources; (2) We calculate costs and benefits for each way of action; and (3) Among them, we choose that option associated with the highest subjective utility that is known to us.

Individual action and social exchange

Individuals are embedded in a social environment where they interact with each other. Interpersonal relations can be perceived as social exchange. Within a rational actor framework it is assumed that individuals attempt to satisfy their needs by initiating exchange processes with other individuals. Rational choice and social exchange theories share the same basic elements – rewards, costs, and profits. Particularly influential micro-sociological exchange theories were developed by Homans (1961) and Blau (1964).

At a first look, Blau's exchange theory appears to have much in common with rational choice theory. According to Blau, exchange involves "...actions that are contingent on rewarding reactions from others and that cease when these expected reactions are not forthcoming." (Blau 1964: 6) Nevertheless, his exchange theory incorporates non-rational transactions as well. He recognised that the value of exchanged rewards varies and that it is not necessarily consistent. Values of rewards also vary from one transaction to another, i.e. there is no fixed market value. Precondition for the occurrence of exchange is the expectation of rewards. According to Blau (1964: 89), exchange fulfils two general functions: it creates and maintains friendship relations and it establishes subordination relations. Social exchange is based on unspecific, diffuse obligations. If an exchange partner is unable to repay her debt s/he has to subordinate herself.

Reciprocity is a crucial aspect of Blau's exchange theory. The importance of reciprocity as a universal principle of exchange relations was first emphasised by the anthropologists Malinowski and Levi-Strauss and later introduced to sociological theory by Gouldner (1960). Gouldner stated a two-sided reciprocity norm which emphasised that give and take will level out in the end and that people should help those who have helped them in the past. It is impossible that exchange relations persist that occur exclusively at a particular person's expense. If the reciprocity norm is not obeyed social exchange will not materialise. However, reciprocity does not apply in full force to relations with certain groups of individuals who are unable to reciprocate, such as children, the elderly, or the sick (Gouldner 1960: 178).

A more recent exchange theoretical approach was suggested by Coleman (1990) to specify conditions under which humans exchange resources. Resources are things over which individual actors have control and in which they have some interest. Thus, interest in resources are preferences in the sense of rational choice theory. The interest in desired resources is the incentive that drives individual actors to get in touch with others. They need to get information about availability of valued resources, who controls them, which resources a particular actor is interested in, and what the conditions of an exchange of resources are. In the process of obtaining this information and initiating a resource exchange, the individual actor establishes social relations, thereby creating simple social networks. Resources are the crucial elements that explain the interest of selfish, utility maximising rational actors to link with others like themselves.

Coleman (1990: 121/122) distinguishes several media of exchange in social and political systems. Here, only those will be presented that are of relevance for the support mobilisation behaviour of lone mothers:

(1) direct, simultaneous exchange of goods and services

This is the simplest form of exchange between two individuals. This original form of exchange occurs, for example, when A gives B a pair of trousers for her son and B reciprocates A immediately with a toy.

(2) direct, non-simultaneous exchange with promise to pay

In contrast to the first exchange scenario received help is reciprocated instantly with the promise to pay later. This promise is later realised. Returning to our example, B promises A to give her a toy in exchange for the pair of trousers which she realises a week later.

(3) exchange with promise of a third party

This third scenario involves a third person. Promises given in separate exchange relations are transferred to a third party. That means, A gives B a pair of trousers which is instantly paid by B with the promise to help A later. B repairs C's washing machine which C pays with the promise to help B at a later occasion. Based on the promise by C towards B C pays A by looking after A's child. In this case, B's initial promise towards A is paid by C.

All of these exchange types are likely to occur in exchange relations between lone mothers and their informal support networks. So far, we have solely looked at cases

where goods/services were exchanged. The division of resources in goods and services can also be expressed in terms of material and human resources (Brannen/Wilson 1987). Exchange processes involving other rewards are possible as well. Goods/services can also be exchanged for deference (Coleman 1990: 129-131). That means, a person does not receive a repayment for provided services. Instead, s/he is compensated with deference. The result is a higher social status for the help provider. Exchange of goods/services can take place without returning equivalent resources. That means, obligations can be conceived of as a 'credit slip' that is redeemable by a good, service, or deference.

Exchange relations presuppose expectations that obligations are met. Trustworthiness within a particular social environment is precondition for a variety of exchange relations. If A does not trust B to reciprocate A will not support B and vice versa. Hence, trust is a feature of social capital that facilitates action (Coleman 1990: 304-306). Obligations are described by Coleman in positive terms. "Individuals in social structures with high levels of obligations outstanding at any time ... have greater social capital on which they can draw." (Coleman 1990: 307) That means that obligations work like an insurance policy. When we do someone a favour it usually happens at a time when it is convenient for us and in a way that is not costly for us whereas that help will be highly appreciated by the person in need. When we need help and, therefore, redeem that obligation it will bring us a higher benefit compared to our initial costs. If these are realistic assumptions about human behaviour lone mothers should be interested in creating multiple obligations to 'insure' themselves for times of need.

Exchange relations in families

What was said about exchange relations and the validity of the reciprocity norm in particular may apply to exchange between acquaintances or friends. But does it also apply to family relations? Support relations in families are based on kinship or marriage (cohabitation). Family relations are long-lasting. We are born into families and maintain contacts to our parents and brothers and sisters for the duration of our or their lifetime. We do not choose our families. The root of our relations with them is a blood tie and is not based on affection. Another type of family relations is based on choice – our relations to spouses or partners. This selection is usually guided by affection. They can be equally long-lasting as parent-child relations. But they remain subject to choice – contact to partners can be interrupted at any time. Family relations differ in another

respect from all other social relations we maintain. They are characterised by high levels of obligations (norms) which are partly legally codified. Although we do not choose distant relatives either our relations with them are different from those to close relatives. We choose whether we maintain contact to them. Mutual relations are guided by a lesser degree of obligations.

Next, the relevance of exchange theory for family relations will be examined. Nye (1979) was among the first who applied exchange theory explicitly to families. He found that family relations are characterised by high levels of mutual obligations. Normative obligations to support each other result in a high reliability of family support. Family support can be expected even in the absence of the capacity to reciprocate and even when relationships are strained. In its purest form, exchange relations in families are guided by a specific form of the reciprocity norm that extends the obligation to reciprocate over the course of a lifetime. We will support our parents when they are old in exchange for the support they gave us when we were children. Exchange relations between family members other than parents vs. children do not involve the same high level of mutual obligations. Nevertheless, they can also include elements of long-term obligations that do not require immediate repayment. Crucial in any case are shared life experiences and regular interactions (Diewald 1991).

When we were children our exchange relations with our parents were characterised by asymmetry. Parents give a lot of support, love, and time as long as their children are little. With increasing age our ability to repay this support improves. Only at the end of the life cycle the reciprocity criterion will be fulfilled, i.e. the exchange equilibrium will be restored (Rossi/Rossi 1990). Another form of reciprocity within family relations is the concept of general exchange or cascade reciprocity. This concept encompasses the notion of exchange processes across generations, i.e. we will pass on to our children the support we received from our parents when we were children (Nye 1979: 10).

Some authors argued, however, that this long-term equilibrium of family exchange has largely disappeared in contemporary Western societies with their comprehensive pensions, health care, and social security systems (see, for example, Nye 1979). An unintended outcome of comprehensive welfare state systems is that they potentially undermine mutual obligations by providing alternatives (Coleman 1990). It is difficult to find empirical evidence for the practical relevance of reciprocity over the course of a lifetime. Longitudinal studies covering an entire lifetime would be necessary to accomplish this. Cross-sectional analyses of exchange relations in families will reflect

above described asymmetry. The German Youth Institute (*Deutsches Jugendinstitut (DJI)*) conducted a three-generation study in 1990 which was intended to measure the resource flow in families of three generations³². They found empirical evidence for the importance of all described reciprocal relations in families (Alt 1994).

4.2. Fundamental elements of social network analysis

After having introduced the basic elements of explanation at the individual actor level, we now turn our attention to those intermediary structures that connect individuals – social networks. Families do not live in isolation – they are embedded into a social environment from where they get the required resources to provide their specific services. The above described exchange relations between family members are the basic elements of social networks. From a network analytical point of view, “...the social environment can be expressed as patterns or regularities in relationships among interacting units.” (Wasserman/Faust 1994: 3) Thereby, the term social network refers to a set of actors and the ties between them. Although social network analysis has become increasingly popular in the social sciences no unitary concept exists. Operational definitions are common.

Increasing numbers of sociologists, economists, and political scientists have used network analytical instruments to analyse a variety of social phenomena, for example social support mobilisation, social capital, policy networks, multinational co-operation. On the one hand, network analysis can be used as a universal method to describe structures. On the other, it has become a distinct theoretical approach. Social networks are often described as the missing link between the micro level of individual action and the macro level of society (Galaskiewicz/Wasserman 1994). Individual and corporate actors are described as embedded in social structures consisting of social relations. Social network analysis combines different strands of social science. Important sources came from a social-psychological tradition (Gestalt theory, field theory, sociometry); and social anthropology, namely the so-called ‘Manchester School’ (Gluckman, Barnes, Bott, Nadel, Mitchell), the authors of the Hawthorne experiment (Warner and Mayo), and the ‘Harvard Structuralists’ (Homans, White) (Scott 1991).

A property of social network analysis that makes it valuable for the social sciences is its focus on *relations* between units. According to Wasserman/Faust (1994) social

³² The focal actor and his/her parents and grandparents were interviewed (n = 1,285).

network analysis is based on four central principles that distinguish it from other methodological approaches. Actors are seen as *interdependent* and not as independent or autonomous. Structures are conceptualised as *lasting patterns* of relations among actors. Relational ties or linkages serve the purpose to *channel resources* between actors. Finally, *ego-centred* network models see the social environment as *structural environment* that provides opportunities and constraints respectively for individual action.

Next, fundamental concepts and basic terminology which are commonly agreed as the core of network analysis will be introduced. The basic analytical units are actors. They are graphically depicted as ‘points’ or ‘nodes’. The second decisive feature of social networks are ‘links’, also called ‘ties’. These ties connect actors with each other. In graphic terms they are visualised as lines. Links are as manifold as social relationships and can personify information, preferences, control, influence, honour/prestige, resources, ideas, liking, etc. It is important to note that ties or links are not synonymous with *relations* within network analysis. Relations are more than simple ties – they are “the collection of ties of a specific kind among members of a group” (Wasserman/Faust 1994: 20) For example, friendship is a relation linking two actors but, of course, it does not consist of a single contact between these two individuals.

Social networks differ widely in respect to certain structural variables. The most obvious factor that distinguishes networks is the number of links between actors. The simplest way to describe lone mothers’ informal support networks is to make statements about contact frequency. Beyond that, specific structures within social networks deserve attention. One of these dimensions is the *density* of ties which indicates the degree of ‘connectedness’ within the network. The density of social networks is an indicator for social integration. Dense parts of informal support networks indicate particularly intense exchange relations, thereby depicting a high degree of support provision. Important for the evaluation of network density is the question whether there is reciprocity of relations or not. Reciprocity of ties is graphically represented by double arrows. They visualise mutual exchange of resources or just mutual relationships.

Granovetter (1973, 1982) emphasised the *strength* of ties as another crucial aspect of a network. The term strength indicates the frequency of contact among individual actors or, in terms of resource mobilisation, volume of resource flow among positions. Weak ties are characterised by the flow of few or sporadic amounts of resources that therefore only constitute a low-density network whereas strong ties indicate a high level of

resource flow and a high-density network respectively. The larger the network, the more likely is someone to get access to valued resources (Lin 1982). The problem with maintaining extended networks is that every new relationship creates new obligations (to reciprocate). The more social contacts we have, the sooner a point is reached where maintenance costs of social relationships exceed its benefits. This means that individuals joining a new social network cannot add many new ties to their existing ones without giving up some old relationships (Wellman 1988). As a consequence, our personal relationships are subject to constant change.

Keeping in mind our inability to maintain a large number of links it becomes a strategic decision to maintain as many weak ties as possible. This inclination of strategically thinking individual actors has implications for the structural setup of social networks, resulting in the emergence of network structures like the following. Individuals who are in the position of '*gatekeepers*' control the flow of resources from and to a particular sub-network (Wellman 1988). An individual is particularly powerful or influential when s/he is part of two cliques that are part of different networks, thus, effectively connecting both subgroups through her/his person. By linking two (or more) subgroups they have access to the resources of both (or all) groups.

Directedness can be another important indicator of the network structure. If all or many links are directed towards one node it points to an actor in a central position. A central actor maintains many relations to many others and, thus, has access to a lot of resources. In the context of support mobilisation a central actor is someone who is commonly referred to as 'good in networking', i.e. someone who is capable of mobilising a lot of support through many people. On the other hand, s/he is also in the position to pass on resources to many others. In any case, central actors are important for efficient resource mobilisation.

The focus of this research project is on *individual embeddedness* into social networks, not on social networks as such. Variables are measured at individual level and mainly analysed using conventional multivariate and bivariate statistics as well as qualitative analysis. Thus, theories about social networks become explanatory factors in understanding individual behaviour. Social network analysis of this kind is commonly referred to as ego-centred network analysis. Ego-centred network models see the social environment as structural environment that provides opportunities and constraints respectively for individual action. "An ego-centred network consists of a focal actor, termed *ego*, a set of alters who have ties to ego, and measurements on the ties among

these alters.” (Wasserman/Faust 1994: 42 highlights in original) Network analysis based on ego-centred networks produces relational data as well. But in contrast to a group setting where all actors and all ties among them can be observed and measured only few ties from the focal actor to only a few alters can be measured.

Typically, so-called name generators and name interpreters are used to operationalize ego-centred networks. Using a *name generator* the number of alters ego maintains a particular relation with (e.g. friendship, mutual childcare provision, membership in an organisation) is enquired. A *name interpreter* is used to collect attributional data about these alters describing them according to certain characteristics of interest (e.g. gender, age, occupation, relation to interviewee, frequency of contact). Data are collected at the lowest of three aggregate levels – they refer to nodes only (Diaz-Bone 1997).

4.3. The importance of social support for individual well-being

After having explored some of the foundations of social network analysis we now turn our attention to a specific sub-set of social networks – social support networks. After an introduction of the general concept of social support and its function the particular relevance for lone parent families will be addressed.

Basic characteristics of social support

For a long time, social support research was concentrated in health related disciplines, such as epidemiology, social psychology, and social psychiatry. In this context, social support provided through interpersonal networks was seen as a crucial factor for maintaining physical and mental health as well as a means for avoiding and coping with different crises. Material, practical, or emotional support was seen as an important mechanism in maintaining individual well-being and ‘buffering’ the individual against damaging external effects (Laireiter/Baumann 1992). Social support was initially applied to questions of individual well-being only, it has become a more abstract meta-concept which considers social aspects of providing social support as well (Veiel/Baumann 1992).

Although the positive effects of social support on individual well-being are no longer contentious it remains unclear *how* exactly these effects occur (Vaux 1988). Part of the problem is that research has focused on collecting empirical evidence in all sorts of different research settings and has neglected theoretical conceptualisation. Even after more than 25 years of increasing research interest, there is no standard definition of

social support. This research follows Vaux' (1988) suggested definition of social support: "The support network is that subset of the larger social network to which a person routinely turns or could turn for assistance (or which spontaneously provides such assistance) in managing demands and achieving goals." (Vaux 1988: 28) He identified three major dimensions of social support: resources which are exchanged within these support networks, supportive behaviour, and support appraisals by individuals.

Operational definitions are dependent on the relevant focus. An environmental concept, for example, sees social support as an external resource available or not to an individual. Other prevalent foci include social support as a transactional process and social support as a buffer against external negative effects (Laireiter/Baumann 1992). Niepel (1994b) distinguished two major strands within social support research: one concerned with structural features, such as size, composition, or density of networks, the other focusing on the importance of social support for coping with difficult circumstances.

Most researchers set their work in the tradition of one of three 'support classics' – Cassel, Caplan, and Cobb – who gave specific impetus to social support research initially and established different strands within the subject. All three emphasised the buffering effect of social support. The epidemiologist Cassel (1974) described social relations as immune system which assists an individual to cope with crises. He was the first to point out that life events like divorce result in the loss of social relations. Researchers in his tradition tend to focus on structural features of social support *networks*. Cobb (1976) turned his attention to the importance of subjective perception. According to Cobb, it is the *individual perception* of received support that matters – and not the extent of support provision. Finally, Caplan (1974) was the first to stress the function of social support in maintaining individual health, i.e. he focused on general *positive* effects of social support, thereby disconnecting the concept of the occurrence of crises. While others argued that social support generates its buffering effect only in particularly stressful times, Caplan's followers maintain a *generally* positive effect of social support on individual well-being.

More recently, these separate foci were combined into integrated models that perceive social support exchange processes as embedded into a particular environmental context, thereby considering environmental and structural variables. Cohen (1992), for example, suggested a mixture of all these conceptions. Unlike others, Cohen explicitly

connected the notion of supportive behaviour with the concept of resource mobilisation. Thus, Cohen's concept is particularly relevant for this research. Social networks are perceived as structures that provide resources. It is down to individual capacity and strategies to mobilise these resources.

Vaux (1988) stressed the importance of person factors, i.e. factors resulting from personality or specific biographical characteristics. He distinguished stressors (e.g. critical life events), family (biographical experiences with social relations), social roles and settings (e.g. parenthood), neighbourhood, specific support network stressors, and the vulnerability of the network. Social factors influencing the likely utility of informal support networks are socio-economic status, gender, marital status, and ethnicity. A high socio-economic status raises others' expectations for being rewarded for providing social support (Laireiter/Baumann 1992). Women generally make more use of social support than men and also provide more support (Thoits 1992). Furthermore, social support provision is more common in particular ethnic groups than in others (Judd et al. 1991). Finally, the provision of social support is subject to continuous change throughout the life cycle. People have different capacities, opportunities, roles, and needs, and act in distinct contexts depending on life phases.

A feature that distinguishes social support networks from the broader domain of social networks is their potentially 'buffering' effects. Direct buffering effects and latent effects of social support are distinguished. Direct buffering effects aim at mitigating potentially damaging effects in a concrete crisis and at reducing the effect of stressors (Perlman/Rook 1987; d'Abbs 1991; Diewald 1991; Laireiter/Baumann 1992; Bien 1994). The mere fact of support provision through others is perceived as supportive by the target individual, regardless of success – thereby creating a buffering effect (Thoits 1992). It facilitates general well-being by reinforcing optimism and confidence (Gottlieb 1983). Moreover, social support can also have latent effects. Knowing that help will be available can relieve us of a significant burden. Latent effects are often not perceived consciously – their effect is only felt in their absence.

In contrast, the concept of *coping strategies* sees the individual from an active perspective. People in need are pictured as looking for suitable ways of coping with crises and eventually developing a set of strategies to solve problems permanently. In a cross-national study of lone mothers' coping strategies in Sweden and Italy Gardberg Morner defined coping strategies as "actor's problem solving behaviour" (Gardberg Morner 2000: 10). Lone mothers' coping strategies are, thus, all actions directed at

handling their lives as lone parents. This includes economic actions as well as caring, housework, organisation, or co-ordination activities. In a similar way, the American sociologists Voydanoff/Donnelly (1988) distinguished 'family coping resources' and 'family coping behaviours'. Family coping resources are defined as "characteristics of the family system that facilitate effective problem-solving approaches in response to difficulties" (Voydanoff/Donnelly 1988: 99) In the next section it will be shown what social support means for lone mothers.

Social support mobilisation of lone mothers

Circumstances of lone mothers are commonly described as very difficult. Lone mothers and their children are more likely to be affected by poverty and social exclusion than any other social group, due to the double burden of being sole family carer and sole breadwinner of their households. Niepel (1994b) sees even a triple burden: lone mothers have to bring up and to care for their children, to earn their household's livelihood, and to do all household work all by themselves.

Research into informal support networks of lone parents in Britain and Germany has been rare so far. First research into lone parenthood in Germany was initiated in the mid 1980s. A number of studies investigated either lone parents' general circumstances (e.g. Napp-Peters 1985; Gutschmidt 1986; Neubauer 1988; Nave-Herz/Krüger 1992) or social networks and social support of families (e.g. Kaufmann et. al. 1989; Diewald 1991; Strohmeier 1995), thereby touching lone parents' support networks only at the margins of their predominant research interest. Although research into lone parenthood has been high on the agenda of British social research since the early 1990s it mainly focused on poverty of lone mothers (e.g. Lewis 1995; Land/Lewis 1997; Kiernan et al. 1998) and employment related issues, especially in combination with childcare or social benefits (e.g. Bradshaw/Millar 1991; Burghes 1993; McKay/Marsh 1994; Ford et al. 1995; Marsh et al. 1997; Millar et al. 1997). Social support mobilisation of lone mothers was only discussed at the margins of this research (see, for example, Duncan/Edwards 1997b, 1999) or literature regarding support mobilisation in families (e.g. Willmott 1986; Kempson et al. 1994; Middleton et al. 1994; Thomson 1995; McGlone et al. 1996, 1998).

There are very few studies into coping strategies and social support networks of lone parents in Germany and the UK. The first studies into the subject in Germany were conducted in the early 1990s (Schöningh et al. 1991; Nestmann/Niepel 1992; Niepel

1994a, 1994b). More recently, this focus was extended to lone fathers on one hand and to East Germany on the other (Nestmann/Stiehler 1998). In Britain, the work of Graham (1987), Millar (1992), and Wenger et al. (1998) can be seen as pioneering in this respect. Ford (1996, 1998) stressed the crucial importance of informal childcare arrangements for lone mothers' employment propensity.

Evidence from these explorative studies suggest that lone parents maintain supportive networks deliberately, as an important part of their overall coping strategies. There is no simple, linear correlation between having access to social support and individual well-being. Niepel (1994b) argues that "...those lone parents report the highest mental/physical well-being who are satisfied with extent and quality of received support, who receive several types of support, who indicate various support sources, and who feel that they are part of an exchange relation of give and take. Satisfaction with received support essentially depends on the match between need of support and receipt of support." (Niepel 1994b: 24/25 ; author's translation)

There has been a long-standing controversy as to whether families or friends are more important in providing support to lone mothers. At this point it is necessary to draw some terminological boundaries. It is relatively straightforward to identify members of one's family or kinship network. Our relationship to relatives is characterised by a lifelong (though not necessary close) bond resulting from the biological link through common ancestry. Generations tend to maintain ties already developed among them. This original family network can be extended through marriage/cohabitation or, in some cases, through adoption (Willmott 1986). We feel attached to relatives because we know that they belong to the same (extended) family as ourselves and we can presuppose that they feel the same way about us. The resulting general commitment to support each other is lifelong. Another important source of support are lone mothers' ex-partners – though mutual relations are often marked by ambiguity.

Families play the crucial role in providing support in emergencies (Niepel 1994b; Wenger et al. 1998). Not only are families the most reliable source of support (Kaufmann et al. 1989; Diewald 1991), they are also the main support source in daily life (Leslie/Grady 1985; Dieckmann et. al. 1986), including financial support (Kurdek 1988). Results of the 1986 and 1995 British Social Attitudes Surveys which contained kinship and friendship modules showed that individual contacts with members of one's original family had indeed fallen over that period. Nevertheless, family relationships are

still extremely important to most of us (McGlone et. al. 1996, 1998). In the case of lone parents they found that relatives substitute partners as primary support source. Lone mothers' parents are crucial supporters in daily life as well as in emergencies (Millar 1992). They are also an important source of financial support. When family members were named as supporters this usually referred to the lone mothers' parents - only few brothers and sisters formed part of lone mothers' regular support networks. Other, more distant relatives only play a marginal role as supporters. Utilisation of kinship support by lone mothers is based on need rather than preference. Lack of affordable childcare leaves many no other choice than to rely on their parents. Those without that kind of support are effectively excluded from the labour market (Ford 1996, 1998 ; Bryson et al. 1997). The severity of this problem is illustrated by Scott/Brook's (1997) findings that 80 per cent of poor mothers would want to work if there was childcare available.

It is a different story with friends. People choose their friends. Though there may be lifelong friendships involving lifelong commitments as well, it is far more common to have different friends at different stages in one's life. Willmott (1986) and Bulmer (1986) pointed out the difficulties in defining who is to be regarded as a friend. Willmott (1986) identified the following three essential characteristics of friendship: (1) Friends are normally non-relatives with whom we maintain continuing relationships. (2) Our friends tend to be alike in regard to demographic background variables. (3) Friendship relations have a supportive aspect. Although we do not normally talk about it explicitly, exchange or reciprocity are important elements of friendship as well.

The pioneering studies into the subject in West Germany stressed the extraordinary importance of friends as main supporters (Gutschmidt 1986; Heiliger 1991; Nave-Herz/Krüger 1992). Niepel (1994b) who produced the most comprehensive study of lone mothers' social support networks in Germany came to the conclusion that friendship relations clearly dominated over relations to relatives. In her study friends accounted for more than two thirds of network members and more than three quarters of all measured support activities. In my opinion it is inadmissible to conclude their importance from their mere proportion. Normally, we have two parents only – but more friends. In contrast, both Abrams (in Bulmer 1986) and Willmott (1986) in their groundbreaking studies of informal support provision by neighbours, kin, and friends in Britain stressed the structural weakness of friends compared to other primary groups since "...they lack the permanence of the family and the frequent face-to-face contact of neighbours." (Willmott 1986: 71) On the other hand, Wenger et. al. (1998) found

evidence for an increased importance of friends for lone mothers, partly substituting absent partners. Their research, however, which was carried out in a rural setting in Northern Wales, also suggested that a rural setting may produce closer kinship relations due to closer proximity. It seems that relatively frequent contacts with neighbours are a consequence as well.

The role of colleagues and neighbours as supporters seems to be marginal, as it was confirmed in all major German studies into the subject (see, for example, Napp-Peters 1985; Diewald 1991; Niepel 1994b; Nestmann/Stiehler 1998). Neighbours can help with occasional favours. But neighbours who are part of stable supportive relations are the exception and not the rule. Though in many cases providing insufficient support, children's fathers are another important support source for lone mothers. A significant proportion of children's fathers did not even comply with their obligation to pay their children maintenance (Wiegmann 1990) but many others maintained regular supportive relations. Most studies confirmed a complete break-off of relations to the fathers' original families (Meyer/Schulze 1989; Schönningh et al. 1991; Nave-Herz/Krüger 1992; Niepel 1994b). Finally, older children may play a role as supporters of their mothers. In the UK many older children work to boost their mothers' household income (Axford 1997).

Remarkably, some studies found that lone mothers received more support than married mothers (Johnson 1986; Heiliger 1991) – although married mothers normally dispose of wider kinship networks. Their argument was that lone mothers attract more attention while it is commonly assumed that married mothers are supported by their husbands – which is not necessarily the case. This does not mean, however, that lone mothers are generally happy with the amount and quality of received support. According to Schönningh et al. (1991), their satisfaction with received help often only reaches average scores. A number of explanations are likely: Leslie/Grady (1988) stressed the importance of reciprocity as crucial for permanent availability of satisfactory support. The dilemma lone parents face is that they experience increased need of support at times of decreased availability of resources. Since many lone parents have difficulties in reciprocating, they only make use of informal support when they are either able to repay the favour or if there is no other alternative (Johnson 1986; Niepel 1994b; Nestmann/Stiehler 1998). Leslie/Grady (1988) even argued that lone parents take the norm to reciprocate so seriously that they end up giving more support than they actually

receive. This asymmetry of support provision can become a major burden in lone parents' lives.

A mismatch between support needed and support received can turn help into another stress factor (Leslie/Grady 1985; Nestmann/Stiehler 1998). Mismatches concerning amount, source, timing, and structure of support provision can occur. Too much support can be as stressful as insufficient support. Timing is important, too. Obviously, support provided too late is not very helpful. Finally, individuals also differ in regard to their position in wider social networks. They differ in respect to access to useful resources depending on their position within these networks. A small but dense network may work best when regular support is needed to master daily life while loose but large networks have other advantages (see Granovetter's 1974 argument). Some people have easier access to these resources because they happen to be in a key position for connecting several subgroups.

Most lone parents are deprived of financial means and time alike. Therefore, they lack essential resources for inevitable network investments and are, thus, much less likely to be part of large networks than others. Of course, it is important to keep in mind that lone mothers form a very heterogeneous group and, therefore, lack of resources affects them differently. Support is generally related to the nature of resources available in their social networks as well as in the communities in which these networks operate. If Granovetter's explanation of the importance of weak ties is taken into account it becomes apparent that these families are in a disadvantaged position in general. This is worsened in case of unemployed or not employed mothers because they are deprived of colleagues as a potential source of social support. Negative consequences of informal support provision include arguments with relatives (Gongla/Thompson 1987) or other members of the support network (Nestmann/Stiehler 1998), interference of others into one's life (Napp-Peters 1985; Isaacs/Leon 1986; Neubauer 1988; Nestmann/Stiehler 1998), dependency of, and obligations towards others (Napp-Peters 1985; Gongla/Thompson 1987; Nestmann/Stiehler 1998). "Lone parents often have to pay for received support with restrictions to their freedom, external control of their lifestyle, diminished self-esteem, and strain through support provision." (Niepel 1994b: 27 ; author's translation)

4.4. An integrated model of individual support mobilisation

A strand of social support research concerned with lone parents in particular has been established in recent years. The main concern has been to map the extent of social support, support sources, and the validity of the reciprocity norm for guiding exchange processes between lone parents and their informal supporters. All these researchers provided evidence of the crucial importance of social support for the well-being of lone mothers as well as their employment propensity. The exclusive focus on exchange relations within ego-centred networks or hypothetical support incidents explicitly or implicitly presupposes that only support provided by members of lone mothers' personal networks are considered.

Characteristics of informal and formal support

In this research, formal support sources are considered alongside informal sources. As was shown in chapter 3 many lone mothers rely particularly on formal support. Although none of the previously mentioned researchers will question the availability of formal support alternatives the interaction between formal and informal support mobilisation has not so far been examined. It seems likely that the need for informal support is strongly dependent on the availability of formal alternatives. When our children regularly attend a childcare facility we do not have to ask our parents to look after them. The utilisation of formal support has the advantage that it does not require the cost-intensive maintenance of social support networks which presuppose reciprocity of support. Considering their constraints in terms of money and time formal support can become an attractive alternative for lone mothers. But formal support involves other costs. Some means of formal support cost money (e.g. childcare, babysitting), time (e.g. waiting hours at state agencies), and effort (e.g. to fill in application forms). Moreover, utilisation of formal support can be accompanied by public stigmatisation (e.g. receipt of means-tested benefits).

However, informal and formal support are not mutually exclusive alternatives – they often complement each other. There may be situations where informal and formal support mechanisms work hand in hand. For example, informal emergency childcare helps to prevent children's illnesses from spreading in public childcare facilities. Moreover, individuals who are good in mobilising informal support may also be successful formal mobilisers. An individual who is good in networking, for example, is not only more likely to get material resources like clothing for children this way, she is

also more likely to learn about how to apply for formal means of support, such as seasonal payments for clothing.

Coping with difficult situations in lone parents' lives almost always offers the choice between informal and formal support sources. Childcare can be provided by family members or friends on the one hand, or public and private childcare providers on the other. General livelihood can be sustained by earning an income, receipt of maintenance, and financial support from the family (at least for a limited period) on the one hand, or from state benefits on the other. We can get advice on problems with our children from members of our families, friends, or self-help groups, or we can approach Social Services. We can ask our friends for comfort following divorce or we can seek counselling. This list could be continued indefinitely. Utilisation depends on knowing of the existence of support alternatives and certain personality characteristics.

The difficulties for social support research in considering such interdependencies are based on the characteristic of formal support that it is available to everyone to the same extent. Everyone who has a psychological problem is entitled to seek counselling. A little bit more difficult is the situation with means-tested benefits. Nevertheless, all individuals with proven need have the same entitlements. Only a cross-national comparison can enable the observer to discover the interdependence between informal and formal support mobilisation provided, because the extent and nature of formal support differs across country borders. This is the innovative element of this research. Thereby, existing research into informal support networks of families and lone parents is supplemented by the findings concerning formal support mobilisation. Moreover, insights in individual decisions about utilisation of either informal or formal support will be provided.

In order to do that a theoretical model explaining the individual decision making process is needed. Next, features of both support forms will be compared. *Formal* support is understood as all support forms provided on the basis of private law contracts or social welfare legislation. Moreover, all support forms that are provided by professional supporters belong into this category. In which ways are they different from informal supporters from our friendship and family networks? The following table 4.1 gives an overview about basic characteristics of formal and informal support.

Table 4.1: Characteristics of informal and formal support

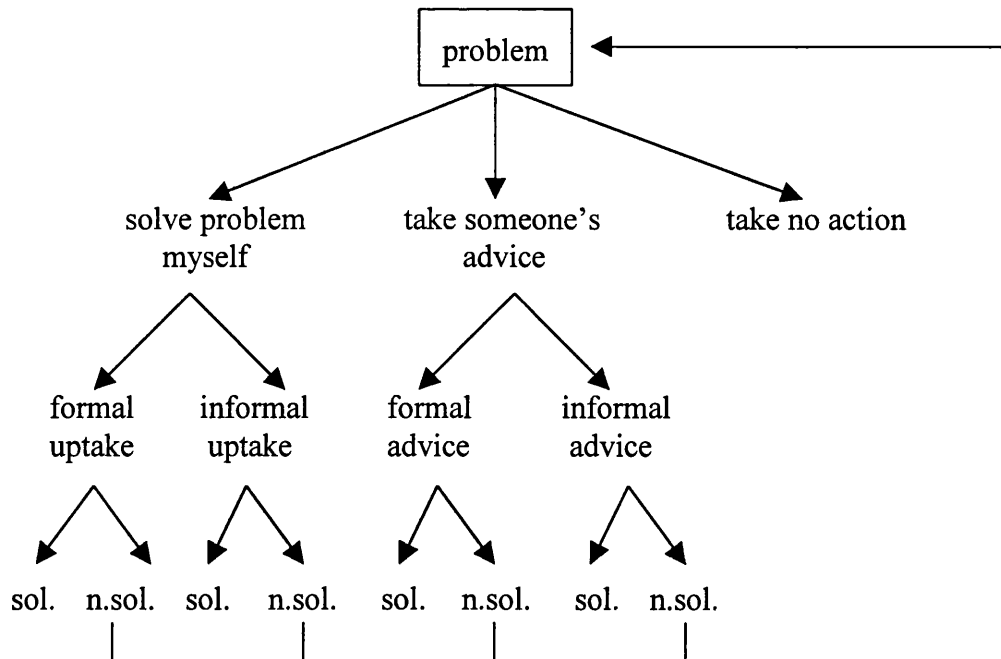
Support provision	Informal	Formal
• Basis of support provision	personal relationship	legal; contract; membership
• Target group	network member	all entitled
• Enforcement	no	yes
• Support method	concrete	general
• Degree of specialisation	low	high
• Reciprocity	yes	no

There are, of course, a variety of support forms possible. Not all of them can be classified unequivocally (e.g. charities, church). Informal support provision is quite straightforward. It is based on a personal relationship, either kinship or friendship. Although it is possible that we have a personal relationship to a formal supporter (e.g. doctor, civil servant, landlord) the basis of support provision there is a formal act. Basically, everyone who is covered by the relevant formal agreement can use this service. State support may require fulfilment of additional formal criteria, such as proven need in case of an Income Support claim. Since these claims are covered by formal agreements they can usually be enforced by the law. In contrast, support provided by members of personal networks cannot be legally enforced. Support is provided based on family commitments or reciprocation of past (future) support. Informal support has the advantage that it is specially tailored for our needs.

Individual support mobilisation

Next, the decision making process of an individual in need who has informal and formal support alternatives will be looked at. At the beginning is always a problem, a difficult situation, an unexpected crisis. How is it going to be solved? The initial step is to decide whether we can solve the problem ourselves, whether we take someone else's advice, or whether we take no action at all. Figure 4.1 below contains this individual problem solving sequence.

Figure 4.1: Problem solving sequence of individual support mobilisation

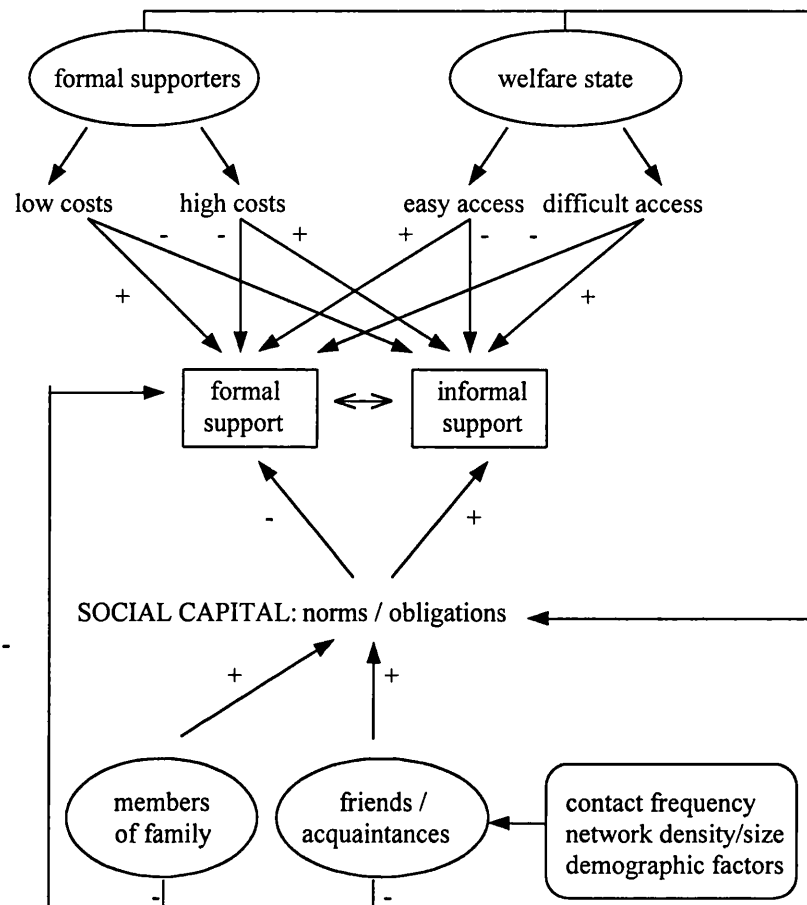


Depending on the nature of the problem there might be informal sources and formal sources of support, regardless of whether I solve the problem myself or take someone else's advice. The rational actor will carefully calculate cost and benefit of each option, thereby not only considering financial costs but also other criteria, such as quality and reliability of service, future obligations, non-monetary cost factors, such as waiting hours, effort, norms. It is not an ambition of this research to provide evidence for such cost-benefit-calculations. The main concern is to investigate whether a decision for use of an informal supporter is dependent on the availability of formal alternatives and vice versa. If the problem could not be solved using either informal or formal means of help we will return to the initial situation and the sequence starts anew – as figure 4.1 demonstrates.

In a next step, the focus is exclusively on the second stage of the problem solving sequence. This stage is crucial for this problematic since the decision whether to use informal or formal support is made there. In figure 4.2 below the individual decision making process is outlined, taking into consideration factors that influence this decision. This graphic visualises the integrated model of individual support mobilisation from which the central research hypotheses in chapter 5 will be deducted.

Figure 4.2:

An integrated model of individual support mobilisation



The core of figure 4.2 is the individual decision between informal and formal support – visualised by the two boxes at the centre of the graphic. The decision whether to use informal support or not depends on two factors: (1) the availability of formal support alternatives in the domain of the welfare state (on the top right) and other formal support sources (on the top left), e.g. banks, private childcare providers, voluntary organisations; and (2) the costs of using these support alternatives. A rational actor will first calculate the costs involved in using each way of action. Thus, utilisation of formal support is mediated through the costs of each way of action. *Low* financial costs *increase* the likelihood of using formal support. The resulting positive value of this way of action is represented by ‘+’ and visualised by the left arrow. In contrast, *high* costs *decrease* the likelihood of using formal support – visualised by the third arrow from the left that carries a ‘-’ representing a negative value of this path of action. Since formal and informal support sources are regarded as substitutes in this model high costs of using formal support also result in an *increased* likelihood of using informal support instead whereas low costs of formal support utilisation *decrease* the likelihood of using informal support.

While formal supporters like private childminders or a bank request payments in exchange for their services the utilisation of state welfare does not normally require payments. The costs of using state support are of non-monetary nature: access to state support can be relatively easy when involving a minimum of bureaucratic effort, no means-test and no waiting time are required, and no public stigma is attached. On the other hand, access to state welfare can be difficult when much bureaucratic effort, means-testing, long waiting hours, and public stigmatisation is the price for using it. Following the same logic as if calculating the costs of using other formal supporters, the likelihood that a rational actor decides in favour of state welfare increases if access is easy and decreases if access is difficult. In the latter case the likelihood of using informal support instead increases.

Utilisation of informal support, however, is not exclusively dependent on the costs of formal support alternatives. There are also properties of informal support networks that influence the decision of whether to use informal support or not. These properties are mediated through our social capital. Social capital exists in the relations between us and members of our personal networks. It includes expectations (trust), obligations, and norms to support each other. If such norms or obligations exist they *increase* the likelihood that the rational actor will use informal support since no additional costs are involved. This is visualised by an arrow with the positive value '+' that is directed at informal support. If, however, no such norms/obligations exist, the likelihood of using informal support decreases and the likelihood of using formal support instead increases in turn (arrow with negative value '-' pointing towards formal support).

We are connected with members of our families (bottom left of figure 4.2) through a life-long history of mutual obligations which do not presuppose direct reciprocity. The existence of such obligations *increase* the likelihood that the rational actor will use informal support since no additional costs are involved with using it. In contrast, the likelihood that she will receive support from friends or acquaintances (bottom centre of figure 4.2) is dependent on network structural and demographic factors. The direction of the relationship with each separate factor varies and will be specified in detail in an appropriate research hypothesis in chapter 5. Therefore, no positive or negative value was assigned to the arrow that visualises that relationship. Contact frequency and/or intensive relationships *increase* the likelihood that obligations to support each other exist. Demographic factors influence the availability of resources in our networks.

Availability of informal support through family or friends has a *decreasing* effect at the utilisation of formal support (left hand side arrow with negative value). If we cannot fall back on obligations in our personal networks due to strained family relations and lack of other supportive relations, for example, the likelihood that we can use informal support decreases. The likelihood of using formal support alternatives instead increases. Finally, there is a *decreasing* feedback effect between the existence of formal support alternatives and obligations within social networks. For example, the introduction of retirement pensions resulted in decreasing obligations of children to support their parents financially in old age.

In this chapter the theoretical foundations of this research were outlined and combined into an integrated model of individual support mobilisation behaviour. This model reflects the basic assumptions of this research about individual thinking and individual action in the process of gaining access to urgently needed resources in crises. The formulation of hypotheses in the following chapter was carried out based on these theoretical considerations about individual behaviour.

CHAPTER 5

HYPOTHESES, SAMPLING AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter concludes the introduction of the theoretical aspects of the dissertation, and it serves as the link between the theoretical parts and the subsequent empirical and analytical ones. In the first section of this chapter, the objectives and the main hypotheses of this research are introduced in detail. Following that, sample selection criteria are introduced and it is explained why they were chosen. These theoretical considerations are followed by an outline of the sampling procedures that were employed to realise the sample. Finally, research methods employed to achieve the research objectives are explained. The operationalisation of theoretical concepts, especially the measurement of informal support will be discussed before the details of realisation in the construction of research instruments, conduct of interviews, and eventually data analysis are explained.

5.1. Research objectives and research hypotheses

This research project is primarily concerned with the way lone mothers mobilise support from informal and formal sources. Support sources are not the only difference, the individual needs of lone mothers vary as well. Demographic variables are the first set of determining factors. In particular, employment and receipt of Income Support/*Sozialhilfe* respectively are important predictors of required support. Individual circumstances do not only have an impact on the extent of needed support. They also influence the required forms of support. For example, someone who is in full-time employment will more appreciate support with childcare than someone who is solely working as family carer. In contrast, the latter will prefer more financial and material support. Health is another factor resulting in differing support needs. Lone mothers whose children are disabled or chronically ill or who are affected by illness themselves need special attention and support.

Moreover, lone mothers vary in their capacities to cope with lone parenthood. This is reflected in diverging needs of emotional support. Finally, lone mothers differ in their

capacities to mobilise support. Some lone mothers are good in networking, others withdraw from their social environment and live in isolation. This enumeration does not claim to be complete but indicates a wide range of varying needs required by lone mothers in different circumstances. Based on a review of relevant literature Diewald (1991) distinguished 16 forms of social support. In figure 5.1 these will be adapted to the specific situation of lone mothers:

Figure 5.1: Typology of social support

Concrete interaction	Give cognition	Give emotions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - person related assistance (childcare) - in-kind assistance (repairs, housework) • Care (illness of lone mother) • Material support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in-kind assistance (clothing given) - financial assistance • Intervention (mediation Benefits Agency) • Information (benefits entitlements) • Advice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in-kind assistance (problems with children) - intimate advice • Socialising • Everyday interaction (smalltalk in the morning) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give appraisal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - personal appreciation (respect) - status ascription (respected group member) • Orientation (coping strategies as model) • Awareness of affiliation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - participation (commitments) - to be needed (sense of belongingness) • Expectation of support (backing) • Location for acquisition of social competence (social skills) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give warmth • Give love and affection • Motivational support

Source: Diewald 1991: 71; author's translation and adaptation

Other influential typologies were suggested by Pearson (1990) and Cutrona/Suhr (1994). Specifically for social support networks of lone mothers, Tietjen (1985) suggested a typology measuring three dimensions: social activities, instrumental support, and personal support. Apart from a few exceptions (for example, Gottlieb 1981; Niepel 1994b) empirical evidence for this broad variety of support could not be provided. Most

researchers managed to distinguish three or four dimensions only using factor analytical procedures. For example, three procedures identified by Cohen et al. (1985) were appraisal, belonging, and tangible.

Central research hypotheses

A basic principle of human behaviour is that people who are capable to solve their own problems will do so. However, if we are unable to help ourselves we can ask for help. Whereas informal support is a trait of human community entitlements formal support is the outcome of the emergence of modern welfare states. Thus, people in need have principally two options – to ask members of their informal networks for help or to turn to institutionalised, formal support. The main concern of this research is to examine whether such an interaction between informal and formal support exists, and how it is manifested in lone mothers' support mobilisation behaviour. However, the interaction between both support forms looked at in this research does not include the analysis of general livelihood maintenance. The objective of this research is beyond the subsistence problem. It focuses on lone mothers' efforts to obtain help in everyday crisis situations. The overarching main hypothesis of this research in its most general formulation is:

Main hypothesis

There is an association between informal and formal support mobilisation.

This main hypothesis is specified in several stages. At the beginning, let us recall the theoretical assumptions about individual behaviour that were outlined in the previous chapter: It was assumed that lone mothers make strategic, rational choices between support alternatives based on sets of preferences and restrictions. Within this research norms are admitted as preferences. It was focused on the cost aspect of support mobilisation to avoid a tautological argumentation. Informal support is a trait of social networks which every human being is embedded. Therefore, informal support is normally easily accessible, i.e. its mobilisation involves low costs. Moreover, there is variety of informal supporters who have the potential to help, especially kinship and friendship relations which are characterised by long-term exchange relations. Formal support often involves high costs in terms of financial effort, bureaucracy, long waiting hours, or stigmatisation. Thus, the first specification of the main hypothesis is, based on the expected lower overall costs involved with informal support mobilisation:

(I) Dominance hypothesis

Informal support is more prevalent than formal support. That means that individuals maintain more informal support relations than formal support relations.

A basic principle of German social policy is the subsidiarity principle which is derived from Catholic social thought. Subsidiarity means that priority is accorded to the smaller unit over wider units and the state. According to this principle, self-help and informal support have priority over formal support (Lampert 1994). For example, entitlements to state support presupposes that all informal sources were exhausted before. Thus, the main hypothesis is specified in a second partial hypothesis:

(II) Subsidiarity hypothesis

If individuals need help they will turn to informal support sources first before they consider to use formal support.

Provided the requirement of subsidiarity was fulfilled, needy individuals are entitled to formal support. Another assumption is that people who tried unsuccessfully to solve their problems using informal means will turn to formal support next. Hence, a third specification of the main hypothesis was formulated:

(III) Compensation hypothesis

Individuals who have no or little informal support will mobilise formal support to a larger extent compared to people who have access to a lot of informal support.

All three aspects of the main hypothesis are closely related and specify the interaction between informal and formal support mobilisation. After this interaction is elaborated, assumptions about determinants of informal and formal support will be made. First, diverging roles played by different welfare state regimes as context variables of support mobilisation will be looked at. General differences in formal welfare provision may cause different needs of informal support mobilisation. Hence, the main hypothesis was specified in a fourth respect:

(IV) Welfare state hypothesis

Support mobilisation strategies used by German lone mothers differ from those used by British lone mothers.

If the British welfare state provides less monetary benefits for families with young children than the German welfare state, British lone mothers are more likely to mobilise a higher proportion of financial and material support through informal channels than their German counterparts and vice versa. That means that welfare state variables have an effect on the support forms people mobilise as well.

Another important issue is whether particular support mobilisation strategies correlate with demographic variables. D'Abbs (1991) and Diewald (1991) showed that well educated people are more likely to mobilise informal support than less well educated. A positive relationship was also shown between informal support provision on one side and employment status and household income on the other. Furthermore, age and number of children are likely to affect informal networks as well. Time is an essential prerequisite for creating social networks and social support networks. Very young children, however, require much care and attention, thus significantly reducing the parent's time budget. Similarly, an increasing number of children reduces the time budget available to a lone mother, thereby reducing the stock of resources that could be invested in creating and maintaining social support networks otherwise. But unlike the age of the youngest child the number of children can also have positive effects on lone mothers' network generating capacities: children are embedded into their own social networks with other children, thereby at least potentially linking their parents as well. The more children a lone mother has, the more parents of other children she is likely to know. However, relations to acquaintances, such as parents of other children are less likely to become stable support relations (Willmott 1986; Niepel 1994b). Therefore, the demography hypothesis was formulated assuming that the number of children has a decreasing effect at the availability of informal support.

Duration of residence in the same community is also likely to affect the availability of informal support. It takes some time to build social networks – and even longer to create stable and reliable support networks. Thus, duration of residence in the same neighbourhood becomes a precondition for successful generation of social capital. In the long run, availability of social capital in a certain neighbourhood is characterised by cumulative and self-reinforcing effects (see, for example, Putman 1993; Fukuyama

1995) – “...the more social capital an area has, the more it will generate and the more prosperous it will become.” (Duncan/Edwards 1999: 65) The following hypothesis takes the effects of these demographic factors into account:

(V) Demography hypothesis

Availability and use of informal support varies depending on demographic properties: The better educated, the longer living in the same neighbourhood, the older her child(ren), and the fewer children a lone mother has, the more likely she to succeed in mobilising informal support.

The expectation of reciprocity is a universal principle of interpersonal exchange relations (Gouldner 1960). Reciprocity means that give and take will level out in the end. Gouldner suggested two interrelated minimal demands of the universal reciprocity norm: “(1) people should help those who have helped them, and (2) people should not injure those who have helped them.” (Gouldner 1960: 171) Other authors stress exceptions of this rule for relationships between close relatives – such as mothers and daughters – where support is provided regardless of reciprocity (Lewis/Meredith 1988; Strohmeier 1995). Buhr et. al. (1987) suggested the concept of ‘social distance’ in order to describe the degree of ‘closeness’ of relations. The more socially distant someone is, the lesser the obligations to help and expectations of reciprocity are higher.

(VI) Reciprocity hypothesis

The closer interpersonal relationships are the lower is the degree of reciprocity. The closer interpersonal relationships are the more likely support is provided without the expectation of reciprocity.

The object of the subsequent sections is to demonstrate how these hypotheses were operationalised in the process of sample realisation and in the construction of the research instruments.

5.2. Sampling

Subject of this section is the explanation of the sampling process. Questions like the following will be answered: Which sampling procedures were chosen to select comparison groups? Why were they selected? Which problems occurred in relation to the selection process? How was sample access realised? Did the selected procedure produce the anticipated sample and if not, what was done to adjust distortions?

Selection of comparison groups

Cross-national research requires country-specific sub-samples that are clearly defined and as much alike as possible to ensure valid comparative analysis. Demographic variables like number and age of children, employment, marriage status, gender, or ethnic background of the parent have certain implications. For example, a toddler needs far more parental attention than a teenager. A parent who is employed disposes of a higher income but less time than someone who is not employed. A divorced lone mother may receive maintenance from her former husband while a single mother may get no financial support from the child's father. The purpose of this sub-section is to specify all characteristics of the chosen samples that were controlled prior to fieldwork.

One-parent families vary in many ways. Most obviously, they can be headed either by a lone father or a lone mother. Exclusively lone mothers were selected for this research project because the vast majority of all one-parent families in both countries are indeed mothers. Being a lone mother indicates an equally high risk of being affected by deprived circumstances in both countries. Whereas British research showed hardly any difference in circumstances between lone mothers and fathers (see, for example, Ford et. al. 1995), German researchers found that German lone fathers tend to be older than lone mothers and also significantly better off financially (see, for example, Klar/Sardei-Biermann 1996).

Lone parents of non-European origin account for roughly seven per cent of lone parents in both countries (Klett-Davies 1997 ; Ford/Millar 1998). No lone mothers from an ethnic minority background were included in the samples. Although they make up a higher proportion of the lone parent population in metropolitan cities – and London and Berlin in particular – they come from completely different cultural backgrounds, thus bringing in a variety of uncontrollable cultural variables that are likely to influence research outcomes. Whereas there is a significant number British lone mothers of Afro-Caribbean origin – according to Berthoud/Beishon (1997) more than a third of all Afro-

Caribbean families are headed by a lone parent – the largest ethnic minority in Germany are of Turkish origin. Turkish and Afro-Caribbean mothers are very likely to have different attitudes towards support through their wider family networks, for example. Including them into the samples would create enormous difficulties in distinguishing such cultural differences from effects resulting from different formal support systems³³.

Age and number of children are likely to have some effect as well. The younger a child is the more parental attention it needs. Children in pre-school age put a severe burden on a lone mother's shoulders, limiting time that can be devoted to non-caring activities as well as her mobility and flexibility to a minimum. Without external support, she will be isolated from her social environment and unable to get employed. It was decided to select lone mothers with children in pre-school age only because this situation makes mother and child especially vulnerable and reliant on external support. A problem at this point was that most British children start school as early as aged 5, some even younger whereas German children do not start school until they are 6.

Furthermore, the more children share the household with a lone mother the more resources she needs and the less resources she can allocate per child. Initially, it was planned to address this fact by including women *with one child in pre-school age only*. This last sampling contingency, however, had to be surrendered during fieldwork because it proved impossible to find the required number of interviewees who matched these criteria. Having a very young child limits a lone mother's ability to mobilise resources in a more severe way than having more than one child. Hence, mothers with older children were included as well provided their youngest child was in pre-school age. Considering all selection criteria at once only *white lone mothers with at least one child in pre-school age in the UK and Germany* were included into the samples.

Sample location and sample access

The main objective of this research was to investigate the relationship between formal and informal support mobilisation by German and British lone mothers. Ideally, this objective could be achieved using two nationally representative samples. Given the financial, time, and personal constraints of this research this never was a realistic option. As a consequence, it was decided to carry out two separate case studies in each country.

³³ Three mothers of Afro-Caribbean origin were interviewed in London to explore such differences. It seems that there are more differences between first generation immigrants and all others than between

This resulted in the difficulty to choose appropriate locations to achieve the research objectives of the project. In order to validate cross-nationally comparative analysis of both 'national' sub-samples it was necessary to select locations that were as similar as possible. London and Berlin were selected for this purpose. Both cities are the biggest urban centres with several million inhabitants and the highest population density in both countries resulting in common features in terms of overall living conditions, such as rents that are higher than national average, lack of affordable and appropriate housing for families, and extensive systems of public transport. Another characteristic that made both cities particularly interesting for this research is the high concentration of lone parents – both in absolute numbers and as proportion of families. Nowhere else in the UK and in Germany are their proportions as high as in London and Berlin, thereby increasing the chances of gaining access to potential interviewees.

A main difference between both cities is the fact that Berlin was formed from two very different parts formerly belonging to two different societal systems in 1990. Even ten years after the breakdown of communism and German unification different attitudes towards lone parenthood exist in the West and in the East. The formerly communist state of East Germany adopted strong pro-natalist policies and, at the same time, established a comprehensive system of full-time public childcare facilities at almost no costs for parents to encourage female full-time employment. Moreover, it was relatively easy to get divorced and to re-marry in East Germany compared with the more rigid divorce laws of the traditional West German system.

As a consequence, negative stereotypes about lone parents hardly exist at all in the East. Lone parenthood is far more common in East Germany where lone parents represent a quarter of all families with children aged up to 18 – a roughly 10 per cent higher proportion than in West Germany (Nestmann/Stiehler 1998). Not only is their proportion of all families higher, lone mothers in East Berlin are also more likely to be employed, and there are more public childcare facilities (own calculations based on Microcensus Berlin 1998 data). Even after a decade of adapting to West German low standards of childcare provision there are still far more public childcare facilities in the East than in the West – with the consequence that self-help in regard to childcare is less imminent. Furthermore, as Nestmann/Stiehler (1998) found in the first comprehensive comparative study of lone parents' informal support networks in West and East

mothers of European and non-European origin. Considering this small number, it is impossible to draw any conclusions. It may be worth looking into this in more detail in future research.

Germany social networks of East German lone mothers are more family focused than those of their West German counterparts who, in turn, tend to make more use of self-help groups and other voluntary associations. Therefore, lone mothers from East Berlin were not included in the Berlin sample to guarantee comparability of the data. No doubt, comparative studies of British and East German societies with their relatively high prevalence of lone parenthood will be a fruitful area for future research.

How was sample access realised? The first step in accessing both case study samples was to select lone mothers using a random route procedure. Unfortunately, neither attempts to contact lone mothers by knocking on doors in a randomly selected neighbourhood nor open letters introducing the project and vowing lone mothers to take part in interviews at a NHS health centre, in nurseries, or local Benefits Agencies had any positive outcome. Therefore, it was decided to use voluntary organisations for lone parents as mediators to get access to the required numbers of lone mothers – despite of concerns of obtaining highly selective samples. A question was whether it was more useful to contact several small self-help groups at local level or one or two rather big national organisations. I decided to contact the two biggest one-parent organisations in each country – Gingerbread in the UK and '*Verein Alleinstehender Mütter und Väter*' (*VAMV*) (i.e. 'Association of Lone Mothers and Fathers') in Germany. Both organisations act as political pressure groups advocating lone parents' interests at national level and, thus, enjoy a high degree of popularity among lone parents. At the same time, their local branches work as self-help groups for lone parents.

To select these two lone parent organisations had several advantages. Both groups are well known for their public role in society. Many people are aware of them and they frequently are a first source of support and information when someone becomes a lone parent. Their public involvement also meant that they were aware of and interested in social research being conducted into lone parents' circumstances. In other words, selecting these two organisations increased the chances of getting access to interviewees in the first place as well as to get the required number of interviews in a reasonably short period of time. Once the interest of Gingerbread and VAMV into the research project as such was established and mutual trust between organisation representatives and researcher was generated, they fully supported the research. That meant in concrete terms that they used both their formal and informal channels within the organisation to inform their members about the project and to encourage them to take part in interviews. VAMV adopted an even more supportive approach: not only did they compile lists with

contact details of lone mothers who were willing to take part in an interview, they also offered their office facilities as venue for interviews, thus speeding up the interview process in Germany significantly.

This procedure allowed relatively easy and quick access to the required numbers of interviewees. Its disadvantage, however, was that both samples are highly selective. Lone mothers who are members of self-help groups made the first step out of isolation and social exclusion already. It is very likely that they differ from other lone mothers in respect to certain characteristics, such as education and social skills. They may have generally more active attitudes. Those lone mothers who are most severely affected by social exclusion are rather unlikely to be members of such organisations.

On the other hand, this sampling procedure opened the unique opportunity to analyse the effect affiliation with voluntary organisations for lone parents may have on lone mothers' support mobilisation strategies. My intention was to compare results gained from these two highly selective samples with data from smaller comparison groups in each country that were selected independently from lone parent organisations. Unfortunately, it proved impossible to gain access to significant numbers of lone mothers who were not affiliated to a lone parent organisations. The only option that remained within the given constraints of this research was to compare obtained data from these selective samples with other researchers' results. Representative survey data of the British or German population were used to investigate first, whether such a bias does indeed exist and second, in which ways lone parent organisations members differ from other lone mothers. Recent publications of research into the subject were considered as well.

Fieldwork

The general route to access both samples was explained in the previous sub-chapter. Subject of this section is how contact to interviewees was actually realised. The same sampling strategy of getting in touch with interviewees through mediation of lone parent organisations turned out to be quite different in reality. Although Gingerbread and VAMV are equivalents in their role as advocates of lone parent interests as well as informal support providers they are not alike in their structural setup that reflects centralist vs. federalist political structures in each country (for more details see chapter 7: Lone parent organisations as support providers). These structural differences resulted in the necessity to adopt different avenues to contact interviewees.

First, both organisations were sent a written outline of the research project and its objectives. These letters were followed up by a phone call a week later. Subject of the phone conversation was to arrange an appointment with a leading representative of Gingerbread and VAMV for an expert interview. The idea was not only to get valuable insights into structure and work of the organisation, but also to build a foundation of mutual trust by informing about content and objectives of the project, guaranteeing confidentiality and data protection as well as giving them a chance to meet the researcher in person. Once they agreed their co-operation the degree of their involvement in the project as well as concrete procedures of giving vs. getting access to potential interviewees were subject of discussion. Expert interviews were carried out in November 1997 (Berlin) and February 1998 (London). Piloting was conducted in March/April 1998 to test both research instruments. Up to this point the sampling process was exactly the same in both countries. Following successful piloting, the fieldwork phase was started in London in late April 1998.

Gingerbread and VAMV are alike in the sense that they are umbrella organisations at national level consisting of more or less independent local groups. Both have national head offices at the seat of government, i.e. in Bonn³⁴ and London. Germany's federal political structure, however, results in the existence of an additional regional layer – the federal state or '*Länder*' level. Consequently, VAMV consists of '*Länder*' Associations ('*Landesverbände*') which form independent organisations within the national umbrella association. Each 'Land' has its own office that represents VAMV interests at '*Länder*' level and co-ordinates contacts to and among local groups. In the three city states ('*Stadtstaaten*') Berlin, Bremen, and Hamburg VAMV offices work as both '*Länder*' representatives and local contact points. Though there is a regional level within Gingerbread as well it is not institutionalised to the same degree – almost all co-ordination work is done by the central head office in London.

This different setup had practical consequences for the way samples were realised. In the end, it was far more difficult and time-consuming to realise the London sample than the Berlin sample. Both VAMV in Berlin and Gingerbread in London were very supportive. Gingerbread's head office in London contacted their local groups by mail first. Although repeated and supported by an advert in the Gingerbread newsletter this

³⁴ It is still unclear whether the VAMV head office will remain in Bonn after the German government moved to Berlin or whether it will move to Berlin as well.

approach failed almost completely: only a single local group member got in touch with me.

When it became clear that this was not going to work I adopted a more informal and more flexible strategy. This was necessary since the Gingerbread head office refused to give me the contact details of their local groups. This informal search for contacts eventually succeeded. Personal contacts to two local groups were the starting point for contacts to other local groups. Thus, the first interviews in London were conducted in late May 1998. A variety of other strategies were employed, including searches at local libraries and of other sources of information. Nevertheless, it remains doubtful whether these approaches would have succeeded without the active help by a particularly supportive and well-connected member of a Gingerbread local group who asked members of other local groups she knew. From that point onwards I had enough contacts to use a snow-balling method to get in touch with other local groups. Finally, I got permission to meet representatives of other local groups at the Annual General Meeting of Gingerbread's London Regions' Committee in July 1998. Thus, I managed to establish contacts to all remaining groups in the Greater London region. Interviews in these groups were realised starting in late June/early July 1998. All interviews were completed by December 1998. The VAMV office in Berlin was more efficient and more supportive. Having said that it is important to keep in mind that contact to interviewees was generally easier in Berlin since there was only one central contact point. Fieldwork in Berlin was conducted in two stages. The first part of interviews took place in September and the second in November 1998. In this period 58 interviews in each sample were realised.

Proposed sample structure

It was proposed earlier that certain demographic factors are likely to influence access to support sources. *Employment* was identified as most important income source in contemporary Western societies. Hence, *employment status* was selected to make further distinctions within the two national sub-samples. These were divided into a dichotomy of being employed vs. not being employed. Considering more dimensions (e.g. full-time vs. part-time employment, self-employment, further/higher education) would have made things too complicated at this point. The crucial difference was seen as being employed or not.

Pre-lone parenthood marital *status* was chosen as another dimension of distinction. It was similarly divided into two sub-categories: having been married before (*'ever married'*) vs. not having been married before (*'never married'*). This dichotomy indicates differences in life styles. Lone mothers who were married before tend to be older and more socially isolated than single mothers. Moreover, they tend to have been out of employment for a longer period than those who were not married before. Consequently, their qualifications tend to be out of date and it is far more difficult for them to find a job, let alone a well paid job. On the other hand they may receive maintenance from their former husbands. The following graphic visualises the proposed sample for each city according to the selected criteria.

Figure 5.2: Proposed sample size and major defining criteria of each national sample

Employment status	Marital status	
	'never married'	'ever married'
Employed	15	15
Not employed	15	15

The combination of these four categories define the envisaged samples. The minimum number of cases that is required to carry out simple statistical analyses is 15 cases per cell. This results into a requirement of 60 interviews per country i.e. 120 interviews altogether. In the end, 58 interviews each in Berlin and London were realised taking their numbers to 116 altogether.

5.3. Research Methods

The objective of this section is to identify research methods chosen to realise the ambitions of this research project. First, it will be clarified why it was necessary to combine qualitative and quantitative research methods to achieve the intended objectives. Following that the operationalisation of informal and formal support will be presented and subsequently the research instrument will be introduced.

Combining quantitative and qualitative analysis

In the course of analysing the circumstances of lone mothers it is inevitable to touch very personal and partly intimate issues. Thus, the selection of an appropriate research design was crucial. An ambition of this study is not only to investigate which support sources were approached but also to find out why a particular support type was chosen.

Therefore, I decided in favour of a combined approach that included both quantitative and qualitative elements. Data collection was carried out using a semi-structured questionnaire in face-to-face interviews. The term *semi-structured* indicates a mixture between standardised questions where options how to respond to those questions are given and non-standardised questions where the interviewee was free to respond in whatever way she liked to.

Qualitative interviews allow the respondents to structure the world as they see it. They are more likely to capture complex matters without being superficial (Rank 1992). The ultimate goal of this research project is to understand – in the sense of Max Weber's 'Verstehen' concept (Weber 1972, 1988) – why individual actors develop particular preferences and why they make decisions in favour of distinct options. Details of support mobilisation were regarded as sensitive information, especially as far as relationships with close relatives, close friends, and most of all former partners were concerned. Exploration of motives and reasons for decisions in favour of particular support seeking strategies require a more in-depth approach that takes the interviewee's perspective seriously. A standardised questionnaire always reflects the researcher's perception of the problem. It does not leave enough space for describing in detail living conditions and other circumstances of daily life that may have an impact on strategic decisions (Dieckmann 1995).

A major disadvantage of non-standardised interviews is that they tend to require a high time commitment. Considering the time constraints lone parent face, preference was given to a compromise between standardised questions that do not require much time to answer and open, non-standardised questions where necessary. A significant amount of information could be obtained using standardised questions, especially data relating to the demographic hypothesis. All other parts of the questionnaire were constructed in a way that allowed a mix between standardised and non-standardised, open questions which allowed lone mothers to talk in length. The questionnaire, thus, became a flexible research instrument that could be adjusted to any interview situation. There was space for extensive in-depth probing, if the interview situation permitted it. If, however, the interviewee was not prepared to talk in length it became an almost fully standardised interview – which rarely happened. This combination of methods also ensured that data collected provided a high degree of reliability, an essential prerequisite of a valid cross-national comparison. One difficulty of cross-national research is that similar questions are understood differently in different cultural contexts (Evans 1996;

Hantrais 1996; Chamberlayne 1999). This problem was avoided through piloting and the extensive use of qualitative elements, especially in regard to the main objectives.

Measuring informal and formal support

Informal and formal support identification and measurement are clearly the centrepiece of the research. As we have seen in the first section of this chapter there are a variety of support types. Based on the social support research, variations of support were selected which were assumed to be particularly relevant for lone mothers. These types included: personal, material, financial, and emotional support. For each support type selected, a relevant scenario was identified through piloting and expert interviews. These scenarios were constructed in a way that lone mothers were asked to recall when a specific problem occurred and what they did to solve it. The intention was to measure support mobilisation behaviour in suddenly occurring, difficult situations – and not everyday common behaviour. The idea to use crisis events as contingencies to measure support was born in discussions with my supervisor Steen Mangen and with David Piachaud at the LSE.

These four support types were used to measure both informal and formal support provision. While it was sufficient to know that an interviewee went to the Benefits Agency/*Sozialamt* to inquire for financial assistance to pay for a major repair, for example, informal support mobilisation required more extensive probing to understand mechanisms and context variables of support mobilisation. These four crisis events were chosen because different resources were required for their solution. Figure 5.2 below visualises the relation between the four support types and selected resources.

Figure 5.3: Support types and resource types

		Resource types		
		Money	Time	Social skills
Support types	Financial support	x		
	Material support	x		(x)
	Personal support		x	x
	Emotional support		x	x

Financial informal support only requires the supporter to dispose of the resource money. Neither social skills and spare time nor face-to-face contact are required to provide this support form. Loans or grants can help to solve such a crisis. In contrast to financial

assistance *material* support is provided as in-kind support. Children's clothing are a form of material support that is especially important for lone parents. Therefore, a scenario was constructed that enquired how respondents obtained clothing for their children. Four options of support mobilisation were possible: to get new clothes, to get worn clothes, mutual exchange of clothes among parents, and purchase of clothing. The first option is, in fact, a hidden form of financial support. Obviously, it was more acceptable for some lone mothers and their supporters to get/give clothing than money. Nevertheless, it was considered as material support. The fourth option was regarded as self-help, unless the money for the purchase was borrowed. In the latter case it was regarded as financial support. Material informal support requires money to buy clothing. Exchange of clothing presupposes certain social skills – but not to the same extent as regarding personal and emotional support.

In contrast, *personal* support requires certain skills and spare time to provide help. To measure this form of support a childcare scenario was constructed. Childcare presupposes familiarity with the child and the ability to care for children. Personal support as well as *emotional* support do not rely on the availability of money as an input. Essential for positive emotional support are social skills like listening, empathy, advising, comforting, appraisal, affection, encouragement, etc. Time is, of course, a prerequisite as well. Emotional support does not require face-to-face contact. Telephone conversations are typical means of emotional support for parents of young children.

Constructing the semi-structured questionnaire

It is impossible to identify a particular source forming the basis of my research instrument. As shown in chapter 4, there is an enormous variety of literature concerning measurement of social support. Particular scholars coming from an American social psychology background were very influential here. D'Abbs' (1991) questionnaire for analysis of Australian families' social support networks was the starting point of this research. Other important sources for the construction of the research instrument were Cohen et al. (1985), Vaux (1988), Wellman (1988), Laireiter/Baumann (1992), Thoits (1992), Veiel/Baumann (1992), Cutrona/Suhr (1994) who provided helpful reading on how to measure social support.

Four scenarios were created, each of them measuring one particular support type. The idea was to select four crisis events that were likely to have been experienced by many lone parents and which reflected typical characteristics of that support type. Moreover,

all selected crisis scenarios had to incorporate both informal and formal support sources for their solution – childcare can be provided by friends and family as well as by childminders or childcare facilities; clothes or money for new clothing/a new fridge can be provided by family and friends as well as by the Benefits Agency/*Sozialamt*; emotional support can be provided by friends as well as by a counsellor.

The decision which scenarios to select was influenced by previous research (notably Kempson et al. 1994, Middleton et al. 1994, and the American social support literature as indicated above). Initially, a fifth scenario measuring the provision of information and advice was used as well. This scenario was excluded from the questionnaire following piloting in an attempt to minimise the risk of deterring potential respondents from taking part in or completing an interview. Giving advice was regarded as a combination of the personal support and emotional support scenarios and, therefore, was deleted.

At this point it is sensible to reflect on the validity and reliability of the data. Validity refers to the degree to which an operationalisation accurately reflects the concept it is intended to measure. Closely related is the notion of reliability that “...refers to the extent to which different operationalisations of the same concept produce consistent results.” (Bohrnstedt/Knoke 1994: 14) That means, high reliability is achieved when two different measures of the same concept yield the same outcome or the same instrument produces similar results when re-applied over time. The only way of testing the reliability of the data produced in this research is to compare its outcomes with the results obtained by other researchers in the field. No doubt, a longitudinal design would be far better suited to address the issue of data reliability. However, considering the given time, financial, and personal constraints of this study repeated interviews were not a feasible option.

A crucial question in terms of guaranteeing the validity of collected data was the decision between the construction of crisis scenarios that mirrored *real* behaviour in the past or *hypothetical* behaviour. Diewald (1991) argued in favour of the latter since measuring past experiences would over-emphasise those who already made this experience compared to those who did not. Moreover, data validity is likely to be affected by recall effects if respondents wrongly remember past events. The occurrence of a so-called recall bias is a general problem of retrospective research. It is commonly acknowledged that, the longer ago in the past the focal event occurred, the less likely are reliable responses (see, for example, Bradburn et al. 1987; Becker 2001).

Nevertheless, the measurement of past experiences is more likely to produce valid data since this approach only considers factual support, i.e. support that was indeed provided. Friends may promise to help but are unable or unwilling to provide support when it is inconvenient for them. It is impossible to make realistic predictions about the likelihood of potential support being transformed into real support. Therefore, only events that did indeed happen in the past were considered. Thus, potential supporters who lone mothers expected to help or those who offered help but whose offers were never needed – and, thus, were never put to the acid test – were excluded. Only support that *was* actually provided, that *was* indeed available, was considered an object of analysis.

Figure 5.3 below matches the selected scenarios with the support types they were intended to measure. A common characteristic shared by all crisis events was that they suddenly occurred and that help was needed immediately. The first scenario in the questionnaire was referring to an illness of the child and was extended to include illness of the mother as well. By offering the choice between two likely reasons for not being able to stay at home (a job, an appointment) the scenario is relevant for both lone mothers who are employed and for those who are not. Financial and emotional support were deemed more sensitive information and, therefore, followed personal and material support in third and fourth place.

Figure 5.4: Four crisis scenarios used to measure support mobilisation

Support types	Scenarios
Personal support	Please imagine that your child got ill and has to be cared for at home. You cannot stay at home all the time because you have to go to work or because you have an important appointment. Did anything like that happen to you before?
Material support	Please imagine that you suddenly need new clothes or shoes for your child(ren). You need to get new ones or second hand ones. Did anything like that happen to you before?
Financial support	Please imagine that your washing machine, your refrigerator, or your car suddenly broke down. You need money for the repair or to buy a new one. Did anything like that happen to you before?
Emotional support	Since you have been a lone parent – have you ever had the feeling that everything is too much for you, that you cannot handle that situation alone?

Each scenario was followed by an open, non-standardised question where lone mothers were asked what they did to handle that particular situation. This open format incorporated both informal and formal support sources. The respondents were free to

mention any support source they used to handle that crisis, regardless of its nature. In most cases interviewed women talked in length about their experiences and their ways of handling the crisis.

This was followed by a name generator which was used to measure the extent of the support network. A name generator is a network analytical instrument that defines a relation type and asks ego to mention all alters with whom s/he maintains this relation type (Diaz-Bone 1997). Thereby, the name generator becomes an operational definition of the ego-centred network, more specifically of its size. Name generators and name interpreters were first used by Burt (1984) and have increasingly become standard in ego-centred social network analysis (Scott 1991; Wasserman/ Faust 1994; Diaz-Bone 1997). A disadvantage of network generators is, however, that they usually define a maximum number of network members that are included into data analysis. This ceiling may help to accomplish research within a reasonable time frame – however, it also affects the validity of data.

Then, demographic characteristics of supporters as well as network features like frequency of support, frequency of contact, or travel distance were enquired using a fully standardised name interpreter. A name interpreter records attributive data that help to ‘interpret’ certain characteristics of network members. In social network analysis, these characteristics often include demographic information as well as other attributes of interest. Finally, a set of non-standardised, open questions concerning relationship to the supporter, kind of support provided in the past as well as reciprocity of support followed. Neither the name interpreter nor the questions referring to mutual reciprocity were used to describe formal supporters since these concepts are not relevant for formal supporters.

Each scenario was structured in exactly the same way, with the exception of financial support. In a few cases the scenario for financial support measured material support instead – for example, when relatives replaced a broken down washing machine with a spare one rather than paying for the repair. Additionally, other forms of informal financial support were considered. Scenarios, name generators, and name interpreters form the central and most extensive part of the questionnaire, section F (for details of the questionnaire structure see annex).

The subsequent questionnaire section G, was created to enquire about informal support provided by lone parent organisations. Since this field was least well documented in the literature this part of the questionnaire was least structures to leave

space for extensive probing. Central was a block of non-standardised questions. They provided the highest degree of flexibility for unexpected responses. Probing was extensively used at that point to get an idea of the importance of lone parent organisations for lone mothers, why she contacted that organisation and how the contact was initiated, and in what ways lone mothers feel supported by these groups.

Questions concerning employment and social benefits formed section H and were standardised to a high degree. Non-standardised questions were used to get more sensitive information, such as reasons for non-employment and experiences with claiming benefits. The major difficulty in this section was that it proved infeasible to gain information about disposable household incomes or earned incomes. All participants in the pilot interviews indicated their unease to respond to income related questions. Many interviewees were weary to tell details of their income situation to a stranger, let alone someone with an extensive questionnaire – probably reminding them of situations they encountered before at the Benefits Agency/*Sozialamt*. Therefore, this question was – albeit reluctantly – abandoned.

The final section I contained questions regarding general life satisfaction as well as satisfaction with formal and informal support. Surprisingly, this final section provided rich data that went beyond the intended role of control questions. Many interviewees who were not very forthcoming with information during most of the interview responded in length and in depth when asked for their satisfaction with life in general and support in particular. Thus, this section became a supplement measure of support mobilisation.

Interview situation

Data was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire in face-to-face interviews that were tape-recorded in full length. I carried out all interviews myself. Initially, I was concerned that the presence of a male interviewer would result in a high number of refusals. This concern, however, proved unnecessary. The sampling procedure using lone parent organisations as ‘gatekeepers’ mediating initial sample access mitigated any negative effects, if there were any. Contrary to my expectations, being a male interviewer rather turned into an advantage in the end because many women seemed to make an effort to explain things in more detail. Another handicap was that I entered the interview situation as foreigner in half of these cases. Language problems with local

dialects did not occur frequently. Since the whole interview was tape-recorded it was relatively easy to ask a native English speaker for clarification, if necessary.

The interview duration in both cities did not vary, however. Interviews lasted 39 minutes on average – ranging from 20 minutes in a few cases to two hours in one case. 80 per cent of all interviews were finished within 45 minutes. Only in four cases the interview lasted an hour or more. This is an indication that most interviewees preferred a short interview that was not going into too much detail. The semi-structured questionnaire as a flexible research tool was very well suited to adjust to both situations: short, more structured interviews and lengthy, detailed explanations. An average duration of forty minutes proved sufficient to produce the required mix of quantitative and qualitative data.

Using lone parent organisations as gatekeepers also had another advantage: there were only very few dropouts – almost every pre-arranged interview was indeed carried out. The non-response rate was very low at 15 per cent for the London sample and 8 per cent for the Berlin sample. The extremely low rate in Berlin was a result of the active support by the lone parent organisation there in selecting interviewees. Most interviews took place in localities of the relevant lone parent organisations, before and after group meetings or following previous arrangements (see table 5.1 on the next page). This option was particularly attractive for many mothers because the interview took place in a safe environment. Additionally, it was convenient because no further arrangements were necessary and their children were looked after during the interview.

Nevertheless, the number of interviews at lone mothers' homes still accounted for a significant proportion (a quarter of all interviews in London interviews and even 40 per cent in Berlin). This is quite an extraordinary result – keeping in mind that all these women knew that an unknown male interviewer was going to visit them at their homes to ask a few questions about their situation as lone mothers. First contact was made prior to the interview in a phone conversation, sometimes also in person at a group meeting or through a trusted person – such as a group leader or a friend. Nevertheless, it is incredible how welcoming and willing to participate most of these women were. In some cases interviewees made sure that a trusted friend was with them during the interview. But in most cases there was no problem at all, some even seemed to enjoy the change in their daily routines. A few interviewees preferred a neutral, public location, in most cases a cafe.

Table 5.1: Interview locations in London and Berlin

Interview location	London		Berlin	
	n	%	n	%
at group meeting of lone parent org.	38	65	29	50
at lone mothers' homes	15	26	24	41
in a cafe	3	5	5	9
at a community centre	1	2	-	-
at work	1	2	-	-

Source: own data, n = 116

It was attempted to mitigate any potential concerns about given information by reassuring all women before the interview of the confidentiality of all given information. All interviewees received a written confirmation signed by the researcher and containing his contact details that this research was guided by research interests only, with no connection to any state agencies or third parties and that all given information was treated confidentially (see annex). Furthermore, it was made clear to them that they were free not to answer any question they did not want to answer and to interrupt or cancel the interview whenever they wanted. Finally, every interviewee was asked to give herself a code name or nickname under which all information relating to her was going to be saved. It would also enable those interested in the results to identify themselves later.

Data processing and data analysis

After the end of fieldwork all data had to be transformed into a suitable format for data analysis. Outcomes of semi-structured interviews are a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data. Basically, there are three options to handle such data: (1) to convert everything into qualitative data, (2) to convert everything into quantitative data, or (3) to treat them as two completely different data sets within each national sample and to analyse them separately.

The first option would involve the smallest effort in terms of data processing, since all interviews were recorded on tapes in full length. This would merely require a complete verbatim transcription of these tapes. Qualitative data analysis could then be carried out using either traditional analytical tools or computer based qualitative software, such as NUD*IST or ATLAS/ti. In case of this research purely qualitative data analysis was considered inappropriate because these questionnaire based interviews were far too much structured for an efficient use of qualitative instruments. The chosen

methodology has structured the interview situation as such – and consequently interviewees' responses as well – far more than a topic-guided interview would have done. Only a very limited number – about 10 per cent of all interviewees talked in length *throughout* the interview, thus breaking up the rather tight research design and convert the interview situation into a topic-guided conversation. Moreover, verbatim transcription would require an extremely high time commitment. Professional transcription services were not an affordable option.

The second option implies that all non-standardised information had to be coded, thus transforming it into the proper format for statistical analysis. The idea is to code as much information as possible, thereby transforming it into standardised format which then can be treated like standardised data. These newly coded data as well as standardised information from the questionnaires then could be entered into a computer based data file for statistical analysis. Despite of the additional effort to code paragraphs and sections of plain text quantitative data analysis promised to deliver results faster. However, this option would mean loss of valuable contextual information that cannot be analysed using standard statistical models.

The intention and ambition of this research was to combine quantitative and qualitative methods to realise its research objectives. Data analysis, therefore, required a mix of methods as well. It was decided to convert as much information as possible into quantitative format to make them available to statistical analysis. Contextual data were used to explain more complex issues. Most importantly, it served the purpose to bring in lone mothers' perspectives in their own words.

CHAPTER 6

SAMPLE DESCRIPTION – WHO ARE THE MEMBERS OF LONE PARENT ORGANISATIONS?

Chapter 6 is the first analytical chapter, the first results are presented here. Its objective is to show in which ways lone mothers in this sample are different from the national average of British and German lone mothers. The chapter starts with the discussion of demographic characteristics of lone mothers and their children in both samples, which are then compared with nationally representative statistics and survey data. This is followed by a section where causes of lone motherhood are explained, pathways into lone motherhood are mapped, and implications of different causes and pathways as well as duration of lone motherhood are discussed. Lone mothers do not only differ in respect to demographic and personal characteristics, they also have different stories to tell how they became lone parents. These initial experiences are important because they contribute to lone mothers' attitudes towards lone motherhood, whether they see themselves as victims or accept their new situation as just another life cycle phase, or even as a chance to start a new life. Finally, the ground for the subsequent network chapters is prepared by mapping the respondents' resource equipment. The resource types money, time, human capital, and social capital are taken into consideration. It is well known that many lone mothers are deprived of financial means. It is less well known and documented that they are equally deprived of time. Time is a precious resource that does not only affect personal well-being of lone mothers, it is also an essential prerequisite for establishing social relations. After completion of this rather descriptive process it will be possible to identify members of lone parent organisations and to distinguish them from the average lone mother population in both countries.

6.1. Demographic characteristics

The subject of this section is the description of both samples in respect to demographic variables and comparison of these results with representative, national survey data. Selected dimensions of comparison include age, marital status, and geographical origin of lone mothers as well as number and age of their children.

Age

The average age of interviewees is almost exactly the same in both cases – 34 years (London: 33.7 years, Berlin: 34.4 years). However, a closer look at age distribution within each sample reveals significant variations (see table 6.1). Firstly, both the youngest (aged 19) and the oldest (aged 49) lived in London. These extremes are no coincidence. They indicate a more uneven age distribution in the London sample, with nearly 10 per cent younger than 25 and more than a fifth aged 40 and older. Contrarily, only the youngest woman in the Berlin sample was younger than 25 – she was 23 – whereas slightly more than 10 per cent were aged 40 and older (with the oldest aged 44).

Table 6.1: Age distribution of interviewed lone mothers (in per cent of each sample)

	London	Berlin
under 25	9	2
25 to 29	15	14
30 to 34	34	31
35 to 39	21	41
40 and older	21	12
	n = 58	n = 58

Source: own data, n = 116

How do these results compare with representative statistics and survey data? Lone parent organisation members in both countries tend to be older than the national average of lone mothers. Though, VAMV's clientele is only slightly older than the average West German lone mother population, with 41 per cent in the 35 to 39 age category whereas Family Survey data show 43 per cent in their *early* 30s (Klar/Sardei-Biermann 1996). The main differences between Gingerbread members and the British lone mother population are at the extreme ends: the proportion of Gingerbread members aged under 25 is only half of its equivalent in the General Household Survey (GHS) (Kiernan et al. 1998). Even more striking is the extraordinary high percentage of lone mothers aged 40 and older in Gingerbread which is 10 times higher than in British society. This result is

underpinned by another fifth of Gingerbread members in the age category of 35 to 39, compared to merely 13 per cent in the GHS.

This shows that lone parent organisations are most attractive to lone mothers who are in their 30s whereas younger lone mothers – including teenage mothers who are frequently identified as main target of social policy efforts in the UK – are grossly underrepresented. It is unlikely that this is an unintended outcome of the selection procedure since teenage mothers tend to have very young children as well. Of all lone parents, teenage mothers are frequently identified as most isolated and least capable of helping themselves. Apparently, lone parent organisations do not appeal to younger lone mothers.

The relatively high age of lone parent organisation members has other implications as well. Research has proven that the likelihood to re-marry or to re-partner decreases with age (Klar/Sardei-Biermann 1996; Ford et al. 1998; Kiernan et al. 1998). If lone parent organisation members are older than the average lone mother population in their countries, it may indicate that they are predominantly frequented by women who have been lone mothers for a long time already. My data, however, does not provide evidence for a correlation between ‘high age’ and long duration of lone motherhood spells – with the exception of those few cases who have been lone parents for more than 10 years already.

Marital status

Next we will have a closer look at marital status in both samples that goes beyond the dichotomy of ‘never-married’ vs. ‘ever-married’ mothers. Was the London sample very different from the real age distribution among British lone mothers, it almost exactly reflects the national situation here. The widest deviation from national average is the proportion of single, never-married Gingerbread members – which is 5 per cent higher than British national average (see table 6.2 below and Kiernan et al. 1998). I managed to interview only one single widowed mother in each sample – which better reflects the low proportion of British lone mothers in this category. But this minor distortion almost disappears behind the enormous differences between the Berlin sample and a typical distribution among West German lone mothers. Whereas almost half of West German lone mothers are divorced, they account for less than a third of interviewed VAMV members. On the other hand, 57 per cent of lone mothers affiliated with VAMV in

Berlin are single, never-married compared to only a quarter of West German lone mothers (Klar/Sardei-Biermann 1996).

Table 6.2: Marital status of interviewed lone mothers (in per cent of each sample)

	London	Berlin
single, never married	43	57
divorced	31	29
married, living separated	24	12
widowed	2	2
	n = 58	n = 58

Source: own data, n = 116

It is striking to see that the Gingerbread sample almost exactly mirrors the British lone mother population in respect to marital status whereas VAMV in Berlin apparently attracts predominantly single mothers. The composition of the Berlin sample in respect to marital status may point towards a particular way of membership recruitment that results in this bias.

Children

Two other crucial determinants of lone mothers' well-being are number and age of their children. Age of the youngest child determines their degree of independence, mobility, and flexibility. The younger their youngest child is the more restricted are they in leaving their homes, with all implications in terms of meeting friends and other people or of getting employed. Number of children combined with age of youngest child has a multiplying effect. The younger their youngest child is and the more children they have, the less likely are they to go out and meet other people or to get employed. More children means higher childcare costs, thus restricting her mobility also from this side.

The average age of lone mothers' youngest children was 3 years in both samples. Age distribution of the youngest children was quite different, however. One difference resulted from different cut-off ages due to differences in school age³⁵. Therefore, the Berlin sample includes 12 per cent who were six already but not in school yet. The two largest age groups are the two years olds in the London sample and babies in the Berlin sample with a proportion of a quarter each. The latter results from an unintended bias due to a major aspect of VAMV's work in Berlin. Perhaps the most important support

this organisation provides for lone parents is professionally guided therapy groups. These groups achieved a high mobilisation effect among lone mothers with very young children. As a consequence, these women are over-represented within the organisation. Apart from these two exceptions both age distributions are quite even. The following table 6.3 contains all information for both samples:

Table 6.3: Age of youngest child per lone mother (in per cent of each sample)

Age	London	Berlin
< 1 year	7	24
1 to 2 years	12	5
2 to 3 years	26	17
3 to 4 years	14	14
4 to 5 years	20.5	16
5 to 6 years	20.5	12
6 to 7 years	-	12

Source: own data, n = 116

British lone mothers have two children on average, compared to one child per German lone mother. This result was confirmed in both samples (1.95 in London, 1.22 in Berlin). However, an even higher percentage of the Berlin sample than West German average had one child only (79 per cent compared to 67 per cent). Only one interviewee had three children, no-one more than three while Microcensus data indicate seven per cent with three or more children (BMFSFJ 1998). A fifth rather than a quarter had two children. 40 per cent each had one or two children in the London sample – which is above the equivalent national data (34 per cent) as far as parents with two children are concerned and below that for parents with one child only (47 per cent, Ford et al. 1998). The remaining fifth with three and more children matches representative data almost exactly.

Origins

The geographical origin of lone mothers is likely to have an impact at their embeddedness in their social environment (neighbourhood, social networks) and, thus, the likelihood to get support this way. The longer people have lived in the same neighbourhood the more likely are they having developed local support networks.

³⁵ A sampling restriction was to include children in pre-school age only. Whereas children in the UK start school aged 5 or even younger, children in Germany do not normally start school until they are 6.

Moreover, the likelihood increases that they become members of local groups, such as a sports club, church parishes, etc. that are potential sources of support. Local support networks are a particularly important for lone mothers, especially when kinship and friendship networks are part of it (Duncan/Edwards 1997a, 1999).

Whereas two thirds of the interviewed lone mothers in London had their origins in Greater London, only half of those in Berlin came from Berlin originally. As a consequence, most lone mothers in London had family living locally while half of those in Berlin have to travel long distances to take advantage of their families' support. However, only two interviewees in Berlin and six in London had lived there less than five years, most spent 10 to 20 years of their lives in either city. Lone mothers in both countries had lived for approximately four years in their current flat. Based on these results it can be expected that lone mothers in London get more kinship support since they live closer. Neighbourhood effects are not expected since the average duration of residence in the same flat/house was roughly the same in both cities.

6.2. Pathways into lone motherhood

So far, general demographic characteristics and their potential implications were discussed. Here, attention will focus on ways leading into lone motherhood and lone mothers' experiences of how their lives changed following that.

Causes of lone motherhood

To know factors that caused lone motherhood are important. They can determine whether lone motherhood is going to be a traumatic experience or whether it is seen as difficult phase in life which turns out to be a new challenge that may offer new chances in the end. Both aspects are the extreme ends of the same continuum and there is much more in-between. To ask for the circumstances of separation, including the question of who finished the relationship would be the most straightforward way of approaching this issue. Given the delicate nature of the matter this was, of course, no option that was ever seriously considered at any time. Therefore, reasons for being a lone mother were enquired using a battery of five standardised response options plus an additional open question. Interviewees were free to mention up to three reasons. Most used the given

five items (items 1 to 4 in table 6.4)³⁶. Table 6.4 contains all items that were mentioned by more than five per cent in London and Berlin.

Table 6.4: Reasons for being a lone mother (multiple responses permitted)
(in per cent of each sample)

	London	Berlin
I enjoy living on my own.	9	10
I rather live on my own than in bad relationship.	51	65
My partner left me.	42	37
It is difficult to find a new partner with children.	14	33
Domestic violence	12	2
I left my partner.	7	7
Child was not planned	3	14

Source: own data, n = 116

While almost all lone mothers in London used one of the given items more than a quarter of all responses in Berlin indicated other reasons. This quarter is distributed among ten different responses. They tended to be of very personal nature that did not fit into the given categories, such as not knowing the child's father, not wanting the biological father to become the social father, having had a relationship with a married man, etc. In London, only two additional reasons were mentioned by more than five per cent. Seven per cent said that they left their partners. Sadly, 12 per cent indicated having experienced domestic violence. However, this is still a comparably low score considering Marsh and colleagues' (1997) findings that 35 per cent of all lone parents experienced physical violence during their last year together. These interviewees reported that they left their former partners because they feared for their and their children's safety. Three women said, their ex-partners were currently in prison, two of them because charges of domestic violence were brought against them. Another mother reported that she left her partner because he turned out to be paedophile. This result points towards misery experienced by some lone mothers which is literally unimaginable to most of us.

By far the most frequently mentioned reason for lone parenthood was that interviewees were unhappy with their relationships. This outcome is similar to Marsh and colleague's (1997: 31) findings that the main reason for remaining a lone parent was: "I prefer to live independently, not as part of a couple." Often, these women were not prepared to accept their partner's lack of time and/or financial commitment towards

³⁶ (5) was: 'My partner died' - which occurred only once in each sample.

their children anymore. In many cases separation was caused in combination with very personal relationship problems. Quite a few women were dissatisfied with a labour distribution within their partnership where their partners felt responsible for earning the household income and nothing else. So, in a way they were lone mothers even before the formal act of separation.

Dorn (London): *"I threw him out! Because I am better off without him, because before I was having to look after him, for his business, pay for all his food, for all his clothes, and everything else. So I am a lot better off without him than with him! [laughs bitterly] I was in danger of losing my house because he was paying me absolutely nothing. As he is paying me absolutely nothing right now, so I have to support myself."*

Many lone mothers were left by their former partners. Contrary to popular belief lone mothers are not irresponsible women driven by their selfish interest to enjoy living on their own in the certainty that the state or their parents will support them. Only a tenth in each sample preferred to live on their own and most of them for very personal reasons not related to *scrounging attitudes* as suggested by Murray (1994), Morgan (1995), and others.

Another approach when enquiring about causes of lone motherhood is to look at so-called *hard facts* rather than subjective opinions of those affected, such as an existing family history of divorce or separation. People whose parents divorced when they were children tend to dissolve their relationships more easily and more quickly than others (Glenn/Kramer 1987; Heekerens 1988; Diefenbach 2000). In the long run, people whose parents divorced when they were children were more likely to have lower school achievements (Dronkers 1995; Becker 2000), lower incomes, and were more likely to be unemployed (Wadsworth 1991). Women were also more likely to start sexual relationships at early age, to become a teenage mother, and to have children outside wedlock (Kiernan 1995). However, it is important to keep in mind that the occurrence of divorce alone is not sufficient to explain negative long-term effects. Kiernan (1997) stressed the necessity to consider selection effects (such as parents' social background) operating prior to divorce which play an even more significant role in determining a child's future prospects.

Divorce or separation do not necessarily result in negative effects on children's future development (Amato/Keith 1991). Short-term effects include behavioural problems, problems in school, and emotional problems (Smith, T. E. 1990). However, adverse long-term effects are rare. After a consolidation period, most children recover

(Cockett/Tripp 1994). Their ability to cope with the trauma of their parents' separation depends on a number of factors, such as gender or personality. Allison/Furstenberg (1989) identified children's age as crucial variable.

Only 16 per cent of lone mothers in London and nine per cent in Berlin did not live with their natural parents when they were born. Five per cent (three cases) in each sample grew up in a lone parent family. Others lived with their mother and a stepfather, with their grandparents, or were adopted. However, this picture changes dramatically when changes *during childhood* are considered. About a quarter of lone mothers in London and almost half in Berlin experienced either their parents divorce/separation or a parent's death. Approximately a third of the Berlin interviewees witnessed their parents separation – twice as many as in London. The fathers of another ten per cent died. Table 6.5 summarises all results:

Table 6.5: Occurrence of parents' separation / death during interviewees' childhood
(in per cent of each sample)

	London	Berlin
parents divorced / separated	16	32
father died	7	11
mother died	2	-
mother re-married ³⁷	3	3
no changes to previous situation	72	54

Source: own data, n = 116

Half of those who experienced their parents separation lived with their mother afterwards, six (London) to seven (Berlin) per cent with their father. Occurrence of these incisive life events at this scale – particularly in Berlin – may have far-reaching consequences. Separation of parents often result in diminished contacts to one parent (Furstenberg 1990). In the context of this research, this is likely to affect the availability of kinship support. Moreover, a number of interviewees reported that they grew up in families with unhappy relationships between their parents, as the following quote illustrates:

Karina (Berlin): "I have been through a very exhausting childhood, a very unloved childhood. I was procreated and at that time mothers and fathers got married in such a case. That was the case with my parents as well. The marriage of my parents was not and is not a good marriage and I was only a burden for them. I ran away from home when I was 17."

³⁷ This was only relevant for those 3 cases in each sample who lived with their mother only initially.

It is noteworthy that a significant proportion of the interviewed lone mothers experienced their parents' separation or death of a parent when they were children. It is also noteworthy that these events reached such a scale in the German sample that almost every second interviewee was affected. At the very least, it leads to the conclusion that VAMV in Berlin particularly attracts lone mothers who experienced such traumatic events during childhood. Two causes are likely: First, their original families provide less informal support. Secondly, based on their personal family history they are particularly sensitised and anxious to avoid negative outcomes for their children.

Duration of lone motherhood spells

Lone parenthood is a dynamic process which means two things: First, a significant proportion of the population is likely to experience being a lone parent or living with a lone parent at some point of their lives, with all its consequences in terms of social and economic deprivation. Second, only few people remain lone mothers until their children grow up and leave their mothers' home – most re-partner at some stage. Ermisch/Francesconi (1996) calculated a median duration of lone parenthood for post-marital mothers of approximately four years and for never-married mothers of less than two years. How is the situation among lone parent organisation members?

Interviewees in London had been lone parents for 40 months on average, compared to only 31 months in Berlin. No Berlin interviewee had been a lone mother for more than six years – which reflects the selection criterion of excluding lone mothers whose youngest child was older than six combined with the widespread prevalence of one-child families in Germany. The *extreme* case in terms of lone motherhood spells was found in the London sample where one person who had several children had been a lone mother for 16 years altogether. The shorter average duration for the Berlin sample is probably due to the higher percentage of single, never-married mothers. Let us recall that the majority of 57 per cent of the interviewed mothers in Berlin was single, never-married whereas the same proportion in the London sample had been married before. Ermisch/Francesconi's (1996) results lead us to expect shorter lone motherhood duration spells in Berlin. Though this is the case if we compare mean ages there is *no* correlation between marital status and duration of lone motherhood spells in both samples. Whereas a higher percentage of never-married mothers occupy both lower and

higher extremes in Berlin, there are no clear differences between never-married and ever-married mothers in London at all.

There is, however, a sharp contrast between both samples in regard to the *point in time* when lone motherhood occurred. Whereas more than two thirds (69 per cent) of interviewed women in London became lone parents *after* their child was born more than half (55 per cent) of the women in Berlin knew that they were going to be lone parents *before* their child was born. This result is another indicator for the dominance of single, never-married mothers in the Berlin sample whose circumstances and problems differ from those experienced by divorced and separated mothers. Many of them stressed their deliberate and well-considered decision to have a child on their own, long before it was born. Motives for this decision were quite different. Most Berlin women who decided to have the child on their own disagreed with the child's father on whether they should have the child or get an abortion.

Juli (Berlin): *"The father did not want children – therefore we finished our relationship. I decided in favour of her and against him."*

Alex (Berlin): *"I would rather be in this situation than in a bad relationship with my ex-boyfriend. Among other reasons, we separated because of the child but also because it is better to separate during pregnancy than once the child is there."*

Two thirds of never-married mothers in both samples had been on their own already when their youngest child was born, compared with only a fifth of ever-married mothers. In respect to ever-married mothers there is, however, some variation. Almost *all* (94 per cent) ever-married mothers in the British sample assumed to have the child as a couple rather than on their own. The same holds true for the majority of German ever-married mothers. But this majority is far more modest, at merely 60 per cent. Many women experienced a situation similar to Daisy's where their husbands left them for another woman shortly after their youngest child was born:

Daisy (London): *"It was very sudden. It was unexpected. It's something that started at Christmas and by Easter he was gone. And obviously, with having a crying baby it was quite difficult."*

Summarising, it can be said that German members of lone parent organisations tend to have experienced lone motherhood for, on average, a nine months shorter period than their British counterparts. This result appears in a different light if one takes into consideration that the majority of them has been on their own since giving birth or even before. So, in fact, many women in Berlin were alone before giving birth, some even

from the start of pregnancy. This is likely to affect the availability (or non-availability) of support through the children's fathers.

Well-being and satisfaction of lone mothers

Duration of lone parenthood spells has implications for individual well-being and need of support. A number of studies present varying results which, nevertheless, all come to the same conclusion that a transition period of up to two years is the most difficult period and general satisfaction and well-being are at their lowest level (see, for example, Chase-Lansdale/Hetherington 1990). Both Napp-Peters (1985) and Dieckmann et al. (1986) showed that many women feel that everything is too much for them. As a consequence, many suffer from depressive and psychosomatic conditions. In the long run, however, lone mothers reach average levels of satisfaction. Nevertheless according to Neubauer (1988), they retain below equivalent satisfaction levels of married mothers.

These results were confirmed in this study. Individuals whose separation happened only a short while ago tended to be more desperate, mourning the life they had before and the plans they had made for their future. These women were still very much occupied with themselves, trying to come to terms with their emotions and incapable of thinking beyond the next day. Their subjective perception of their circumstances was more negative and their attitudes more passive than that of lone mothers whose separation happened some time ago, with all implications in terms of support they need and its urgency.

Many women were quite happy to talk in length about their experiences as lone mothers and how their life changed. Part of these experiences were very positive ones, especially those related to the joys of having a new-born baby. Others reported how they gained strength, confidence, and independence by mastering difficult circumstances all by themselves. Some felt better off after having sole responsibility for their and their children's fate. However, others again talked about their traumatic separation experiences, the unforeseen changes separation brought into their lives and how it became a life they did not *want* to live. Some were still suffering the trauma of a recent separation or an unplanned child while others had endured economic deprivation and isolation for a long time already. This is that phase in lone motherhood when informal support is most needed and its buffering effects are most effective.

The following pages contain original quotes from the qualitative interview sections, reflecting lone mothers' experiences of positive and negative changes lone motherhood

had brought upon them. Furthermore, statistical data gained from scale and index construction based on this qualitative data is presented. Categorisation into positive, neutral, and negative responses is based on the qualitative interpretation of changes caused by lone motherhood. In cases where positive attributes dominated the variable was ascribed an overall positive score. Examples for positive attributes were: 'happier', 'great', 'better', 'I found my own ground', 'I don't have to worry', 'It's changed for the best'. As neutral attributes were interpreted: 'it changed completely', 'more responsibility', 'I cope so far', etc. Negative attributes included: 'difficult', 'complicated', 'sad', 'very hard', 'lonely', 'exhausting', 'a lot of problems/trouble', 'a living nightmare', 'no support', etc. This was controlled through a standardised variable measuring general life satisfaction. Results are summarised in the following table:

Table 6.6: Positive vs. negative perception indices of life changes (in per cent of all responses per sample)³⁸

Life change indices	Frequency occurrence	London		Berlin	
		positive	negative	positive	negative
a) economic changes	61	10	78	17	73
b) stress / time related changes	62	25	67	27	69
c) changes of social networks	61	26	62	22	73
d) changes of <i>support</i> networks	44	28	56	35	65
e) emotional changes	61	26	63	25	64
f) changes of self	83	44	47	43	47
g) changes of future prospects	49	31	56	48	48
General life change index	100	31	50	47	47

Source: own data, n = 116

(a) economic changes (i.e. changes to finances, employment, housing, social benefits, etc.); (b) stress/time related changes (i.e. more/less stress, responsibility, (in)dependence, freedom, more/less rigid time management, etc.); (c) changes of their social networks (i.e. loss of friends/making new friends, loss of/refreshing contact to family, degree of isolation felt due to loss of friends or lack of mobility, etc.); (d) changes of their support networks (i.e. support by friends, family, former partners, etc.); (e) emotional changes (i.e. changes in their relationship to former partners or the child's father, changes in their feelings, emotions, changes to their *inner balance*, etc.); (f) changes to oneself (i.e. gain/loss of confidence, self-esteem, maturity, skills, etc.); and finally (g) changes of future prospects.

In the first column of table 6.6 different aspects of change through lone motherhood are listed. The second column informs how frequently certain aspects of change were mentioned. Almost all respondents emphasised changes to their selves while changes of support networks were least frequently indicated. It is striking that negative perceptions dominate. Clearly most negatively perceived were changes to their economic

³⁸ Some numbers do not add up because neutral statements were not included in the table.

circumstances. Increased stress in their everyday lives as well as changes of their emotional balance and social networks were predominantly described in negative terms. More positively valued were changes to their selves. Many women reported pride in mastering their lives without help, despite of all difficulties. Most striking are the different perceptions of their future. In Berlin, interviewees were more positive in this regard. Summarising, it can be said that half described changes through lone parenthood more negatively. However, a third in London and the other half in Berlin had an overall positive perception of these changes. A frequently recurring theme was dissatisfaction with the current situation combined with poor future prospects. Statements like the following ones were very common:

Jackie (London), lone parent for 3 years: *"I'm satisfied with my life in as much as I'm getting on with my life. ... My life is fine but financially my life is a piss. I can't do anything! I feel that at this age I should be able to buy things or to take my children out – and I can't do anything like that! And that makes me feel inadequate."*

Sarah (London), lone parent for 6 months: *"It's not what I had envisaged. ...I'm not satisfied because, you know, I was thinking about another life. I wouldn't want to have a child. I feel quite guilty that ... that her father was a complete waste of time."*

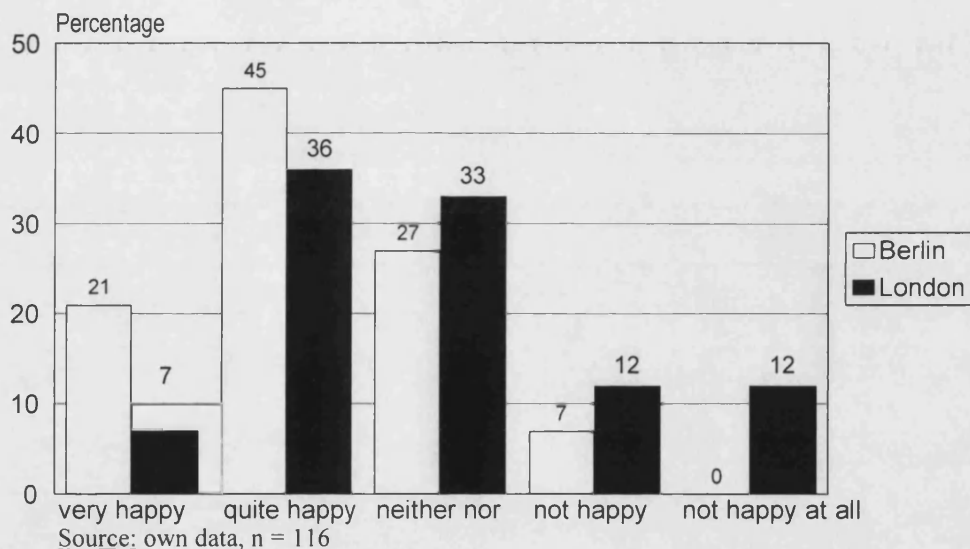
A predominantly negative perception of life changes in the wake of lone motherhood is a broad theme that unites lone mothers in Germany and the UK. However, there were some aspects that were seen more positively. The most positive reception received changes to oneself which was frequently expressed in statements like 'I gained more independence.', 'I found my own ground.', or 'Now, at least I know where I'm going.' In other words, quite a few women learned to see lone motherhood as challenge to their abilities and skills to sort out a difficult situation. Reliance on one's own devices which was intimidating initially became a virtue later when many discovered that sole responsibility involves certain advantages, such as the sole right to make decisions and full control of what is going to be done.

Vicky (London): *"It's got better. I know where I'm going in life. I don't have to worry about anything apart from myself and my children."*

Molly (London): *"I feel proud in a way that I've achieved my house on my own without the help from a man. And I'm coping, that we haven't gone downhill. I managed to keep my standard. And I've got my child into good education at a church school. I feel proud of that, I feel proud that he is doing as well as a child from a two-parent family."*

These results are supported by evidence from a standardised control variable at the end of the questionnaire measuring general satisfaction: two thirds of lone mothers in Berlin but only 43 per cent of those in London said they were 'very happy' or 'quite happy' with their lives (see figure 6.1 on the next page). A quarter in London were 'not happy' or 'not happy at all' with their life, compared with only seven per cent in Berlin. Perhaps even more worrying, 12 per cent indicated that they were 'not happy at all' – a response option that was not chosen by anyone in Berlin. Taking both results together, overall positive attitudes in Berlin despite of clearly negative life change perceptions are remarkable.

Figure 6.1: General life satisfaction of lone mothers in London and Berlin



Since research results are always dependent on the research objectives it is not surprising that the description of lone mothers' circumstances are dominated by a documentation of specific strains. Many researchers have focused on problematic aspects of lone parenthood, especially poverty, social exclusion, low employment propensity, behavioural problems of their children, etc. Overstating, it can be said that lone mothers are mostly pictured as victims (Niepel 1994a). I found a number of positive statements in my data.

Nicky (London): "It's changed for the best. I've never been happier since I had Ashley – without a doubt."

Half pint (London) "You learn different things, it's a different ball-game. You learn more about yourself, you learn more about what you want, you learn – I suppose, you learn different lessons from what you would normally do if you were

married. I've done things I'd never thought I would be able to do – which in a way is good”

Susie (London): “It’s actually become a lot better since I have Molly. All it meant was that I had to put my educational plans back three years. The benefits I’ve got from having Molly, I think, it’s changed me so much, it has actually given me a lot more confidence. I think, it’s done nothing but good!”

These examples show that the selection of appropriate procedures can result in a positive perception of lone motherhood. Such statements, however, do often not reflect the ambivalence of the situation. For example, the freedom of making all decisions on my own also involves the other side of the coin of having to do this on my own. There is no-one helping with these decisions. When I am happy about not having to look after my partner’s problems any longer I do not have a shoulder to lean on either. These findings show that lone motherhood does not necessarily come along with a dominance of severe problems. A more balanced view is desirable.

6.3. Resource equipment of lone mothers

The subject of this section is to look at resource available to lone mothers: time, human capital, and money. Resources are central within this research because they are elements of exchange processes. Furthermore, availability or non-availability of resources determine the need of support. Resources are things over which individual actors have control and in which they have some interest (Coleman 1990).

Time as scarce as money

Having to bear the double burden of being breadwinner and carer at the same time, lone mothers do not only dispose of lower household incomes than others. They are also deprived of other resources, first and foremost of time. Time is precondition for participation in a variety of cultural and social activities. Also, social relations need to be maintained through regular contact. As was shown in the previous section, more than two thirds indicated time related changes for the worse in the wake of lone motherhood (see table 6.6). Full-time employed lone parents with pre-school age children spend the most time of all family forms on paid and unpaid work – 77 hours per week – according to a representative time budget study in Germany (Blanke et al. 1996). Compared with full-time employed wives and husbands, they work more than an hour more per day.

Lone mothers need time for themselves, to maintain their *inner balance* and mental strength. But since lone parents have the sole responsibility for co-ordinating every

single aspect of daily life free time becomes a luxury. Often enough the day does not have enough hours to get everything done, let alone to relax, to read something, or to go out. Even when a day's work is done many lone parents are too exhausted to enjoy themselves. The situation is particularly difficult for employed lone mothers and for mothers of very young children. Adult conversation – something completely normal and trivial to anyone who is not a lone parent – becomes a precious good when you spend all day with children. The following examples illustrates varying degrees of spare time experienced by lone mothers:

Daisy (London): "If I get an hour spare time per week I'm lucky. And that includes through the night. I don't even get time through the evening because one or the other ... I mean, my daughter, my older daughter sleeps with me, has nightmares, wets the bed. All the kids are in trauma since their father ... she hasn't slept a night since her father left. ... She is very, very troubled by that. And obviously, I'm trying to settle the baby. And I'm lucky when I get 1 ½ hours sleep at night."

Vicky (London): "Only when my ex-partner decides he wants them, really – which is not very often. It's once every six weeks or maybe once a month. And I get sort of the day from 10 a.m. to about 6 p.m. He takes them round to his mum's for diner. That's the only time I get to myself."

Julia (Berlin): "Every fortnight, when the children are with their father. Then I let myself go, then I fall into a hole, something is missing then. It happens frequently that I want to do too much and don't do anything in the end."

The latter two quotes indicate that support through the children's father can free time for the mother. Most had some time for themselves once the children were in bed or at one day in the week when the children were staying with their dad, grandparents, etc. *Indoor* relaxation (to sleep, to take a bath, to watch TV, to listen too music, or to read a book) was the spare time activity mentioned by most interviewees. This is hardly surprising because it does not normally require much preparation. Some also used this quiet time to catch up with work or to study. Household work also took up a significant amount of lone mothers' time. They would normally do that when the children were in bed (tidying up, ironing, paperwork) or in a childcare facility (shopping, appointments). But mothers of very young children who have their children around all day often even need to organise childcare when bigger homework jobs needed to be done. They are most vulnerable and prone to isolation because they lost many friends following separation and were not able to rebuild their social networks.

All *outdoor* activities (shopping, appointments, sports, socialising with friends) involved some preparation and organisation. Precondition for going out is to have

someone to look after the children in the meantime. If no relatives, close friends, or the former partner are there to do it, additional costs for paying a babysitter will incur – which makes it virtually impossible to go out for the poorest lone mothers. The situation is further complicated by the fact that it takes some time not only to find a trustworthy person but also someone child or children are comfortable with. As a consequence, some hardly get out at all – although socialising with friends was the activity undertaken second most frequently:

Ruth (London): *“The last time when I had the childcare available my sister and me went to the theatre and had a meal. I haven’t done that in 3 years! ... I cannot imagine to do anything on a regular basis off plan.”*

Interviewees in the London and Berlin samples were asked how often they had time for themselves and if yes, for how long. Through multiplication of both variables a measure for available spare time was obtained (in hours per week). The surprising result was that German lone mothers had twice as much spare time on average as their British contemporaries. The differences were mainly found at the extreme ends. More than a quarter of interviewees in Greater London had less than an hour per week to themselves, compared with 10 per cent in Berlin. A fifth indicated to have no spare time at all. On the other hand, almost a fifth of lone mothers in Berlin had as much as 28 hours per week, i.e. a half-day (morning, afternoon, or evening) each day to themselves. Only three mothers in London (five per cent) were in the same fortunate position.

Lone mothers in Berlin had spare time on four days per week on average, those in London only on two days. Slightly more than a fifth in London and nearly half in Berlin could enjoy some free time on a daily basis. On the occasion, lone mothers in both countries had about the same number of hours to themselves: slightly more than three hours on average. What caused these enormous differences? Is it linked to availability or lack of availability of public childcare? Who are *time rich* mothers and who are the ones most deprived of time?

A multiple regression equation including variables that are likely to have an impact on availability of spare time was computed. The universal model for both sub-samples indicated significant effects of employment status, marital status, number of children, and age of youngest child as well as a significant effect of the London/Berlin split variable. After some factor variation, the age of the youngest child and the number of children turned out to have the strongest effect on the time available to a lone mother. The younger the youngest child, the less time is available to lone mothers. This confirms

the findings of Blanke and colleagues (1996). Table 6.7 on page 112 summarises all variables that had a significant effect. As we can see in the second and third columns in table 6.7, age of youngest child and number of children have the strongest combined effects. Other factors with significant effects are employment status and marital status. The regression model confirmed the earlier result that lone mothers in Berlin had more spare time. Computation of separate regression models for each sub-sample leads to the result that the model does not fit both samples equally well. While the independent variables in London explain 14 per cent of the variation in spare time, nearly 20 per cent of variation is explained through variables in the regression equation in Berlin. However, the only difference between both cities was the impact of employment status which had a powerful and highly significant effect in Berlin but not effect at all in London. That means, employed lone mothers in Berlin had considerably less spare time.

Table 6.7: Standardised regression coefficients (OLS) with spare time as dependent variable

Variables	Both samples		London		Berlin	
	Beta	Sig t	Beta	Sig t	Beta	Sig t
age of youngest child	.26	.006	.24	.076	.43	.007
number of children	-.26	.016	-.25	.091	-.28	.043
marital status	.18	.068	.26	.079	.19	.170
employment status	-.21	.028	-.03	.819	-.41	.009
London / Berlin	.19	.043	-	-	-	-

Source: own data, n = 116

Marital status: 0 = never-married, 1 = ever-married; employment status: 0 = not, 1 = yes; London = 0, Berlin = 1.

To summarise, lone mothers in Berlin enjoy significantly more spare time than their counterparts in London. Whether a lone mother has much time available to herself or not is mainly determined by the age of her youngest child and the number of children she has. The younger her youngest child and the more children she has, the less spare time she has. These results are in line with our earlier expectations.

Lone mothers' human capital attainments

Human capital is "...the education and training embodied in a human person which gives rise to increased income in the future." (Rutherford 1995: 210) Human capital has the potential to produce increasing returns in terms of future incomes. Becker (1991) emphasised the importance of the human capital concept for families as well. He argued that married women with high qualifications have high opportunity costs when not

working. The same applies to lone mothers as well. Lone mothers with high educational attainments will develop a higher employment propensity because they would otherwise forfeit a high income. Moreover, they are more likely being in the position of paying high childcare fees.

Levels of school education are important indicators of their equipment with human capital and ultimately, their general job prospects and earning capacities. There is a proven correlation between high levels of school attainments and well-paid jobs (Becker 1964; Mincer 1974; Shavit/Blossfeld 1993; Becker/Schömann 1996). In that sense, school education is a rough predictor of the likelihood that someone is earning a relatively high income. Being a lone mother, however, can bring even a person with high educational achievements and earning potentials in a situation where she experiences economic deprivation. Nevertheless, she is more likely to find a way out of this situation because her economic situation will improve rapidly once she returns to work. Moreover, her friends and family are more likely to dispose of higher incomes (Goldthorpe 1996) – which means that her potential informal support networks are ‘richer’ and thus more likely to help her out financially. Table 6.8 contains the relevant data for both samples.

Table 6.8: Educational attainments of interviewed lone mothers
(in per cent of each sample)

	London	Berlin
none, left school prematurely	14	2
O-Levels	40	36
A-Levels	47	62

Source: own data, n = 116

Let us start with *inter-sample* comparisons: three things strike the eye when comparing the London and Berlin samples. First, most of the interviewed lone mothers have A-levels. Second, although their proportion among Gingerbread members was very high already reaching almost half of all interviewees, their percentage among VAMV members was even higher at almost two thirds. Thirdly, there was only one person in the Berlin sample with no completed school education compared with 14 per cent in London.

The value of these results can only be evaluated when comparing them with representative data. Kiernan et al. (1998) show using GHS data that 16 per cent of all British lone mothers have A-levels whereas 38 per cent have not completed school at

all. Lone mothers with higher educational attainment are ergo grossly over-represented in lone parent organisations at the expense of those with no completed school education whose proportion is nearly three times lower than at national average. A similar picture emerges for West Germany: 20 per cent of lone mothers there have A-levels in national average (ALLBUS 1998 own calculations). Schilling/Groß (1992) found that the proportion of lone mothers without any vocational training was far higher than the equivalent for married mothers (34 vs. 22 per cent) and that lone mothers' qualifications were generally poorer. That means, lone mothers with A-levels are clearly over-represented in lone parent organisations (see table 6.8). Obviously, there is a strong education effect in regard to membership of lone parent organisations. These results confirm the well-established findings of the political participation research that proved the correlation between educational attainment and voluntary participation (see also Milbrath/Goel 1977; Kaase 1990; Verba et al. 1995; Erlinghagen 2000). In contrast, teenage mothers leave school before completion (Kiernan 1995). This results in their clear under-representation in voluntary organisations.

Employment and income

A family household can be described as economic community whose functioning requires an income. The basic problem of families is finding a balance between employment and family care. In order to sustain their and their children's livelihood it is essential for lone mothers to get employed. However, time needed for employment is not available for care and housework. Therefore, the earning capacity of lone mothers with young children is severely restricted, as demonstrated in chapter 2.

In my samples 60 per cent were not employed and 40 per cent employed. Whereas this very roughly reflects the employment propensity of lone mothers in the UK – 39 per cent were employed in 1993 (Kiernan et al. 1998) – these findings are in sharp contrast to the average West German lone mother population. Two thirds of West German lone mothers were employed in 1993 (Bauerreiss et al. 1997). That means, employed lone mothers are clearly under-represented in the Berlin sample. Table 6.9 below shows the prevalent employment statuses for each sample under consideration of women in higher and further education.

Table 6.9: Employment status of interviewed lone mothers (in per cent of each sample)

	London	Berlin
full-time employed	24	9
part-time employed	12	33
in education ³⁹	21	9
not employed	43	49

Source: own data, n = 116

Of all employed women in the London sample nearly two thirds were full-time employed. This result compares with 51 per cent full-time employed of all employed lone mothers in the UK (Marsh et al. 1997). In the Berlin sample, however, 80 per cent of the employed respondents were in part-time employment. Again, this result is in sharp contrast to representative surveys according to which almost 60 per cent of the employed West German lone mothers were full-time employed⁴⁰ (BMFSFJ 1998). Obviously, Gingerbread members represent more or less the national average of British lone mothers.

It is a different story with VAMV members in Berlin. Here, women who were either not employed at all or part-time employed were over-represented compared with national statistics. This result is the outcome of an unintended selection bias in Berlin: VAMV's unique offer of professionally guided therapy groups specifically targeted at expectant lone mothers as well as women who only recently became lone mothers attracted many women in this situation. As a consequence, women with new-born babies were over-represented within the organisation as well as within the sample of this research project – as demonstrated in table 6.3. Naturally, mothers of very young children have a low employment propensity. Additionally, German *Erziehungsurlaub* (parental leave) legislation gives a strong incentive not to get employed until the youngest child reaches the age of two. As explained in detail in chapter 3.2, those taking advantage of *Erziehungsurlaub* are not counted as being employed since they are not available for employment uptake.

Employment is the main income source of families in contemporary Western societies. Individuals who are not employed rely on savings or property, maintenance, or monetary state transfers. The disposable monthly or weekly income was not enquired in this research. As pointed out in the previous chapter it was infeasible to gain

³⁹ This includes higher education, further education, and colleges.

⁴⁰ These Microcensus data do not differentiate between lone mothers and cohabiting mothers.

information about disposable household incomes or earned incomes since interviewees felt uncomfortable in answering income related questions. However, the research instrument captured a number of variables directly relating to income. These included means-tested benefits (Income Support, Housing Benefit, Family Credit) (see table 6.10).

Table 6.10: Receipt of means-tested benefits (in per cent of each sample)

	London	Berlin
Income support/ <i>Sozialhilfe</i>	52	43
Housing Benefit/ <i>Wohngeld</i> ⁴¹	14	12

Source: own data, n = 116

Table 6.10 shows the proportion of interviewees who receive means-tested benefits. Slightly more than half of the interviewed lone mothers from London received Income Support when they were interviewed. Thus, their proportion is significantly lower than the 65 per cent estimate for British lone parents presented by Marsh et al. (1997). At the time of the fieldwork (1998), 32 per cent of West German lone mothers were dependent on *Sozialhilfe* (Armutserbericht 2001). In this study their proportion was more than 10 per cent higher. In other words, whereas Income Support recipients were under-represented in the London sample *Sozialhilfe* claimants were over-represented in the Berlin sample. This result is strongly associated to the employment related bias and the opportunity to live on a combination of *Erziehungsgeld* and *Sozialhilfe* (parental leave benefit and social assistance) while being on *Erziehungsurlaub* (parental leave). Another indicator for low incomes is receipt of Housing Benefit/*Wohngeld*. Of course, all Income Support recipients claimed Housing Benefit as well⁴². However, another 14 or 12 per cent respectively received only Housing Benefit/*Wohngeld*. Taken together two thirds in London and more than half in Berlin have to be regarded as poor.

⁴¹ This category includes those who receive Housing Benefit/*Wohngeld* but not Income Support/*Sozialhilfe*.

⁴² German *Sozialhilfe* includes a specific housing component. Therefore, *Sozialhilfe* claimants are not eligible for *Wohngeld* payments (see chapter 3.2).

6.4. Summary: Who are the members of lone parent organisations?

Nearly 120 interviews with lone mothers in Germany and the UK were carried out to get sufficient data material. The main deficiency of this research is that sampling procedures leading to nationally representative data could not be employed, due to given time, financial, and other constraints. The chosen sampling procedure of contacting only members of lone parent organisations produced a sample that is different from the average lone mother population in both the United Kingdom and West Germany. The question is in which ways do lone mothers in this sample differ?

Certain demographic data gained importance by effectively providing links between this case study and the existing stock of knowledge about lone mothers. The purpose of this section was not only to compare this sample with the average lone mother population in both countries. Its intention was also to provide more detailed information about causes of, pathways into, and duration of lone motherhood. So, who are typical members of lone parent organisations in both countries?

The *typical* lone parent organisation member is a well educated lone mother in her mid 30s who is currently not employed. She decided to split up with her former partner rather than accepting an unhappy relationship. She thinks that her life has deteriorated ever since, with particularly harsh economic consequences, more stress, increasing social isolation, and severe emotional distress. The future is bleak but she gained new confidence and skills since she separated. The amount of time she has to herself is determined by the age of her youngest child and the number of children. So far, Gingerbread and VAMV members are alike. But in many other respects the typical Gingerbread member is different from the typical VAMV member.

A typical *Gingerbread* member is either divorced or going through divorce at the moment. Her children were born while she was in a marriage. She has been living alone with her two children for more than three years. They take up an enormous amount of her time. Only on two days per week she has some time to herself. She perceives her future prospects rather bleak and is not very happy with her life. On the other hand, she is in close contact to her family members who live locally (for a detailed analysis see chapter 8).

The typical *VAMV* member shares many of her Gingerbread sister's problems. Nevertheless, she is different in some ways. First of all, the typical VAMV member is a single mother with one child only. Although she was living in a relationship with the child's father initially, they split up *before* the child was born. She knew that she was

going to have the child on her own. She has been on her own with her child for two and a half years. Her single child leaves her much more space – she has time to herself at least four times a week. Hopes of a better future counterbalance fears that things will get worse. Unlike her sister in London, she experienced her parents' separation when she was a child. Her relations to her family are not as close as her sister's in London – with the exception of her relationship with her mother which is even closer. But generally speaking, family relations are more loose, not least because she did not grow up in Berlin and her family lives more than three hours away in West Germany. The lone mother's relationship to her father is not very good, if there is a relationship at all. She made new friends but not as many as her sister in London (for a detailed analysis see chapter 8).

What implications do these results have? Looking at them from a cross-nationally comparative perspective, the generally more positive perception of present life and future prospects of lone mothers in Berlin is striking. A factor that plays a crucial role in determining these differences in perception is a structural variable resulting from the different demographic composition of both sub-samples. The Berlin sample is dominated by single, never-married mothers with one child only whereas most lone mothers in the London sample had been married before and had more than one child. This structural difference has consequences at many other levels: single mothers tend to be younger, more dynamic, active, and mobile, re-partner sooner, and have a generally more positive attitude to life and changing circumstances. Generally speaking, lone mothers are a heterogeneous group that cannot be described as social problem group per se. They differ in regard to demographic characteristics as well as resource equipment. These differences occur independent of national context. Coping strategies vary widely. Members of lone parent organisations are a rather privileged group. Lone parent organisations attract predominantly well educated women and women who are older than average. The UK has one of the youngest lone mother populations in Europe (Kiernan et al. 1998) – a fact that is not reflected in the interviews. The question is what makes these organisations attractive only for certain lone mothers? Characteristics of and services provided by these organisations will be subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

LONE PARENT ORGANISATIONS AS SUPPORT PROVIDERS

The object of this chapter is the role lone parent organisations play as part of lone mothers' support networks. Lone parents share the experience of a substantial loss of kinship and friendship relations in the wake of partnership breakdown, resulting in social isolation. The organisations that were contacted in order to interview their members are different from small neighbourhood groups with regard to membership numbers, degree of organisation, and political weight within society. Gingerbread and VAMV are the biggest lone parent organisations in the UK and Germany respectively. They have branches at national, regional, and local level. Whereas their local groups still have the characteristics of typical self-help groups, their national and regional organisation layers predominantly act as major public advocates of lone parents' interests.

The aim of the first section is to suggest ways in which lone parent organisations can be theoretically conceptualised: as voluntary organisations, interest groups, or self-help groups. Each of these functions is essential for the successful functioning of lone parent organisations. This is followed by a section reflecting lone parent organisations' self-image based on the analysis of expert interviews and content analysis. At a later stage, the results of this analysis will be combined with the theoretical findings of the previous section. The fourth section is dedicated to empirical data collected in the interviews. The first point looked at is whether joining a lone parent organisation is the outcome of strategic decisions or not. The role and importance of lone parent organisations as support providers from the interviewed lone parents' perspective will then be analysed. Finally, the focus is on those individuals who play a particularly active role in the groups' life. The chapter is concluded by a summarising evaluation of lone parent organisations' role as support providers.

7.1. Conceptualising lone parent organisations

Lone parent organisations were founded in a period of social unrest in the late 1960s when the post-war generation, who did not feel sufficiently represented by traditional institutions of parliamentary democracy, set up a number of informal groups that addressed a whole variety of issues not taken seriously by political parties, trade unions, the church, and traditional charities, such as racial and ethnic discrimination, urban decay, poverty, and war (Wilson 1990; Kendall/Knapp 1996). Both Gingerbread and VAMV are the outcome of an individual lone mother's attempt to cope with partnership breakdown and to stop the imminent slide into poverty. The objective of this section is to figure out which of the following three organisational concepts best describes the role of lone parent organisations as support providers.

Lone parent organisations as voluntary organisations?

Both Gingerbread and VAMV see themselves as forming part of the voluntary sector. More importantly, their structural characteristics, as well as their recruiting mechanisms, place them in this category. Voluntarism can be seen with respect to all sorts of activities involving lay participation. It reaches from such wide-ranging areas as research and education, health, and social services to cultural and recreational as well as political and legal activities. The voluntary sector embraces a broad variety of organisations ranging from small, locally based self-help groups to major national welfare providers. They do not only differ with regard to situational circumstances and/or their lifetime as an organisation, but they also do often depend on the very personality of the individuals who initially decided to set up the organisation. The result is a vast amount of organisations of all sorts of shapes and sizes that add to the complexity of the matter. Thus, it becomes extremely difficult to identify a clear set of categories that define a voluntary organisation.

National differences in the use of terminology add to this confusion. Although these organisations share common characteristics across countries they tend to be conceptualised differently because various aspects of organisational life are considered more important depending on national context. What is most often referred to as *voluntary* sector in the UK may be called *charitable*, *tax-exempt*, *NGO*, *non-profit*, *independent* or *third* sector elsewhere (Salamon/Anheier 1997). Moreover, usage of a particular term does not necessarily imply that members of the organisation *always* act according to this principle. For example, the term *voluntary* usually refers to the

character of individual participation. It indicates the absence of any form of compulsion in carrying out particular actions as well as the absence of payments in exchange for doing this. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of tasks voluntary organisations fulfil can only be carried out by professionals (e.g. doctors, counsellors, social workers). The term *charitable* focuses on funding mechanisms, more specifically on private donations by members and supporters. However, almost all charities rely on state funding or funding from private market sources as well – which somehow blurs the vision of an *independent, non-governmental, or third* sector that does not fit into public vs. private or state vs. market dichotomies.

The use of the term *non-profit* or *voluntary* sector in the United Kingdom is reasonably clear. At the heart of conceptualising the UK non-profit sector is the notion of *charities*. According to English law, charitable status (and thus tax exemption) is granted to organisations in recognition of their objectives, irrespective of specific legal form provided that the organisation's purpose is exclusively '*charitable*' and 'for the benefit of the public' (Kendall/Knapp 1996). The legal definition of the sector, however, is far from being clear. Although commonly used the term *voluntary organisation* does not have a precise meaning in English law. Unlike in civil law systems in continental Europe, organisations in the UK do not have legal status. Instead, they are defined through their individual or corporate members who are recognised as legal entities.

In contrast, German law provides a rather rigid system of classification, which defines the status and rights of an organisation. Civil law applies to private individuals and organisations, whereas public law applies to public institutions. Paradoxically, voluntary organisations are *private* organisations that fulfil *public* purposes. In other words, they are 'civil law' in form and 'public law' in function. German law acknowledges the existence of such organisations by granting tax exemption to so-called *Vereine* (small associations), certain institutions (e.g. hospitals) and foundations, provided they are of public benefit. This contribution to the public good is acknowledged by granting the attribute *gemeinnützig* (public-benefit) to any organisation that is considered by the law as doing so.

However not only terminology differs across countries. Contemporary systems of social welfare provision in both the UK and Germany are characterised by a welfare mix, i.e. a division of labour between the welfare state and informal, voluntary welfare providers. The present situation in each country is very much the result of unique historical developments. The early introduction of social insurance in Germany in the

late 19th century was intended to integrate the working class into the new German nation state and to weaken the social-democratic movement (see, for example, Alber 1987; Seibel 1990). This included a broad variety of political, sports, and cultural associations as well as associations for risk protection in industry and for the improvement of education. The principle of *self-administration* or *self-government* became the institutional mechanism to achieve both objectives at the same time: "...to maintain political control through a system of quasi-public service administration, and to integrate parts of the population that might otherwise pose a threat to political legitimacy and stability." (Anheier/Seibel 1997: 134) This was accompanied by efforts to incorporate the voluntary sector into this new welfare state by ascribing voluntary welfare associations a role as intermediary welfare providers.

As a result, the voluntary sector is heavily involved in social welfare provision to the present day. Most social services are provided by so-called *Wohlfahrtsverbände* (welfare associations) or *freie Träger* (free underwriters). These welfare associations are made up internally of thousands of separate legal entities, ranging from registered associations to foundations and public law foundations and corporations. VAMV as the major lone parent organisation belongs to *Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband*, which almost entirely consists of independent registered associations (89 per cent) (Bockhacker 1985). Other welfare associations include the welfare branches of the Protestant ('Diakonie') and Roman Catholic ('Caritas') churches. Their activities are guided by the principle of self-administration as much as by two more overarching principles: the principle of subsidiarity ('*Subsidiaritätsprinzip*') and the principle of communal economy ('*Gemeinwirtschaft*'). Whereas the former gives priority to private over public action whenever possible – state support is only granted after next of kin failed to provide sufficient support – the latter has its origins in the co-operative and workers' movement and "...favoured an economic system in which actors attempt to maximise common as well as private returns." (Anheier/Seibel 1997: 136)

The British voluntary sector was strongly anchored in the notions of philanthropy and civic responsibility. Many voluntary welfare providers were formed by members of the middle classes. Others included mutual aid organisations established by working class people. Until the beginning of the 20th century, the voluntary sector was the dominant force in providing social welfare in Britain while the State perceived its role merely as providing the legal framework for charitable work, supplementing it only where absolutely necessary (Kendall/Knapp 1997). Following the notorious distinction of the

poor into '*deserving*' and '*undeserving*' in the reformed Poor Law of 1834 the State felt responsible for re-educating the '*undeserving poor*' in the workhouse whereas the voluntary sector was ascribed to provide for the '*deserving poor*', a task that was often combined with advocacy and campaigning work.

This division of labour was turned upside-down after the establishment of a comprehensive state system of social welfare in the 1940s. Significant parts of the voluntary sector were absorbed into the newly created welfare state. Nevertheless, the voluntary sector continued to play a crucial role in the field of social services. The British post-war welfare state has been characterised by a partnership between the State and the voluntary sector, though the voluntary sector became the '*junior partner*'. This relationship remained more or less unchallenged until the 1980s and 1990s when Conservative governments under Margaret Thatcher and John Major attempted to redefine this division of labour by enhancing both the market's and the voluntary sector's roles in welfare provision, at the State's expense. Many academics claimed that the Conservative ideology of privatisation and emphasising individual responsibility was the driving force for this development (see, for example, LeGrand 1991; Wistow et al. 1994), that eventually resulted in "...the promotion of '*quasi-markets*' and the encouragement of contracting-out in fields where voluntary sector providers co-exist with other sectors." (Kendall/Knapp 1997: 267)

In order to determine whether lone parent organisations do indeed belong to the voluntary sector a structural-operational definition that was developed within the Comparative Non-profit Sector Project⁴³ will be used. This definition focuses on organisation structure and operational modes. It identifies a formal set of rules (ideally a constitution), self-governance i.e. established decision making structures and procedures, absence of any profit or financial gain orientated purposes, and some degree of voluntary participation by its members as necessary characteristics of voluntary organisations. Furthermore, they have to be institutionally separate from state and market sectors. The achievement of some degree of institutionalisation by setting formal rules (constitution) and following certain standard procedures (regular meetings, self-governance), combined with permanence of self-governance and regularity of such

⁴³ The Comparative Non-profit Sector Project is a cross-national comparative study of the voluntary sector in 13 countries based at Johns Hopkins University under the directorship of Lester M. Salomon and Helmut K. Anheier.

procedures, permits them to be identified as organisations and set them apart from informal, loose gatherings (Salamon/Anheier 1997).

Lone parent organisations as campaigning and interest groups?

Interest groups have become an important pillar in the evolution of Western democracies. They mediate the information flow between government and an enormous diversity of organised interests, ranging from big players like trade unions and employers associations to smaller, but very well organised lobby groups representing predominantly economic interests, such as those of farmers or of particular industries, to voluntary organisations campaigning on behalf of disadvantaged social groups, such as ethnic minorities, handicapped and disabled people, homosexuals, or lone parents. Obviously, these organisations differ tremendously in their goals, public image, resources available to them, and in their procedures to achieve their goal of influencing government policies in favour of their members. In parliamentary democracies interests are usually represented in parliament through political parties. Nevertheless, interest groups have always played a substantial role in representing interests by lobbying governments. Unlike political parties, interest groups represent the interests of a particular group that is far more homogenous than the electorate of a political party which has to find some common ground that appeals to as many voters as possible. This results in interest groups being far more flexible and being able to react for more quickly to changing circumstances. Interest groups are able to raise issues that are too detailed for public debate.

Interest groups have available to them a whole arsenal of instruments to influence political outcomes. These can be roughly distinguished into two main groups of strategies: *insider* and *outsider* strategies. Insider strategies seek access to ministers and civil servants, a procedure that is normally approved by the group. Outsider strategies include public campaigning, demonstrations, or public protests. Some interest groups use predominantly outsider strategies, others insider, and others use both. Interest groups are not just useful for their members or the sections of society they claim to represent, it has also become increasingly important for governments to consult interest groups. This has partly to do with the complexity of interrelated interests in contemporary western societies, as any piece of legislation affects a variety of intermingled interests and members of parliament inevitably lack the technical knowledge to master all details involved. Secondly, interest groups give legitimacy to

the government policies they approve. As Wilson pointed out: “The assurance that ‘all interested parties have been consulted and have indicated their approval’ can smooth a policy’s progress through parliament.” (Wilson 1990: 83)

Also, interest groups can better represent the interests of minorities who are frequently overlooked by political parties due to their small numbers. Perhaps even more important, interest groups can make the voice heard of those minorities who will be most affected by certain political decisions. Furthermore, the informal set-up of small interest groups encourages the political participation of those groups in society who lack influence in traditional political institutions. Their informal procedures make political participation easier for those who do not have at their disposal the skills, knowledge, and networks required to have an impact within the conventional political system. Democratic values as well as these very skills and knowledge, thus, reach parts of the population who would not have access to them otherwise (Wilson 1990).

Lone parent organisations as self-help groups?

Although mutual aid organisations, such as friendly societies, formed part of the traditional voluntary sector in centuries gone by, contemporary self-help groups are a relatively recent phenomenon. Their numbers have exploded since the 1970s, in the wake of the so-called social movement organisations. Most self-help groups focus on curing a particular medical condition or social crisis. Groups tend to emerge spontaneously, without any significant intervention by political actors. Action may be sparked by individual experience of a crisis. This initial spark may be magnified by a media report, thus reaching hundreds or even thousands of other individuals with similar experiences. The term self-help is not understood as a purely private activity for the benefit of a single person. Mutual aid and self-help are seen as two sides of the same coin, forming an interdependent relationship of action (Wann 1995). Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish *private* and *social* self-help groups. According to Runge/Vilmar (1988), the former restrict their actions to helping those affected in the group only whereas the latter feel committed to a common cause of improving the circumstances of everyone affected.

Essential characteristics of self-help groups are informality, equality among members, a common concern or problem and the common decision that something has to be done about this concern. Self-help groups are often formed in response to the absence of, or the unsatisfactory, support provision from other sources. In contrast to

charitable organisations or service providers from the public or private market realm, self-help groups are run by their members for their members. They typically provide emotional support, information, advice and practical help. What makes their emotional support special is that they provide the unique opportunity to meet people in the same situation, with the same problems and similar experiences who understand without the need to say a word. Group members may offer advice and practical help based on their experiences in dealing with professionals, state agencies, etc.

Besides these mutual support activities, self-help groups have to engage in other activities as well in order to secure the long-term survival of the group. These include recruiting, publicity and education, fundraising, and campaigning. Recruiting is not just a means of survival - every new member adds to the group's knowledge and contributes skills, thus enhancing its pool of resources. Moreover, it spreads the existing knowledge to a wider range of people. Publicity is important for spreading the word and it also keeps members and sympathisers informed of current developments. But it is also important to ensure professionals and potential funders recognise the group's work as being beneficial to a wider community. Leaflets, newsletters and annual reports are common among many self-help groups. Some may even engage in contributing to the training of professionals or participating in public education ventures, as well as campaigning ventures to take publicity to politicians and a politically interested public. There are different opinions as to whether this should be done by self-help groups in the first place or whether it should be left to political pressure groups (Wann 1995).

What can self-help achieve? The break from isolation many individuals feel when they join a self-help group is commonly regarded as the most important achievement. Beyond that many self-help groups provide practical support. A credit union, for example, may enable someone to borrow money who would not get a loan from a bank; parents who could not otherwise afford childcare may rotate childcare with others. Self-help activities may benefit a wider public by improving public services or by giving people a choice as a result of distributing information not otherwise available. However, self-help groups are not an answer to every problem and are not suitable for everyone. Some may be overwhelmed by other peoples' problems or preoccupied with their specific condition. Others worry about becoming stigmatised for belonging to a particular group. Also, self-help groups are not conflict free spheres. Few members tend to take on organising tasks that, in turn, may result in others feeling marginalised. Professionals may worry about the misinformation of their clients or patients. Notably,

“people with few resources and little access to information may not be able to bring into the group what it needs in order to develop.” (Wann 1995: 18)

7.2. Lone parent organisations in the United Kingdom and Germany

In this section, the two lone parent organisations, which were approached in order to interview their members, are introduced. Both Gingerbread in the UK and VAMV in Germany are the largest organisations of their kind in each country. They have the required resources to work as campaigning and interest groups at national and regional levels as well as self-help groups at local level, at the same time. The following information is the resulting content analysis of relevant documents published by these organisations and from expert interviews with leading representatives of Gingerbread and VAMV⁴⁴.

Gingerbread

Gingerbread perceives itself as an advocate for all 1.7 million lone parents in Britain in the national debate as well as an initial source of support for lone parents in times of need. Part of this commitment is to also take the interests of those 3 million children who live with a lone parent seriously (Gingerbread 1999). Gingerbread is a unique lone parent organisation because it is both a political interest group and an umbrella organisation that unites approximately 160 local self-help groups in England and Wales under the common identity of a nationally respected organisation⁴⁵. Membership is limited to lone parents only; even former lone parents cannot remain members once their circumstances change. This is important for maintaining the unique character of the organisation because it guarantees that all trustees share the same status and will make sure that Gingerbread will always remain what it was set up to be – an advocate and self-help provider for lone parents.

National and regional offices co-ordinate many activities typical of a campaigning and advocacy organisation, but Gingerbread’s organisational identity is deeply rooted in the notion of self-help and mutual aid from whence it sprung. The importance Gingerbread assigns to self-help/mutual aid is exemplified by the following quote:

⁴⁴ Expert interviews were carried out with the chief executive of Gingerbread, Liz Sewell, in February 1998 and the secretary of VAMV 'Landesverband Berlin' (state association Berlin), Veronica Klingemann, in November 1997.

“Gingerbread has a basic belief: lone parents who are confident, supported and feel good about themselves make better parents than those who are lonely, unhappy and feel victims of circumstance. We see our work as preventative, seeking to help families deal with their problems rather than leaving them until more costly intervention is needed. The aim is to help lone parents give their children a happy and secure childhood.” (Gingerbread 1999)

Gingerbread was set up as self-help group by a lone parent in 1970. She found herself without a home after her relationship broke down. The local authorities refused to help her find a new place for herself and her children to stay. After she overcame her initial devastation she wrote an article in the London based ‘Time Out’ magazine that was later taken up by ‘The Sunday Times’. She received many letters from other lone parents who had had similar experiences. They got together and decided to start up their own self-help movement. Gingerbread has had a lot of publicity since the start, which helped it in the process of becoming a national organisation. But most of all, Gingerbread emerged at a time that witnessed an enormous increase in the number of lone parents, from about half a million in the early 1970s to 1.7 million in 1998.

Gingerbread attempts to address four key audiences: lone parent families, local self-help groups, organisations working with lone parents, and policy makers. The organisation has a national office in London and seven regional offices. These offices offer information services to their members and other lone parents as well as to anyone interested in lone parent issues. Beyond that Gingerbread provides training opportunities for lone parents to acquire new skills to enable them to manage their own lives, whether that means to return to employment or to become more active in their local communities. Gingerbread collaborates with two other voluntary organisations in implementing the ‘New Deal Advisers Training’. The aim is to train 1,000 Employment Service Personal Advisers who will play a key role in promoting the government’s New Deal for Lone Parents.

A major service located at the national office is the free weekday Gingerbread Advice Line. Issues dealt with range from membership enquiries and information concerning the location of the next Gingerbread local group to the provision of initial help in case of relationship breakdown, unplanned pregnancy, or domestic violence.

⁴⁵ There are Gingerbread organisations in Scotland and Northern Ireland as well. Although they share the same name they form separate organisations. Nevertheless, there is close co-operation between all three Gingerbread organisations.

Advice is given to help lone parents to solve their most pressing problems and to re-organise their lives. Recommendations are made on which issues should be given priority over others. For example, it may be essential to find new accommodation immediately, whereas legal and benefits issues can at least wait a couple of days. Topics typically covered during an emergency advice session include accommodation, benefits entitlement, employment and childcare, legal issues concerning divorce, maintenance, custody, and general support.

Each local group is an independent, self-contained unit that manages its own affairs through its own elected committee. It merely operates under a standard Gingerbread constitution. The name of Gingerbread as a nationally respected organisation unites all these groups and attracts lone parents to join them. The groups are not supported financially by the national organisation; they have to raise their own funds. On the other hand, all membership fees go to the national organisation rather than the local group. The national and regional offices do not really get involved in the local groups at all. They keep local members informed of ongoing issues and provide some logistic support in the process of setting up a group and encourage anyone willing to do so. The group founder has to look for a suitable location for group meetings as well as advertise the new group all by herself / himself.

Most often the starting point is to provide an opportunity for lone parents to socialise where the children will also be looked after. It may quickly become an important part of many lone parents' lives where they can share experiences and information and support each other emotionally as well as in more practical terms, such as childcare or transportation. Some lone parents come with the main intention to give their children a chance to socialise with other children who have known lone parenthood as normality. Many come in the safe knowledge that everyone there understands and no painful explanations are needed.

‘Verband Alleinerziehender Mütter und Väter’ (VAMV)

The organisation that eventually became VAMV was founded by a single mother in 1967 in Herrenberg near Stuttgart as *Verein lediger Mütter* (association of single mothers). Its name has been changed twice since then: first to *Verein lediger und geschiedener Mütter* to include divorced mothers as well and then to today's name *Verband Alleinerziehender Mütter und Väter* (association of lone mothers and fathers).

VAMV is the leading lone parent organisation in Germany⁴⁶. It is present in all federal states through regional offices and associations. VAMV has approximately 9,000 members nation-wide and represents the interests of 2 million lone parents in Germany. The organisation consists of 200 *Ortsverbände* (local associations) and contact points that form 16 *Landesverbände* (state associations) – one in each federal state – and the *Bundesverband* (federal association) at national level.

VAMV sees itself predominantly as a self-help organisation. Similar to Gingerbread, it works as a political pressure group advocating lone parents' interests at national and regional levels. VAMV has committed itself to work for fair family policy and therefore seeks collaboration with government sources at national, regional, and local levels. Its preamble states: "VAMV points out disadvantages and injustices towards one parent families in legislation, social planning, and in other areas of societal policy and tries to avoid family policy measures being predominantly or exclusively oriented towards married couples and married families." (VAMV 1999b; author's translation). VAMV perceives public campaigning at national and regional level and mutual aid at local level as two sides of the same coin in improving lone parents' circumstances. It believes in the capability of individual lone parents to help themselves and others and therefore encourages activities leading to this end. VAMV has also joined forces with other nation-wide active organisations that are members of the so-called *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Deutschen Familienverbände* – an association of all major organisations working with families that maintains close contact with government agencies and ministries dealing with family affairs. Lobbying employer representatives, the media, and political parties as well as the general public via the media, as well as making information accessible to its members and other lone parents, are other cornerstones of VAMV's work.

The national office offers information services to their members and other lone parents as well as to anyone interested in lone parent issues. It also co-ordinates all political campaigns. Current campaigning issues include the demand for sufficiently high *Kindergeld* (child benefit) that covers the average costs of raising children or maintenance payments that cover at least the subsistence minimum of children, compatibility of childcare and employment, the demand that shared custody should be

⁴⁶ In East Germany and Berlin, however, it faces 'competition' from another lone parent organisation, SHIA – that is 'Selbsthilfeinitiative Alleinerziehender' ('Self-help Initiative of Lone Parents') that emerged shortly after communism was overturned in autumn 1989.

subject to both parties agreeing voluntarily, reform of *Erziehungsurlaub/Erziehungsgeld* (parental leave/parental leave benefit) legislation, and finally the abolishment of tax bonuses for married couples and the introduction of bonuses for families instead.

The national office hosts a weekday advice line for lone parents – similar to that of Gingerbread which was established in 1999. Its intention is to provide initial support for people who find themselves in a situation where they are unable to cope and do not know what to do. VAMV offers advice on childcare, maintenance and custody, social benefits, and more general legal issues as well as information packs and contact details of the next local groups. However, unlike Gingerbread, VAMV was unable to obtain a free telephone line. Phone calls are therefore charged at a premium rate of 3.63 DM per minute⁴⁷. Considering this, it seems questionable whether this advice line can live up to its promises. However, the national office publishes a booklet entitled '*Alleinerziehend – Tips und Informationen*' ('Being a Lone Parent – Advice and Information') that contains comprehensive advice on all issues involving lone parenthood and which is updated annually. This booklet is published with support of the Federal Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth and distributed free of charge via *Sozialämter* (benefits agencies), local authorities, and family advice centres, thus reaching a wide audience. Moreover, a booklet called '*Informationen für Einelternfamilien*' ('Information for One Parent Families') is published bimonthly to report on current developments of concern to lone parents.

Regional offices are not just regional contact points that channel information between VAMV's national head office and its local associations and contact points. Due to the federal structure of the German political system they are faced with regional governments that have the legal authority to pass legislation with regard to primary and secondary education, law enforcement, radio and television, and cultural activities. In several other policy areas, such as higher education, social welfare, and public health, the federal states share concurrent powers with the German government. Consequently, the regional offices work in a similar way to the national office, just at a lower layer of political structure. They also represent regional associations that form part of the national organisation but do nevertheless have a high degree of autonomy over their own affairs.

⁴⁷ This is much more expensive than local, national, and even most international destinations.

What exactly VAMV offers at local level varies to a large extent on the needs and desires of their members and on successful fundraising. Small groups tend to provide just an opportunity to meet and socialise with other lone parents, giving everybody a chance to receive and give emotional or more practical support. Larger associations, particularly those located in bigger cities, may have the resources to administer their own local contact points where lone parents can get specific advice on social benefits, separation and divorce issues, including maintenance and custody regulations. The biggest local associations can be found in the three German city states Bremen, Hamburg, and Berlin since these cities have the status of being separate federal states. VAMV works as both regional and local associations there. These local associations are thus 'burdened' with having to act as political campaigning and advocacy groups as well. On the other hand, they tend to have better fundraising opportunities than smaller local associations, which enable them to provide more services.

VAMV's Berlin association, for example, does not only have an office with full-time and part-time employees to fulfil the tasks of a regional and local association simultaneously, it also organises self-help groups concerning a variety of topics (e.g. pregnancy without partner, shared custody, how to bring up children on your own, how to handle children with behavioural problems) which are assisted by trained social workers. Each group meets on a different day in the afternoon and is open to any lone parent interested – not just members of the organisation. Demand is so high that many have to put their names on waiting lists to join their desired group. Some parents have had to wait for more than a year. Beside that, there is also a weekly VAMV Café where lone parents can socialise on Sunday afternoons. Altogether, VAMV in Berlin has 437 members (Ulshoefer 1998) – with many non-members using its services as well.

Conceptualising lone parent organisations in Germany and the UK

Here, the conceptual part is brought to a close by matching theoretical characteristics and the outcome of content analyses. The purpose of table 7.1 on the next page is to briefly summarise basic features of Gingerbread and VAMV. Using Salamon/Anheier's (1997) structural-operational definition of the non-profit sector both Gingerbread and VAMV fit into the appropriate categories. Both organisations are alike with respect to their organisational structure. Local self-help groups are the basic entities that are united under the umbrella of a nationally recognised and respected organisation. These local groups enjoy a high degree of independence within the organisation and are responsible

for running their own affairs, both in organisational and financial terms. Nevertheless, in exchange for high public visibility and a good reputation they have to commit themselves to following the rules laid down in the organisation's constitution. Both organisations entirely rely on volunteers for setting up and running their local groups. It is remarkable that lone parent organisations have installed structural mechanisms to guarantee that they always remain committed to the well-being of lone parents as seen by lone parents. Gingerbread was especially innovative to this end by installing a structural mechanism that ensures that lone parents remain in control of the entire organisation.

Table 7.1: Organisational features of Gingerbread and VAMV

Organisational features	Gingerbread	VAMV
Year of foundation	1970	1967
Structure:		
Number of local groups	about 160 in England & Wales	more than 200 all over Germany
Members	5,000	9,000
Membership open to lone parents only	yes	yes
National office	yes	yes
Regional offices	7	16
Services:		
Cost of calling telephone advice line	free	premium rate
Annual update of initial advice booklet for lone parents	no	yes
Collaboration with government agencies	yes, implementing training scheme within 'New Deal for Lone Parents'	yes, discussing implications of future family policy legislation
Collaboration with other voluntary organisations	yes, implementing training scheme within 'New Deal for Lone Parents'	yes, discussing implications of future family policy legislation
Professional support	- to run national organisation - to co-ordinate national campaigning and lobbying work - to maintain telephone advice line and to publish advice	- to run national organisation - to co-ordinate national campaigning and lobbying work - to maintain telephone advice line and to publish advice - to assist local self-help groups

Their national offices, however, and to a lesser degree also their regional offices (particularly VAMV's) cannot fulfil their work without hiring paid staff. Nation-wide campaigning and lobbying work would be unthinkable if it was not centrally coordinated. Furthermore, assistance to local self-help groups provided by social workers and psychologists employed by VAMV enables lone parents to overcome personal crises and to rebuild confidence in their abilities and skills – a factor which significantly contributes to the quality and attractiveness of the entire organisation. Neither group charges for their services, but good quality has a price. Members of lone parent organisations and all their individual supporters cannot finance all these services through membership fees and small donations alone. Therefore, VAMV and Gingerbread depend heavily on government funding. Whereas Gingerbread was able to secure some private market funding on top of this, VAMV's dependence on state funding is alarming. This dependence inevitably results in serious financial crisis when the government cuts funding – as has happened to VAMV Berlin⁴⁸ over the last two years. In contrast, Gingerbread was more recently able to secure a large bulk of its financial means through lottery money. The free telephone advice line that Gingerbread offers is sponsored by a private telephone company. It seems that a mix of various funding sources is most beneficiary to lone parent organisations in the long run because it increases their overall independence. Both Gingerbread and VAMV employ outsider as well as insider strategies when acting as interest groups.

Public campaigning, demonstrations, and protest actions are as much part of their work as lobbying members of different government departments, political parties, or MPs. Equality among members is guaranteed through the groups' constitutional commitments. Members of local groups enjoy a high degree of informality. Whether this is still the case at national level may be questioned from an individual's point of view. However, compared to formally structured organisations in the state, market or even voluntary sector (e.g. hospitals or research institutes) this characteristic is still met. Finally, commitment to the common cause to improve all lone parents' circumstances and position in society, as well as to the self-help notion of supporting lone parents to help themselves, can be found explicitly in most of their publications. Table 7.2 on the following page gives an overview of the extent to which both Gingerbread and VAMV

⁴⁸ As long as the federal state of (then West) Berlin was regarded as a 'bridgehead' against communism it enjoyed generous funding from the West German government. This support was significantly cut during

match the defining criteria of a voluntary organisation as developed by Salamon/Anheier (1997), interest groups as outlined by Wilson (1990), and self-help groups as summarised by Runge/Vilmar (1988) and Wann (1995).

Table 7.2: Defining criteria of voluntary organisations (I), interest groups (II), and self-help groups (III)

Defining criteria	Gingerbread	VAMV
I) formal set of rules (constitution)	yes, set by national umbrella	yes, set by national umbrella
I) self-governance (established decision-making procedures)	yes, office performance controlled by trustees + AGM; local groups run by local committees	yes, office performance controlled by AGM; local groups run by local committees
I) non-profit orientation	no charge for services	no charges for services
I) separate from State / market	funding through membership fees, private donations, government grants, lottery money	funding through membership fees, private donations, government grants
I) based on voluntarism	yes, apart from a few employees at national office	yes, apart from a few employees at national + regional offices
II) outsider principle: public campaigning	variety of public campaigns	variety of public campaigns
II) insider principle: collaboration with government	yes, implementing training scheme within 'New Deal for Lone Parents'	yes, discussing implications of future family policy legislation
III) informality	yes, at local + regional level	yes, at local level
III) equality among members	institutionalised in constitution	institutionalised in constitution
III) common concern	improve lone parents' + their children's life	improve lone parents' + their children's life
III) self-help to enable mutual aid	guiding principle	guiding principle

In conclusion, it can be said that both organisations meet the criteria for voluntary or non-profit organisations, although they rely on external funding in order to provide their services – as many other non-profit organisations do. However, their role as voluntary welfare providers of benefit to the public is formally recognised by the law, thus granting them charitable status. In the case of VAMV this is even codified in its membership in '*Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband*', one of six voluntary welfare associations in Germany. Both organisations employ outsider and insider strategies

the 1990s whereas demand for public spending increased following unification with East Berlin. In the wake of these political events subsidies that were traditionally granted to many social projects were cut.

typical of interest groups. Their basic organisational entities are formed by local self-help groups, aimed at helping lone parents to support themselves, their children and others, to regain control over their lives. In other words, lone parent organisations combine all three aspects within their organisational life.

7.3. Lone parent organisations as support providers

The objective of the following section is to analyse the work of lone parent organisations as support providers as seen from the perspective of their members. First, we will look at the recruitment process. Do lone mothers plan to join lone parent organisations or is their membership a result of informal contacts, such as knowing a group member? The second part focuses on the contribution of lone parent organisations as support providers to the well-being of lone mothers. Finally, we turn to the question why some participate in the organisations' life more actively and invest more time and effort than the average member.

Coincidence or strategy – how do lone mothers join lone parent organisations?

At this point it shall be investigated how interviewees got in touch with lone parent organisations. Two avenues are possible. First, they look intently for help and a community of like-minded individuals. Secondly, their contact is the result of certain opportunity structures. That means, they either knew someone who has been in touch with that organisation or were referred by institutional supporters. Table 7.3 below shows how interviewees learned about the organisations. The presented contact modes were responses to the question 'How did you get in touch with Gingerbread / VAMV?' Multiple responses were permitted which often reflected a sequence of getting in contact with the organisation. The table contains first mentioned responses to that questions.

Table 7.3: First contact with lone parent organisations (in per cent of each sample)

How did you get in touch with VAMV / Gingerbread?	London	Berlin
self investigation (telephone directories, local libraries, etc.)	13	15
publicity efforts of lone parent organisations (telephone hotlines, booklets, posters, etc.)	25	24
TV or newspaper, magazine reports	11	15
someone mentioned existence of these organisations	11	11
knew organisation member	22	17
learned about it at work	7	7
sent by doctor, counsellor, health visitor, voluntary organisation	11	11

Source: own data, n = 116

There were respondents who made the deliberate decision to get in touch with lone parent organisations, 14 per cent in both cities. These individuals were aware that these organisations existed before they became lone mothers. When they became lone parents, they looked up telephone directories or searched a local library to find out contact details. A quarter of all the respondents learned of the existence through publicity efforts by these organisations. Recruitment of new members is among the top priorities of any voluntary organisation. Gingerbread and VAMV have been undertaking a great deal of publicity work to attract new members – which was obviously successful. Gingerbread's national telephone hotline proved very efficient in bringing lone parents into touch with the organisation. In Berlin, many interviewees got VAMV's annually published booklet 'Being a lone parent – advice and information' at the *Sozialamt* and local authorities. An indirect outcome of VAMV's publicity work were women who just happened to come across adverts with contact details while reading the newspapers or watching TV.

Another route that got many lone mothers in touch with lone parent organisations was knowing somebody who was a member already. More than a fifth in London (22 per cent) and a sixth in Berlin (17 per cent) accompanied a friend to a group meeting or went there because it was recommended by a friend or acquaintance. Another tenth learned about it when someone happened to mention it. Other sources of information included notices at work or colleagues who knew about it as well as other voluntary organisations (other lone parent organisations, Citizens Advice Bureau, etc.). Finally, a number of lone mothers were referred to Gingerbread and VAMV by a doctor, counsellor, or health visitor.

Summarising it can be said that there is no dominant pathway leading to contact with lone parent organisations. Publicity efforts of lone parent organisations and personal contacts to group members were the most common used routes to contact these organisations. However, self-investigation and referral by institutional supporters were important as well.

Lone parent organisations as support providers

Lone parent organisations claim to be cornerstones of support networks of those lone parents. First of all, they provide some sort of institutionalised 'first aid' i.e. they are often the first source lone parents turn to for advice on how to re-organise their life, and more specifically, to get advice on legal and benefits issues. This kind of support is

provided by the national and regional offices of Gingerbread and VAMV. Most of the interest group activities are co-ordinated there. At the local level, lone parents can get practical advice as well. Furthermore, they are given a chance to meet other lone parents. Company of like-minded people soon becomes the starting point of self-help and mutual support and new informal support networks emerge. Table 7.4 on page 137 summarises services lone parent organisations offer at national/regional and local level.

Throughout this research informal and formal support were differentiated. As can be seen in table 7.4. lone parent organisations provide both informal and formal services. All activities at the national and regional level eventually serve the purpose to improve the circumstances of lone parents and their children. Thus, they are major formal support providers for lone parents. But many do not perceive this formal support as help. In contrast, almost all appreciate formal services provided at local level (practical and legal advice and guided therapy groups). Informal support is exclusively provided at the local level. This includes the exchange of experiences and mutual support among group members, a community of like-minded people, socialising, joint activities with their children, etc.

Table 7.4: Services of lone parent organisations at national/regional and local level

Services at national/regional level	Services at local level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaigning for the interests of lone parents; legal test cases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community of like-minded people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talks, negotiations with government representatives to influence family policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • socialising, family substitute (with childcare and in safety)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-help and mutual support – exchange of experiences, information, and emotional support ; empowerment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practical advice (housing, social benefits, legal issues, childcare, employment, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practical advice • (indirectly) creation of new social networks, informal support networks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seminars, workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • professionally guided, thematic therapy groups (VAMV)

Source: own data, expert interviews

Two thirds of Gingerbread members and three quarters of VAMV members were in touch with these organisations at least once every fortnight, about 40 per cent of Gingerbread members and nearly two thirds of VAMV members once a week. This does not, however, indicate that lone mothers in Berlin are more interested in group activities. It merely results from the different organisational setup. Gingerbread is a loose

association of local groups that have their own committees and different procedures. Many of them meet on a weekly basis, others once every fortnight or even once a month. The setup in Berlin is completely different. What attracted most lone mothers were the professionally guided therapy groups that meet on a weekly basis.

The overwhelming majority of interviewees (78 per cent in London and 81 per cent in Berlin) regarded lone parent organisations as ‘very important’ or ‘important’. This is no surprise since there was no reason for them to be members of these organisations otherwise. Those who did not consider them so important did not rely on them for support because they had alternative support sources, mainly large and/or intensive friendship networks. Very few interviewees were unhappy because the advice given did not meet their expectations or because of the travel costs to get to the nearest local group.

However, the question is what makes them so valuable for lone parents? The majority of lone mothers regard support provided by lone parent organisations important because it helps them to meet other lone parents with whom they can exchange support.

Dona (London): “Because we are not alone – even if we have different circumstances, regarding ex-partners and regarding children, we are more or less one people as a group, and we can give a lot of support to each other. And I think, it’s helpful and we can do a lot of things together.”

Every respondent joined the organisation initially in order to get help. But soon enough they realised that they were indeed capable of helping others (to listen, to give advice, to look after others’ children, etc.). In other words, this exchange process initially started with a time lag when the new member was at the receiving end of the process and old group members were at the giving end. Surprisingly, this was hardly ever seen as a problem, not so much because everyone was expecting the new member to reciprocate later but because they felt they were reciprocating for help they initially received when they joined the group.

Table 7.5 gives an overview of all support forms mentioned by more than three respondents in either London or Berlin. The company of people in the same situation, the feeling of mutual understanding, compassion and emotional support as well as the chance to escape social isolation were seen as the most important support provided by lone parent organisations. Altogether 21 different support avenues were identified by interviewees, with different ones featuring particularly popular in London and Berlin.

Table 7.5: Selected support forms provided by lone parent organisation

Which kind of support by VAMV / Gingerbread was important for you?	London (per cent)	Berlin (per cent)
emotional support	8	20
to meet other lone parents	7	14
socialising	18	5
make new friends	7	4
community, family substitute	6	4
gives more confidence	6	2
good for the children to mix with others	16	2
professionally assisted groups	-	18
legal and other advice	3	9

Source: interviews with lone mothers; n = 116

First, the results showed that there is no single support form appreciated by a majority of lone mothers. Secondly, lone mothers in London and Berlin named different services as particularly important. The service most honoured by lone mothers in London was the opportunity to socialise with other lone parents. More than 18 per cent stated this as being the most important support through Gingerbread. To socialise means for many of them to get out of isolation. It was also seen as a precondition for rebuilding confidence. Most of the Gingerbread local groups in Greater London resemble social clubs for lone parents. A few of the bigger groups have programs that go beyond that. But socialising is definitely a core activity in all groups.

Ally (London): *“Gingerbread tries to get the adults out there, you know, socialising and going out to places where you can meet new people. Just, you have that time to yourself. The second thing is that we go out like one big family, like children’s outings and things like that. If you go out with lot’s of friends and their children – it’s quite a good day: you’ve got company, you know that she’s having fun whereas you can talk to your friends as well. That’s another reason why I joined Gingerbread.”*

Ginger (London): *“It also means that we get a lot of outings either at no cost for us or very little cost which means, the children can go out a lot more. The children will go to the cinema, to the zoo, there are a lot more things. Also, you have other adults to talk to and the children have someone to play with. They hire coaches and we’ve gone to places for a day on a coach. You couldn’t go there on your own because you had to go by public transport or because it cost too much.”*

Both quotes illustrate the importance of socialising for lone mothers who do not often get the chance to do so. Socialising was extremely important to them because it interrupted their everyday routines. The group enabled them to join activities which they would not do otherwise. Some of these activities did not cost a lot of money (e.g.

picnics, barbecues) and others were only affordable for them in a group (e.g. outings to Legoland, zoo, day trips). All of these activities let them forget their concern that they could not be seen as a 'normal family' in public. Moreover, it gave their children the chance to have fun and to have new experiences.

It is remarkable that almost as many lone mothers in London stressed the importance of finding an opportunity for their children to mix with other children, especially with children of other lone parents (16 per cent of all respondents). The explanation given by many of them was that it was important for their children to see that they were not the only ones in the world whose daddy was not living with them. Many interviewees expressed the concern that their children may be seen as abnormal or 'having a chip on their shoulders'.

Sandy (London): "Gingerbread is very important, especially for the children. It's through them that I originally joined because it makes them meet other children who are in the same situation. Because my daughter is feeling very isolated. She felt that she was the only child who wasn't with her daddy ... But she is a lot better now. She has changed. She knows that there are other children in the same situation."

This quote also indicates the high degree of stigmatisation lone mothers and their children experience in society (see chapter 3). Public stigmatisation reinforces the effect of poverty which can result in social exclusion of lone mothers and their children. Similar arguments were used by few interviewees in Berlin. This does not mean, however, that German lone mothers never experience feelings of inferiority or being stigmatised in society. Many stressed that the community of like-minded people they experienced in lone parent organisations enabled them to gain more confidence which helped them to master their lives. The above quote also hints at the degree of trauma children suffer through partnership breakdowns.

The most prevalent motive in Berlin to join a lone parent organisation – which was also frequently mentioned in London – was the need to meet other lone parents. It was important for these women to get in touch with people in a similar situation as themselves. It helped them to see that there are many more lone mothers, and that it can happen to everyone. Most of them did not know any lone parents before. Here, they met sympathetic people who did not fit popular stereotypes about lone mothers. Closely related to this was the desire to talk, to listen, to be taken care of, to feel understood, to get and give comfort and advice, and to learn coping strategies to deal with their situation. The following two quotes are typical examples.

Martina (Berlin): *"I came here already when I didn't even have a proper belly. Since then it has helped me to be among people who are in a similar position. The model – they were having a good time and gave me the feeling: 'You can also make it!' And I haven't felt being a minority anymore – I have developed some sort of pride. Because they all are women who do not climb down but have both feet firmly on the ground."*

Tana (Berlin): *"The group is a little bit like a family – where you can leave your worries, where you learn that others have similar problems and worries, and where people listen – you can also learn a lot by doing so. It is simply a great psychological support."*

Lone mothers in Berlin were particularly impressed by the professional guidance they experienced in the therapy groups at VAMV. More than 18 per cent explicitly mentioned these groups as an important service provided by VAMV, many of them rated it as the most important. These therapy groups were unique – I am not aware of any similar program that is available in other voluntary organisations in this domain. The only alternative providers are formal supporters, such as health services and some local authorities. Karina describes why these groups are important for her:

Karina (Berlin): *"VAMV has had a respectable reputation. But most important is to me that here are professionals and that the groups are professionally guided. I'm not so sure with others [other lone parent groups]. Just to sit together because women are lone parents – that is not the right way for me. The right way is a guided group."*

Although the organisations stress the availability of their practical and legal advice, these services were not emphasised by the interviewed lone mothers. It seems likely that they would have agreed on their importance if explicitly asked for it. However, it is interesting to note that they did not mention it when asked for the support lone parent organisations provided for them from their perspective. A final support form provided by lone parent organisations that we will discuss here is the opportunity to make new friends. Six respondents emphasised explicitly that they created new social networks as an outcome of contact to lone parent organisations. Thus, they replaced or supplemented the loss of former friends in the wake of partnership breakdown, birth, and motherhood. In their case this was the result of specific efforts to overcome their isolation, and not an unintended side-effect of meeting other lone parents.

Recapitulating it is striking that there is no single service that is regarded most important by a majority of the interviewed lone mothers. Services mentioned by lone mothers were very much alike and merely differed in their emphasis of a particular

support aspect. Although different aspects were emphasised (socialising in London, emotional support in Berlin) the community of like-minded people affected by similar circumstances was equally important for lone mothers in both samples.

Active vs. passive participation – who are the group leaders?

A problem all voluntary organisations face is to find individuals who are prepared to invest a considerable amount of their spare time and effort into the organisation. Lone parent organisations as well need volunteers who are willing to run their local groups as committee members i.e. who organise a venue for group meetings, produce leaflets, posters, and invitations, raise funds, and are prepared to act as first contact for newcomers by providing their private telephone number. Although they face the same restrictions on their time as every other lone parent they nevertheless volunteered to do this work. The question is, why did they do it?

Twelve women in London (i.e. 21 per cent of all interviewees in London) stated that they were members of their Gingerbread local group's committee or have played an active part in setting up the group initially. Seven women (12 per cent) in Berlin played an active part in co-ordinating VAMV's work, self-help group moderators, or by running the VAMV Cafe – a social club which meets on Sunday afternoons. Many of them were my initial contacts in the process of gaining access to local groups. Virtually everyone of them took part in an interview, provided their youngest child was in pre-school age. As a consequence, their relative proportion in the sample is unusually high.

I will begin with looking at the self reported motives for becoming active members. Klages (1998) distinguishes two motive groups for voluntary involvement: traditional virtues (to help others or to contribute to the common good) and self-realisation motives (to have fun, to improve skills and knowledge, to get to know interesting people). Similarly, Verba et al. (1995) specified four motive dimensions: material benefits, social gratifications, civic gratifications, and finally collective outcomes (e.g. the chance to influence government policies).

All motive groups were prevalent among group leaders, none of them dominated. A motive mentioned several times in London was that there was no local group nearby and, therefore, these lone mothers decided to set one up themselves – which involved a combination of motives previously referred to. A material motive was to get access to group activities, especially outings and day trips. Three respondents in Berlin and one woman in London perceived this work as an opportunity to further their career. Social

gratifications reported almost all group leaders. These social gratifications cannot be enjoyed apart from the activity. Many enjoyed the work. Others regarded lone parent organisations as communities where they meet friends. Nearly all group leaders indicated civic gratifications. They perceived their work as their contribution to the common good of all lone parents. Group leaders shared some ideals, some common sense of solidarity as lone parents. They wanted to pass on their experiences and help other lone parents. Finally, a few wanted to change society in a way that would make it a more favourable one for lone parents.

Francesca (London): *“I think, it is necessary that there should be a group of people who get together to ensure that this service is still there for those people who are finding themselves in a situation where they need our help and support. That is the main reason why I am involved with it!”*

In which ways are group leaders different from ‘ordinary’ members of lone parent organisations? A number of demographic variables were considered to identify differences. One effect was duration of lone motherhood. Group leaders had been lone parents for a significantly longer period than others at the time of the interview. Moreover, their youngest child was older than those of other group members. Another important prerequisite for voluntary involvement is spare time. Therefore, it was expected that non-employed women were over-represented among group leaders. This was, however, not the case. Age of the lone mother, number of children, and receipt of Income Support had no effect.

However, it was striking that all committee members had achieved relatively high level of education. School education had a powerful, statistically significant effect on group leadership. Three quarters of group leaders in both samples had A-levels, compared with half of the group members – which is, nevertheless, extremely high compared to national average of lone mothers (see chapter 6). This result was even more pronounced in Berlin where *all* group leaders had A-levels. This result confirms the well-established effect of education on voluntarism and political participation. This association can be explained through decreasing participation costs: well-educated individuals have developed particular skills in school, at work, and in organisations that enable them to take the lead in lone parent organisations as well. That means it is easier for them to make presentations, write letters, or to co-ordinate activities (Verba et al. 1995).

These skills also include the ability to team up with other people in an attempt to find a new group. Contrary to VAMV with its rather rigid organisational structure at the local/regional level, the emergence of Gingerbread groups is the direct result of individual effort. A few of these more active lone mothers actually set up their own lone parent groups. Some started off on their own, others got together with a friend or a few friends to set up the group.

Zoe (London): "A friend of mine, Dona, thought we are gonna to join a group and then there wasn't any one near. So, we actually started this one. ... We phoned the head office and they said there wasn't one near. And they told us the procedure of how to get a new group started."

The head office of Gingerbread generally encourages lone parents to set up new groups and offers advice in this process. However, their support is limited to advice, information and encouragement. They may also help to establish useful contacts. But their involvement does not go beyond these 'logistics'. What is seen by quite a few of their local members as lack of support is in the end a consequent interpretation of Gingerbread's role as self-help organisation – members are supposed to help themselves which includes finding a suitable venue and funding. In reality, however, that means that it often is the responsibility of a single person – the group founder – to organise everything all by herself. If the process of setting up a group takes a long time and she does not find the support of others, the group's life may fade away before it even started.

Silvana (London): "I found that there was a Gingerbread group in Lewisham. but I couldn't find out where it was and at what time. So, I contacted the National Office to find out if the group was still going. They told me it wasn't. Would I like to set one up? ... I set this up! I've managed to bring it to flourish. So I have quite a sense of achievement for me. And keeping it going gives me something to do – that's constructive, that will help me in gaining, you know, decent employment. So, I need as much from the group as I'm giving to it. ... How did the National Office help you? [furiously] They don't really get involved! It's ... each group is autonomous and is setting itself up. They give you information regarding Gingerbread's ethos and ideas as to how other people have set up their groups. I went looking for a site, then I went looking for people and in the meantime I was looking for money. And for our group that what I did worked. ... But, you know, it has taken time because we had people who let us down. And it's been very difficult. But there are two other members who are active. The three of us have really supported each other on various ways. We sort of kick each other in the backside. We know that we are going to do this. Having had that has really helped because it's kept the determination going as well as the enthusiasm."

This quote illustrates the many difficulties group founders encounter during the process of setting up a group. When I interviewed Silvana in the summer of 1998 she had just

completed the initial group founding phase. But when I returned in late November to interview other members of her group she was extremely unmotivated. She did not manage to find more people willing to contribute, apart from the initial two supporters she mentioned above. Which leads us to another, crucial question – that of group survival. What is required to guarantee a local group's long-term success?

It is a trait of lone parenthood that these groups are only important for lone mothers in a transitional period. Many lone mothers find new partners or do not need group support anymore once they have completed their re-orientation phase. Therefore, it is essential for these groups to continuously attract new members. But at the same time some degree of stability in the form of a few old members is necessary for the group's survival. This reliance on a very few or even one person is the vulnerable characteristic of lone parent organisations' local work. Group leaders – especially when they are on their own – are not only important for establishing the group. It is also their enthusiasm and their hard work that keeps the group alive. Some felt that other group members did not appreciate their efforts sufficiently. One interviewee even ended up paying off debts of £ 3,000 she paid out of her own pocket.

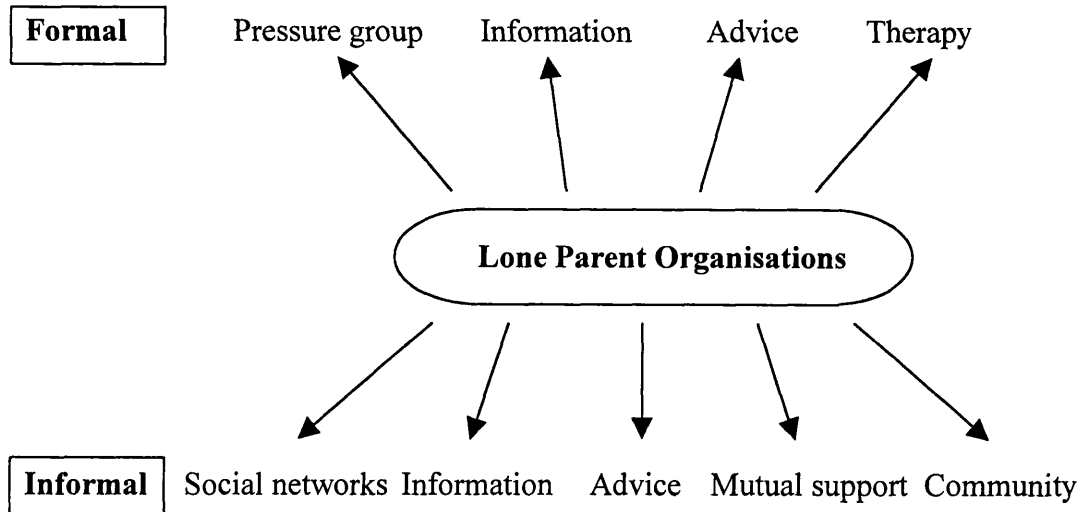
The emphasis on individual responsibility and independence in setting up and running a local group thus becomes a structural deficiency that endangers the very existence of the local organisation. It works best when several people who often become close friends after a while get together and share the workload. If, however, the group is very much dependent on the input of a single person, it becomes fragile and unstable. The group leader finds herself trapped between her ambitions to run the group successfully, commitments arising out of the work, and the difficulties of life as a lone parent. If the group leader does not get any support – both from other group members and the national organisation – she will get to a point where she cannot, or will not, do the work anymore. The group then ceases to exist. It could be very interesting for further research to analyse conditions of group success and group failure.

7.4. The role of voluntary organisations as welfare providers

In this chapter we have seen how similar two prominent lone parent organisations are, despite different national and welfare state contexts. The mere fact that Gingerbread and VAMV are nationally recognised *organisations* and not inter-personal networks formed on the basis of long-term personal commitments suggests a higher degree of formality and places them in-between informal support networks on one hand and formal support sources on the other. VAMV and Gingerbread have been in existence for more than 30 years. Over the years they have become well-established advocates of lone parent interests. Their public reputation signals competence and trustworthiness. Lone parents know that their services are made by lone parents for lone parents. Advice they get here is tailor-made to meet their needs.

Although lone parent organisations are formal organisations they act as both formal (e.g. therapy groups) and informal (e.g. mutual aid among lone parents) support providers. The lone parent organisational role as a support provider is twofold. First, they act as political pressure groups on the national and regional level. They inform and advise their members on a variety of topics related to lone parenthood. The organisations offer specific services that are not available elsewhere or at least difficult to get access to. All these services are in the form of formal support. At the same time, lone parent organisations offer the opportunity to meet other lone parents and to experience a community. Mutual support is intended to be an outcome of group membership which results in the creation of new informal support networks that extend beyond group life. Thus, they facilitate an exchange process that would not happen otherwise. In their role as self-help groups these organisations rely on voluntary input of their members. Figure 7.1 below summarises the most important formal and informal services of lone parent organisations without explicitly considering interactions among them.

Figure 7.1: Lone parent organisations between informal and formal support



These two levels of support provision of lone parent organisations contribute considerably to lone mothers' well-being. This includes improvements of their status in society and their children's legal position as a consequence of divorce and custody legislation as well as social policy reforms. Lone parent organisations are hybrids that provide both informal and formal support. In chapter 8 the focus will be exclusively on the more traditional sources of informal support – family and friends – while the subsequent chapter 9 focuses on formal support mobilisation.

CHAPTER 8

INFORMAL SUPPORT MOBILISATION BY LONE MOTHERS

In chapters 8 and 9 the main findings of this research are summarised. The purpose of chapter 8 is to analyse how and to what extent lone mothers mobilise informal support. Informal support as outcome of interpersonal relations is crucial for coping with everyday life as a lone parent and crises alike. Aspects of informal support considered here include extent and types of provided support, support sources, and satisfaction with support provision. Concluding, the results of this chapter are condensed into a typology of informal support mobilisation.

8.1. The operationalisation of informal support

First, it is necessary to explain how informal support was measured. Methodological aspects of the measurement of informal support and the construction of the research instrument were discussed in chapter 5. Four crisis scenarios were introduced there, each of them measuring one particular support type. They are typical of lone mothers' lives and common in their occurrence. All crisis events had in common that they occurred suddenly and unexpectedly - and that help was urgently needed. Only support that *was* actually provided, that *was* indeed available, was the object of analysis. All interviewees had experienced at least one of these crisis events and, thus, could respond to the scenarios. Two thirds of all interviewees in London and slightly more than half in Berlin responded to all four scenarios. Table 8.1 below gives an overview of the occurrence of the selected crisis events in both samples.

Table 8.1: Occurrence of selected crisis events in London and Berlin (number of cases)

	London	Berlin
one crisis event	1	1
two crisis events	6	8
three crisis events	13	19
all four crisis events	38	30
	n = 58	n = 58

Source: own data, n = 116

Next, the frequency of occurrence of these crisis events is presented, looking at each support type separately (see table 8.2 below). Percentages within each column refer to the total number of interviewees in each sample who responded to that particular crisis event.

Table 8.2: Occurrence of crisis events in London and Berlin (in per cent)

	I.) Personal support - childcare when child/mother ill		II.) Material support - second hand clothing		III.) Financial support - money for repair		IV.) Emotional support - everything too much	
	London	Berlin	London	Berlin	London	Berlin	London	Berlin
never	12	19	21	13	24	37	4	4
once	19	31	10	3	48	42	4	5
few times	60	38	36	63	23	21	38	54
frequent	9	12	33	21	5	0	54	37
n	n = 58	n = 58	n = 58	n = 58	n = 57	n = 57	n = 58	n = 58

Source: own data, n = 116

Lone mothers in London appear to be more affected by health problems of either child or mother – two thirds compared to half of the Berlin mothers reported that this happened at least a few times before. If we look exclusively at those who *frequently* experienced health problems more lone mothers in Berlin were affected (12 per cent compared to nine per cent in London). Only a minority of 12 per cent in London and a fifth in Berlin had not experienced illness of either child or mother before. Illness of the child as an unexpected obstacle to employment or an important appointment was not seen as problematic by *all* interviewees though. Some pointed out that their own illness was a far more serious crisis event than illness of their child:

Sophie (London): *"If she gets ill I'm very careful not to catch it because when I catch it I can't look after her. ... And obviously, the problem is that if either your child or you are ill, no-one else is going to see you because they don't want their child to catch it!"*

The need to get second hand clothes was seen as less straightforward. Not everybody used second hand clothes. Quite a few lone mothers could either afford to buy new clothes or bought them as a matter of principle. A sixth in London and a fifth in Berlin ruled out informal second hand mobilisation straight away. In a significant number of cases clothes for children were purchased by relatives, thereby providing a hidden form of financial support that seemed to be more acceptable to both the lone mother and her

supporters. Contrary to Kempson and colleagues (1994) and Middleton and colleagues (1994) sudden emergency purchases of winter shoes, winter clothes, etc. turned out to be the exception rather than the rule. Many interviewees reported that they had developed strategies to anticipate such shortages and to avoid their occurrence well in advance. Three quarters of both samples were in a situation before when they needed to get second hand clothes. The main difference between both samples was in the urgency clothing was needed. Whereas nearly half of the interviewees in London declared that they needed new clothes very suddenly the same proportion in Berlin proclaimed that the need was there but it did not arise suddenly.

Provision of financial support occurred least frequently. Although as many as three quarters in London and two thirds in Berlin reported asking for financial support to pay for the repair of a washing machine, fridge, or car before, most did so only once. Taking into account the relatively less frequent overall occurrence it is nevertheless striking that financial crises happened slightly more frequently to lone mothers in London. Emotional distress was only too familiar to almost every interviewee (97 per cent in both samples). Especially when several 'minor catastrophes' occurred at the same time the resulting pressure quickly became too much. Of course, this does not specifically apply to lone mothers only. Every parent may find herself/himself in a similar situation from time to time. It is, however, noteworthy that more than half of the London lone mothers indicated suffering emotional stress frequently whereas only slightly more than a third in Berlin stated being emotionally distressed that often.

The frequency of the occurrence of these crisis events suggest that they are appropriate tools to measure informal support mobilisation. Measurement of informal support throughout this chapter is based exclusively on the four selected crisis events. Of course, other approaches to measuring informal support are possible which might perhaps come to different conclusions. Furthermore, the selection criterion to consider lone mothers with children in pre-school age only results in specific support mobilisation mechanisms. Mothers of older children have different needs that have to be covered by different means of informal support. In the following section we will analyse the extent of informal support mobilisation before we look at the supporters of lone mothers in more detail.

8.2. The extent of informal support mobilisation by lone mothers

Size of lone mothers' informal support networks

Existing studies provided evidence of changing structural features of lone parents' social networks following separation/divorce. Their results are, however, contradictory. Some researchers proposed decreasing network sizes (Napp-Peters 1985; Neubauer 1988; Marbach 1989), others concluded that lone parents' networks increase in size after a transition period (Dieckmann et. al. 1986; Gutschmidt 1986; Heiliger 1991; Nave-Herz/Krüger 1992). The most recent German studies by Niepel (1994b) and Nestmann/Stiehler (1998) identified an average network size of eight people, ranging from a minimum of two to a maximum of 15 members. 80 per cent had networks containing more than five members - which is relatively large, compared to married mothers.

How do data from this study compare with this evidence? There are a number of ways to approach this question. The first option is to look at the number of people who have the potential to help lone mothers. A *potential* supporter is someone who (1) has the capacity to help others, and (2) is likely to help the person in question due to a special commitment resulting from a particularly close relationship. Such relations have to have a certain degree of stability in order to be reliable sources of support in times of need. Thus, coincidental or ad-hoc support sources are not included in lone mothers' *potential* support networks. Potential supporters are defined as individuals with whom lone mothers maintain close and/or stable relations, such as their own parents, brothers and sisters, friends, and sometimes the children's fathers. Table 8.3 below gives an idea of the extent of these potential support networks.

Table 8.3: Total number of lone mothers' *potential* supporters in London and Berlin (%)

Total number of <i>potential</i> supporters	London	Berlin
2 to 5	9	17
6 to 9	39	53
10 to 12	24	19
more than 12	28	11
Mean	11.3	8.6

Source: own data, n = 116

Lone mothers' potential support networks in London and Berlin differ significantly in terms of their size. Irrespective of the quality or intensity of support professed, lone

mothers in London have recourse to considerably larger potential support networks (11 potential supporters vs. nine in Berlin). More than two thirds of the interviewed women in Berlin had a potential support network of small or merely modest size (fewer than ten potential supporters), whereas more than half of their counterparts in London indicated having more than ten potential supporters. Two main factors contribute to this outcome: (1) British women tend to have more siblings than German ones (see chapter 6). (2) The interviewed lone mothers from London indicated having more friends than their counterparts in Berlin.

Another way of grasping the size of informal support networks is to look at the total number of individuals who *actually* provided informal support in case of one or more support incidents. Table 8.4 below gives an overview of the total number of lone mothers' *actual* supporters including all support incidents.

Table 8.4: Total number of lone mothers' *actual* supporters in London and Berlin (%)

Total number of <i>actual</i> supporters	London	Berlin
up to 3	36	29
4 to 5	28	26
6 to 9	33	43
10 to 12	3	2
Mean	4.6	4.9

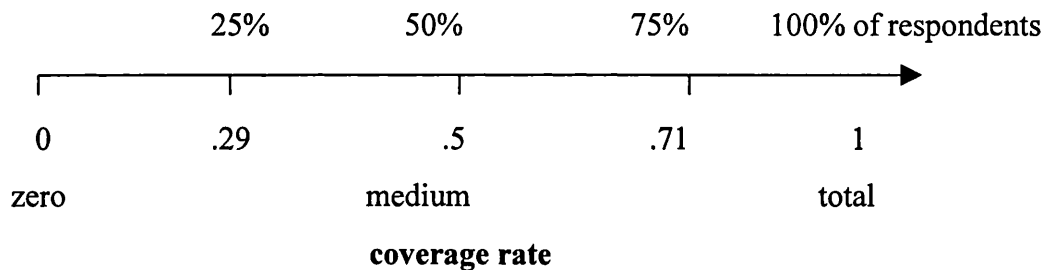
Source: own data, n = 116

Contrary to potential support networks, actual support networks in London and Berlin hardly differ in regard to their size. The average number of supporters was five in both cases. However, slight differences become visible when we consider the different distributive patterns across each sub-sample. The median scores were five in Berlin and four in London, i.e. whereas half of the interviewees in Berlin had up to five supporters the same proportion in London had only four.

How are these results to be interpreted? Potential and actual support networks of lone mothers differ considerably in their size. Generally speaking, there are more potential supporters than people who actually help out when support is needed. Although lone mothers in London reported larger potential support networks the extent of the actual support networks was similar in both cities. Neither in London nor in Berlin were the potential support capacities available to lone mothers fully exhausted, though varying in detail. A specific index - the support network coverage rate - was computed, thereby

setting actual support network size in relation to the potential support network size for each interviewee. Index values ranged from 0 to 1. A coverage rate of 1 means that every member of the potential support network did indeed provide support while a value of 0 means that none of the potential supporters provided any support. As figure 8.1 below outlines a quarter of all respondents had coverage rates of up to 0.29 i.e. only about every fourth network member provided support. Another quarter had coverage rates of 0.3 to 0.5 (every third to every second network member supported them). The third quartile included coverage rates between 0.5 and 0.71. Almost all network members were supporters in the fourth quartile.

Figure 8.1: Informal support network coverage rate (in quartiles)



Another descriptive measure of distributions is the arithmetic mean – whose value is .53 for the total sample. Looking at both sub-samples separately, the interviewees in Berlin had higher average coverage rates (mean = .61) than their contemporaries in London (mean = .46)⁴⁹. The German lone mothers were obviously more successful in exploiting their smaller support potential. Different coverage rates in both cities resulted in the same number of actual supporters. The question is why were lone mothers in London unable to recruit all of their potential supporters?

In order to get to the bottom of this problem it is helpful to look at actual network sizes again, this time considering each support incident separately. The following table 8.5 outlines the distributive patterns of the extent of actual support networks. The final line contains the arithmetic means of the number of supporters for each support type.

⁴⁹ The t-test for mean differences was .001 significant.

Table 8.5: Number of supporters per support incident in London and Berlin (in per cent)

No. supp.	(I) Personal support- childcare when child/mother ill		(II) Material support - second hand clothing		(III) Financial support - money for repair		(IV) Emotional support - everything too much	
	London	Berlin	London	Berlin	London	Berlin	London	Berlin
no	27	17	9	4	32	37	26	28
1	25	34	43	32	44	37	9	14
2	36	30	23	27	12	23	16	18
3	12	6	9	14	7	-	16	13
4 to 5	-	11	9	23	5	3	21	14
> 5	-	2	7	-	-	-	12	13
n	n = 52	n = 47	n = 44	n = 44	n = 43	n = 32	n = 57	n = 55
Mean	1.33	1.68	2.16	2.32	1.07	0.94	2.65	2.31

Source: own data, n = 116

As can be seen in the table above the average network sizes varied considerably across different support incidents. Generally speaking, the interviewees had most supporters in the emotional and material support scenarios. Financial support involved the smallest support networks with only one supporter on average. This is the lowest number of supporters across all four support incidents – more than a third had no supporter at all. In the other scenarios the size of lone mothers' informal support networks varied significantly. Lone mothers from Berlin had larger support networks in regard to personal support whereas those in London had more emotional supporters.

Why is the number of supporters so low? At this point it is important to keep in mind that exclusively factual data were collected that reflect how lone mothers did indeed solve a given crisis scenario in the past. This did not include: (1) Potential support that was offered but not used. (2) Lone mothers who decided to solve their problems on their own. (3) Those who turned to formal sources of support instead. Some lone mothers were not prepared to leave their children when they were ill. Particularly in London, many had internalised a norm that they ought to stay with their children (to be 'good mothers') - as the following example illustrates:

Diana (London): "If my children get sick I have to stay at home. I don't have family around me. I don't know, when my children are sick – that's where mummy should be. The children have to come first, that's what you are working towards. I think, my first priority is as a mother."

Finally, I was surprised to find that it was easier for many interviewees to mobilise material rather than emotional support. Based on Niepel's (1994b: 179-184) data one

could expect far more difficulties in finding practical support. But almost all respondents had at least one supporter in this category. Exchange of second-hand clothing does not presuppose close relationships.

The extent of lone mothers' informal support mobilisation

The previous section was concerned with getting an idea of the size of lone mothers' informal support networks. The object of this section is to get an estimate of the *amount* of support provided through these channels. The name interpreter (see chapter 4: 66) within each support type section was used to collect attributional data about individuals who provided support in each crisis event. It contained a question concerning the frequency of informal support provision in the past year. This referred to all forms of informal support ever provided - not just one particular support type. At the beginning, the total number of *support units* a interviewee received from her informal support network was calculated. Then this result was set in relation to the total number of actual informal supporters, thereby creating an index of the help provided per supporter. A precondition for this procedure was a transformation of ordinal responses, such as reported daily, weekly, or monthly support into a metric format⁵⁰.

Next, the total number of support units will be looked at. The term *support units* is a measure of the total number of supportive acts provided by members of lone mothers' informal support networks. It includes all supportive actions provided by the supporters mentioned in the scenarios. Additionally, other supportive actions by the same individuals, such as assistance with shopping, transport, information and advice, repair and maintenance work, etc. were considered as well. Of course, I am aware that this is only a crude measure of the amount of support provided throughout the year. To ask someone retrospectively for all supportive actions provided in the past year inevitably results in recall errors. A diary of supportive actions, for example, would produce more valid data but was not practicable within this research project. The following examples illustrate how the concept of support units was used.

Let us assume, it is Monday morning. Jane who is a lone mother discovers that her child got ill over night. She has to organise someone to look after the child very quickly because she needs to be at work in an hour's time. Fortunately, her mother

⁵⁰ Ordinal responses were transformed into annual format following the subsequent pattern: someone who provided support on a daily basis was ascribed the value 365, weekly support was ascribed the value 52, monthly support the value 12, annual support the value 1, any support provided less frequently than once a year was coded 0.

is available and will take care of her grandchild. When Jane returned from work at midday her mother had prepared lunch. The next day the child went to the nursery again. In the evening she called a close friend to talk about problems she had at work.

Heather's mother is a pensioner and looks after her daughter's child on a daily basis to enable Heather to go out for work. Heather works five days a week. Heather goes out with her friends on a Saturday night about once per month. Then, her ex-husband will look after the child.

In the first example, Jane gets three support units: two from her mother (childcare, cooking) and one from her friend (emotional support at the phone). In the second example, Heather receives 272 support units throughout the year: 260 from her mother (5 days per week, 52 weeks per year) and 12 from her ex-partner (1 night each month). The first example also exemplifies a problem of this scaling method: childcare and cooking are weighed in the same way although the former required several hours time and the latter perhaps half an hour. Nevertheless, this procedure was justified since it was not an aim of this research to give a detailed account of how much support a lone mother received within a given time period. Support units were introduced in order to get a unitary measure for different support types provided by different individuals which were not comparable otherwise. Tables 8.6 and 8.7 outline distributive patterns of informal support in both cities.

Table 8.6: Mean scores of the total number of support units

Mean scores	London	Berlin
Mean	386	328
Median	369	201
Minimum	4	3
Maximum	1149	1106
n	58	58

Source: own data, n = 116

As ascertained in table 8.6 lone mothers in London received significantly more support units than their coequals in Berlin. An arithmetic mean of 386 support units per year implies that every interviewee in London was supported at least daily throughout the year. Their counterparts in Berlin obtained almost 60 support units, i.e. 15 per cent less support. These are, of course, only average scores. The majority did not get informal support on a daily basis. Instead, they got several support units per day when help was desperately needed.

Based on these results the *informal support rate* was computed to find out how much informal support was provided by each supporter. The sum of the total number of support units per year was divided by the total number of informal supporters. Informal supporters in London provided clearly more support on average than their equivalents in Berlin. An arithmetic mean of 62 support units per informal supporter in Berlin means that an average supporter helped approximately on a weekly basis. Informal supporters in London helped significantly more often. An average supporter there provided 90 support units per year. Taking into account the distributive patterns within each sample huge variations become visible (see table 8.7 below).

Table 8.7: Support units and support rates compared

Quartiles	London		Berlin	
	Support units	Support rates	Support units	Support rates
First	74	20	34	4
Second	369	79	201	49
Third	597	142	551	111
Fourth	1149	274	1106	182

Source: own data, n = 116

It is striking that a quarter of the informal supporters in Berlin helped only up to four times a year (see the fifth column in table 8.7 above). In contrast, the lowest quarter in London received up to 20 support units from their supporters (column 3 in table 8.7). The fact that 25 per cent in Berlin received fewer than 35 support units per year (fourth column) does not necessarily mean that lone mothers in Berlin are deprived of informal support. They may not need more support.

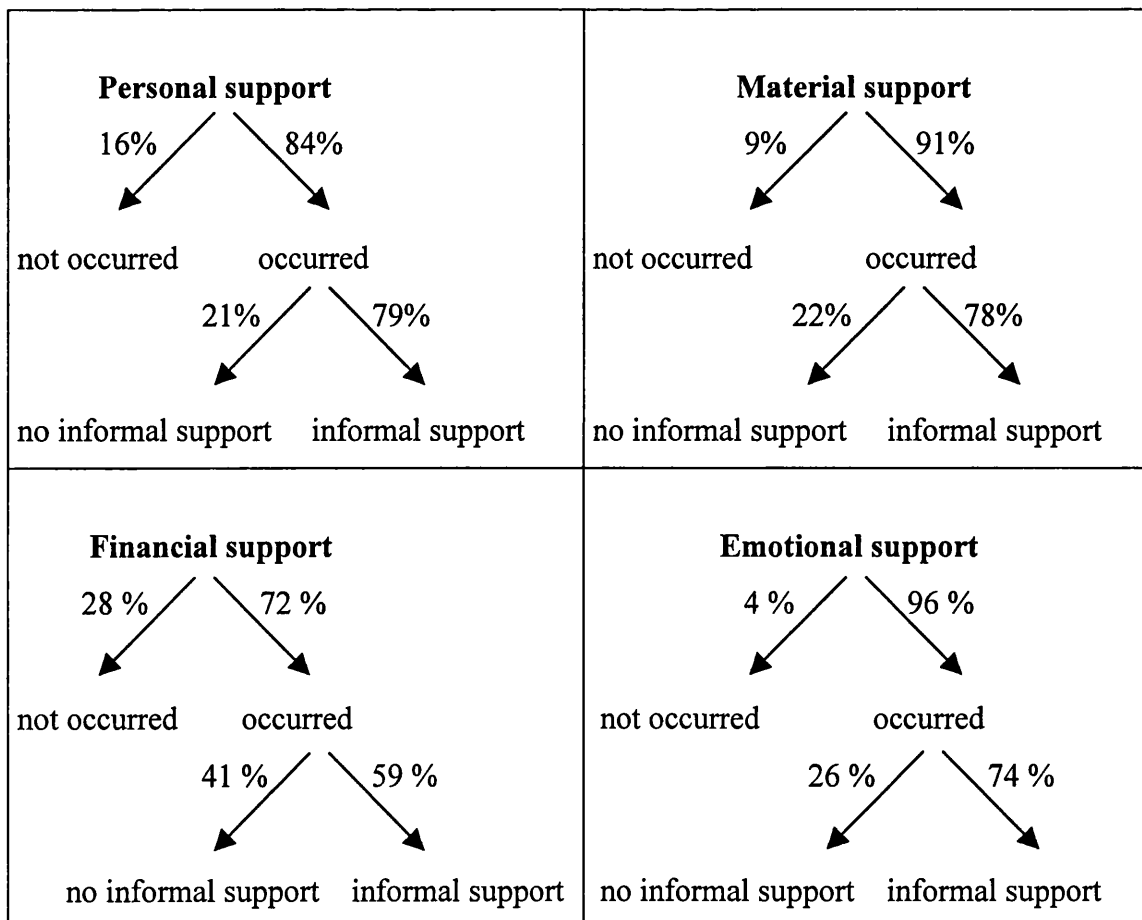
A question that still remains to be answered is whether lone mothers were able to mobilise all four support types. The four support types analysed (personal support, material, financial, emotional support) cover four separate dimensions of crucial needs of lone mothers. Every fifth interviewee was in the comfortable position of getting support in all four categories. Another quarter was able to mobilise support in three out of four types. Slightly more than 40 per cent reported to have obtained two support types. The remaining 14 per cent had to cope with one support type only – one person from London was unable to mobilise any informal support:

Joyce (London) needed support in all four scenarios – but did not get any informal support at all. Joyce has a hard full-time job as social worker for drug-addicted people and prostitutes. A year ago she set up a new Gingerbread group to mobilise local support for lone parents. She does not have any family living nearby. She

mentioned that she was let down by friends in the past when she asked them for help with emergency childcare. Since then, she does not ask them for help anymore. On the other hand, many people ask her regularly for support.

Not all respondents needed support in all four support dimensions. Some only needed help with childcare and emotional support, for example, while they had enough money to pay for clothes themselves and had not encountered a situation where they needed to borrow money for a major repair. If only those of the four support incidents that applied to a particular person are taken into account a more favourable but also more realistic picture emerges. Thus, nearly half of the interviewed lone mothers always got support when needed. More than a quarter indicated that they had to go without informal support in one scenario. 22 per cent managed to mobilise support in half of the support incidents. Every tenth respondent reported that she got help in one out of three or one out of four scenarios only. Next, each support type will be looked at separately. Figure 8.2 below summarises frequency of the occurrence and the degrees of successful informal support mobilisation in all four scenarios.

Figure 8.2: Occurrence of informal support provision in all four scenarios (in per cent)



In the first crisis event 16 per cent did not encounter a situation where they suddenly needed childcare. Of the remaining 84 per cent 79 per cent successfully mobilised informal support. The remaining 21 per cent had to solve the problem on their own. A similar pattern can be observed in case of material and emotional support. Surprisingly, the proportions of those who managed to mobilise informal support was roughly the same in all three scenarios. The only exception was financial support. A mere 60 per cent received financial help from informal sources. Another startling outcome was that more than a quarter were unable to secure emotional support using informal support sources. At first sight listening to someone's problems and giving comfort would seem to be supportive actions that everybody could provide. But obviously it was easier to organise emergency childcare than to find satisfactory emotional support.

Quality and intensity of relations to supporters

The object of the previous sections was the description of the extent of lone mothers' informal support networks. At the beginning, the extent was described in terms of a spatial dimension i.e. network size which was then followed by an elaboration of the amount of support provided. Next, I will look at the *quality* and *intensity* of support relations. Quality and intensity of relationships are likely to affect the amount of support that can be mobilised through informal channels. Relations that are more intense are more likely to provide large amounts of support whereas less intense relations - whether caused by lesser commitments or obstacles like long distances, lack of time, etc. - are unlikely to be the source of much support. Intense relationships also tend to be more reliable.

A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods were selected to measure quality and intensity of relations. The interviewees were asked to indicate how often they were in touch with their supporters. Hereby, personal contact and telephone contact were distinguished since not all support acts require a physical presence. Again, data were first transformed into metric format following the above described procedure. Table 8.8 on the next page summarises the results.

Naturally, lone mothers talk to their supporters more frequently than they meet them. What was surprising, however, is how frequently lone mothers were in touch with their informal supporters. The average lone mother talked to all of her supporters approximately three days per week and met them twice per week on average. This does not exactly match the image of the isolated lone mother. Nevertheless, it confirms

Niepel's (1994b) findings that 90 per cent of the lone mothers in her sample had daily contact with at least one member of their social network. What comes out quite clearly is that lone mothers in London are far more frequently in touch with their supporters than are their contemporaries in Berlin. The former talk to their supporters on the phone every second day on average while their West German counterparts do so only twice per week. The difference is even more pointed in regard to face-to-face contact – lone mothers in London met their supporters twice per week compared to slightly more than weekly in Berlin.

Table 8.8: Overall contact frequency between lone mothers and their supporters

Mean scores	London	Berlin
<i>How often do you usually talk to each other?</i>		
Mean	188	114
Median	182	93
Minimum	13	5
Maximum	365	365
<i>How often do you normally meet?</i>		
Mean	114	61
Median	101	51
Minimum	10	1
Maximum	365	208
n	57	58

Source: own data, n = 116

One reason for this is the fact that as many as half of the Berlin interviewees (compared to a fifth in London – see chapter 6) were not born there. A crucial consequence in terms of support mobilisation is the non-availability of lone mothers' parents – in particular their mothers – as primary supporters. As a matter of fact, interviewees who were born in Berlin communicated significantly more often with their supporters than those who were born in one of the West German federal states. The original 'Berliners' also met more frequently. Nevertheless, even when contact frequency is controlled for lone mothers' origin, lone mothers in London were still significantly more often in touch with their supporters than were lone mothers in Berlin.

It was assumed that frequent contact increases the chances of getting much support. There is indeed a highly significant correlation between contact frequency and the amount of support received ($r = .60^{**}$). Lone mothers who were frequently in contact with their supporters also tended to get the most support and vice versa. Frequency of contact, however, is only a very crude estimate of the intensity of social relations. It

does not say anything about the *quality* of these relations. To look at the quality of relations is important because it can have a significant impact on lone mothers' well-being. Relations to one's parents, for example, can be very close, thereby relieving a lone mother of a significant burden. But on the other hand, they can also be conflict-ridden. Different points of view about how to bring up children, for example, create additional stress - as the following example shows:

Susie (London): "They still treat me like I'm very young! It can be quite difficult because on the one hand they are helping me a lot – so it makes me feel ... bad about sticking up for myself saying: 'This is what I want to be done with Molly!' But on the other hand I still have to do that. And I can't clash with them because I think, they've been helping me. It's their right to tell me how to bring her up sometimes."

Such situations are extremely difficult for lone mothers who rely on their parents and/or friends for support. If they feel unable to cope with this additional stress, they may decide to minimise conflict-ridden contacts. As a consequence, they deprive themselves of potential support. Thus, individuals who have to rely on conflict-ridden relations are worse off than others. They either have to cope with additional stress on top of the problem they need support for or may decide to leave that problem unsolved when they feel unable to handle the additional stress.

Are there circumstances or particular settings that increase the likelihood of the occurrence of such conflict-ridden relations? In order to answer this question participants in the interviews were asked for the nature of their relationship to supporters. This is, of course, a very sensitive question which was approached very carefully. A qualitative question was seen as the appropriate tool and was supplemented with cautious probing. The following table 8.9 contains the percentages of supporters with whom lone mothers maintained overall positive, neutral, or negative relations. The relationship continuum ranged from very close relationships (mostly close friends or parents) to relationships characterised by open hostility (mostly former partners). Categorisation into positive, neutral, and negative relationships is based on the qualitative interpretation of the relationship description provided by the respondents. In cases where positive attributes dominated the variable was ascribed an overall positive score (examples for positive attributes were 'affectionate', 'intimate', 'loving', 'very close', etc.). When neutral or negative emotions predominated equivalent categories were used.

Table 8.9: Quality of supportive relations to supporters per support incident
(proportion of responses per item in per cent)

Relationship quality	Personal support	Material support	Financial support	Emotional support
Positive	76	70	75	95
Neutral	1	16	5	4
Negative	23	14	20	1

Source: own data, n = 116

This time, the four support types were looked at separately. First of all, it is striking that almost exclusively positive relationships were reported. Unsurprisingly, almost all women selected individuals who they maintained positive and close relations with as emotional supporters. Second-hand mobilisation does not require close contact. Loose contacts with acquaintances and work colleagues play an important role here. Therefore, particularly close relationships were neither required nor expected.

The most conflict-ridden support incidents were financial and personal support. To ask someone for financial support ideally presupposes a very close relationship. Whenever possible lone mothers approached their own parents for financial support. This decision was also influenced by feelings of shame about their inability to maintain their own livelihood. Nevertheless, the vast majority of interviewees reported that it was relatively easy to ask their parents or even close friends for financial support. However, financial support provided by parents or friends are not equivalent to that expected or demanded of ex-partners. Parents and friends were usually approached on an ad-hoc basis only. Divorced and separated mothers regarded their former husbands as the ones who ought to support them in the first instance. It is in the nature of such relations that they are particularly conflict-ridden and impose a significant amount of stress on lone mothers - as the following example illustrates:

Daisy (London): How would you describe your relationship to your ex-husband? *"Very, very acrimonious."* Do you talk to him at all? *"I try not to because it normally ends up with ... him being abusive, making accusations about me and the children – and it normally ends up in a row. So, if I have anything to deal with him, I try to be pragmatic. And I only ever deal with things either relating to finances or the house or the children. And I don't get into any other discussion with him anymore."*

In Berlin, the mobilisation of emergency childcare was particularly stressful. Again, the fact that half of the lone mothers there had no parents living locally had an impact. As a

consequence, more than a quarter indicated that they had to turn for help to people related to them through difficult, if not negative, relationships like their former partners.

It is important to keep in mind that the quality of relations to supporters and the quality of support are not the same. The object of this section was the examination of lone mothers' relations to their supporters. Relationship quality potentially influences extent and quality of support provision: very close relations can relieve lone mothers of much of the pressures of lone parenthood whereas conflict-ridden relations can impose additional hardships. The majority of respondents requested support from individuals with whom they maintained positive relations. However, approximately a quarter in regard to personal, material, and financial support were dependent on ambiguous relationships for support.

Factors influencing the provision of informal support

After the size of informal support networks, the amount of support provided, and the quality of support relations were examined this section is concluded by looking at factors that determine the extent of informal support provision. In the introductory section of this thesis several hypotheses were stated which proposed that the amount of mobilised informal support was dependent on a number of factors, including the availability of formal support alternatives in different welfare state regimes, network structural features, the effect of norms in guiding exchange behaviour, and certain demographic characteristics. The effects of these factors at the amount of informal support available to lone mothers will be determined using a multivariate regression model.

As stated in the demography hypothesis successful informal support mobilisation is likely to depend on certain demographic factors. The demographic model considered age of lone mothers, number of their children and age of the youngest child, and education. According to the welfare state hypothesis, the different welfare state systems in the UK and in Germany are likely to result in varying needs of informal support. A sample split indicator (London/Berlin) and receipt of Income Support/*Sozialhilfe* were included into the regression equation. They represent formal support mobilisation. Employment status was not included since people who do receive Income Support are in most cases not employed and vice versa. Thus, the dichotomous variable for Income Support/*Sozialhilfe* measures, in fact, both Income Support/*Sozialhilfe* receipt and employment. Furthermore, it was expected that network structural variables would have

a significant effect on informal support mobilisation. Geographical proximity, frequent contact to potential supporters, and the availability of network resources were assumed to predict high amounts of informal support and vice versa. Moreover, availability of spare time is a precondition of networking. A number of respondents indicated to spend most of their 'spare time' on housework. It was expected that these individuals received less informal support. Finally, two variables that guided individual mobilisation behaviour were considered – the general norm that friends should help each other and the self-assessment of lone mothers' capacity to ask for help. In the following table 8.10 the standardised regression coefficients (beta weights) with the extent of informal support as dependent variable are presented. The complete results can be found in table A 3 in the annex.

Table 8.10: Standardised regression coefficients of a multiple regression equation with the amount of informal support units per year as dependent variable

Variable list	Beta
Separation of parents in childhood	- .36 **
Age of lone mother (years)	.06
Number of children	- .32 *
Age youngest child (years)	.16
School education (years)	.11
London/Berlin indicator	- .001
Income Support/Sozialhilfe recipient	.13
How long in current flat? (years)	- .06
Travel time to own mother (min.)	- .50 **
Average travel time to brothers and sisters (min)	.24
Total number informal supporters	.22 *
Frequency of talking with friends (per year)	.29 **
Time spent on housework	- .27 *
Friends should help each other	.19 *
It is difficult to ask for help	- .13
Adjusted R ²	.41

Variable description: London/Berlin: London = 0, Berlin = 1; separation of parents during childhood: no = 0, yes = 1; current employment status: not employed = 0, employed = 1; current IS/SH recipient: no = 0, yes = 1; spare time spent on housework: no = 0, 1 = yes; friends should help: no = 0, yes = 1; it is difficult for me to ask for help: no = 0, yes = 1.

Significance levels: * = .05, ** = .01

The total regression model explains 41 per cent of the variance of informal support provided. It is striking that network structural variables had by far the most explanatory power in regard to the variance in informal support provision (adjusted R² = .17). Which variables had the strongest effects and, thus, are the best predictors of successful

informal support mobilisation? By far the strongest effect had a network variable – geographical distance to one’s mother (beta = $-.50$). The further away a lone mother’s mother lives the less support she provides. This underlines the extraordinary importance of mothers as primary supporters. It also points out the difficulties individuals face whose families live many hours away and, thus, cannot help out in emergencies immediately. A similar effect – though not as high – was the geographical distance to brothers and sisters. Brothers and sisters did not per se play an equally prominent role as primary supporters. But in cases where there was a close relationship they became major supporters⁵¹. A third network variable, contact frequency to friends contributed to the strong effect of network variables. This is also very plausible. The more frequently people were in touch with their friends the more support they received. Moreover, frequent contact is an indicator of a close relationship which is a precondition of stable and reliable support relations. Another network property that had a significant effect was the number of supporters – which confirms the findings of Niepel (1994b) and Nestmann/Stiehler (1998). The more supporters someone had the more support she got. Every additional supporter increased the amount of support by 32 support units (see second column of table A3 on page 242). The duration of residence in the same neighbourhood had no significant effect. In contrast, time available for networking had significant effects as well. The time commitment needed for employment and family care determines how much spare time remains to be invested in networking. Not much is left over for this purpose, if a considerable amount of spare time is spent on housework. The total regression model provided evidence of this correlation.

The demographic variable that had the strongest effect was the experience of divorce/separation of one’s parents or death of a parent during childhood. Kiernan (1997) and Kiernan/Hobcraft (1997) showed that the experience of one’s parents’ separation during childhood can have long-term effects until adulthood – although they have also demonstrated that they are by no means of simple linearity. The negative beta weight of $.36$ was the second strongest effect throughout the total model. In other words, women with this experience disposed of considerably less support. Only a few women in the sample lost a parent through death during childhood. Separation experience, however, was more prevalent and resulted in a noticeable decrease of contact

⁵¹ The respondent’s father was not considered because of the high multicollinearity to that of the mother.

and, hence, support. As expected, the number of children reduced informal support. Age of the youngest child had a positive (though not significant) effect, i.e. interviewees mobilised more support with the increasing age of their youngest child. Obviously, young children limit their mother's mobility and, thus, her ability to maintain social networks. Neither lone mothers' age nor education had significant effects.

Moreover, the effect of norms on the availability of informal support was tested. It was assumed that people who internalised norms of support get more support. Only one of the analysed norms was relevant for the problematic: those who agreed to a norm that friends should help each other had significantly more support than those who did not⁵². The self-assessment of respondents that it was hard for them to ask for help had the expected negative effect – which was not significant however.

Although I will not deal with the correlation between informal and formal support mobilisation at this stage (for more details see chapter 9), I would like to comment briefly on the effects of some formal background variables. Contrary to my expectations, lone mothers in London and Berlin disposed of the same amount of support when all other variables were held constant. Thus, it could be shown – at least for the data presented here – that the British and German welfare states had no significant effect on the availability of informal support. Obviously, the specific circumstances of lone mothers which are independent of national context determine the extent of informal support provision. Receipt of Income Support/Sozialhilfe had weak positive effects (not statistically significant). Altogether, the selected formal variables did not have an effect at the extent of informal support mobilisation.

These findings indicate that the extent of lone mothers' informal support mobilisation is predominately dependent on social network characteristics. Equally important is the result that it is largely independent of a particular welfare state type. Two explanations are likely: (1) The British and the German welfare state are alike to such an extent that their effects on informal support mobilisation by lone mothers are more or less the same. (2) Informal support mobilisation is largely independent of formal support provision i.e. needs covered by informal support cannot be covered by the formal sector anyway. This correlation will be discussed in more detail in chapter 9.

⁵² A similar norm that family members should support each other had no effect since only five individuals did not agree.

8.3. Who supports lone mothers?

Following the discussion of the extent of lone mothers' support networks and their contributions to lone mothers' well-being the focus will now be on the question of who the sources of informal support are. Which sources are likely to provide support?

Family vs. friends – who are the main supporters?

There has been much controversy whether families or friends are more important in providing support to lone mothers. There are different ways of answering this question. One way is to look at all supporters who provided support in a concrete crisis event. Another way is to focus on people who were identified as main supporters during the interview. Both procedures are conceptually different. The former approach has the advantage that it includes all individuals who ever provided any help in the previous year. This includes regular as well as one-off supporters. The latter method emphasises the importance of the person who provides the most support. If families and friends do indeed play such a crucial role as suggested in the literature they should dominate in the main supporter category.

First, attention is turned to all supporters. The situation differs considerably across support types (see table 8.11 on page 167). Lone mothers' original families (mother, father, brothers and sisters) account for nearly half of the personal support provided. Friends come in second place providing a quarter of emergency childcare. Other people, including ex-partners play only a minor role. Similarly, parents and brothers and sisters are the predominant sources of financial support. Nevertheless, friends are the only other significant source of financial support accounting for a fifth. Despite their maintenance obligations, ex-partners play a marginal role here as well. Looking at main supporters only (see table 8.12 on page 167), mothers' extraordinary importance in providing emergency childcare is striking (43 per cent of all supporters are mothers). All others, including friends only play a secondary role in the provision of regular personal support. In regard to financial support fathers and mothers together are main supporters – and often the only ones. They alone account for almost 50 per cent of all financial support.

Material supporters are predominantly friends (38 per cent of all supporters). Another third of the material supporters belong to the original family. Material support is the only support type where another group provides a significant proportion of informal support: acquaintances and work colleagues (17 per cent of all supporters). Mutual

exchange of second-hand clothing does not presuppose close relations. If we look at main supporters, friends still play a prominent role – they account for a third. However, mothers' role as important material supporters becomes visible as well – a quarter of main supporters are mothers. Acquaintances still play a major role here along with brothers and sisters. The only support type where friends dominate very clearly is emotional support. As many as three quarters of emotional supporters are friends. All other groups, including mothers, play no significant role here. The same picture comes out when we consider main supporters only. The following tables summarise the most important supporter groups. The remaining supporters are included in tables A4 and A5 in the annex.

Table 8.11: All informal supporters of lone mothers (percentages of selected supporters per support incident)

	(I) Personal support	(II) Material support	(III) Financial support	(IV) Emotional support
mother	28	14	20	9
father	10	7	24	2
sister/brother	9	14	15	5
ex-partner	10	3	11	1.5
friends	25	38	19	74
acquaint./colleagues	1	17	3	5
neighbours	6	3	3	1.5
No. respondents	77	82	49	81

Source: own data ; n = 116

Table 8.12: Lone mothers' main supporters (percentages of selected supporters per support incident)

	(I) Personal support	(II) Material support	(III) Financial support	(IV) Emotional support
mother	43	23.5	22	15
father	9	4	26	1
sister/brother	6.5	15	11	5
ex-partner	10	5	11	1
friends	16	32	17	66
acquaint./colleagues	1	16	2	3
neighbours	6.5	1	2	3
No. respondents	77	81	46	74

Source: own data ; n = 116

Based on the outcomes of both procedures we can now answer the question who lone mothers' main supporters are. Both friends and original family in all scenarios play a

significant role. Lone mothers' original families, and hereby especially their mothers, are crucial supporters in regard to personal support, material, and financial support. Emotional support is dominated by friends.

If the cross-national dimension is considered by looking at each sub-sample separately a few differences become visible. In London, original families were named as main supporters in three out of four cases with the only exception being emotional support. In contrast, they dominated personal support and financial support only in Berlin. Friends occupy the most prominent positions as material and emotional supporters there. Surprisingly, they also accounted for as many as a third of the main financial supporters. In London, friends only played a significant role as the main emotional supporters. Next, all supporters who ever provided any support in both cities will be taken into consideration to get a more detailed picture of who lone mothers' main supporters are.

Original families

Childcare provision in London is much more dominated by the original family than in Berlin. In particular, mothers help far more frequently. While two thirds in London could rely on their mothers in emergencies only 40 per cent in Berlin were in the same position. Friends provide twice as much childcare in Berlin as they do in London. This reflects the fact that most mothers of lone mothers in London live locally - with two thirds of them living within 30 minutes travel time - while the majority of mothers of Berlin lone mothers live more than an hour's travel time (a third more than two hours) away and, thus, are not available in emergencies.

Also in regard to material support lone mothers in London received considerably more from their original family, especially from their sisters and mothers. In Berlin, all family members provided about the same amount (five per cent each). Original families provide most financial support in both cities. Again, Londoners are, proportionally, even more supported by their families. Apart from this, the main difference between both cities was that brothers and sisters accounted for a fifth of all financial supporters in London whereas they were practically non-existent in Berlin. Only few family members were part of lone mothers' emotional support networks.

Friends

While we are born into a particular family we choose our friends deliberately. It was proven in a variety of studies that lone parenthood goes along with a dramatic change of friendship networks (see, for example, Milardo 1987; Schönningh et. al. 1991). As was shown in previous sections friends play an important although not the most important role in lone mothers' informal support networks. Friends included all those individuals who were named as friends by the interviewees since most respondents distinguished between friends and acquaintances. Friends as informal supporters were more present in all but one scenario in Berlin than in London. Especially in regard to financial support and childcare their share was much higher. Their extraordinary importance as emotional supporters was nearly identical. Three quarters of all supporters in both cities were friends. Again, this underlines the importance of friends in lone mothers' life. Generally, there were more friends in lone mothers' support networks in Berlin. The norm that friends should help each other was equally common in both cities. Nevertheless, expectations towards friends differed considerably. British lone mothers were very cautious not to overburden their friends. The role of friends was mainly seen as being good company, to socialise and to have a good time together. This often included taking the children out together. Friends were by far the most important sources of emotional support. However, lone mothers in London thought about it very carefully before they had 'a good moan' to friends because they feared being seen as 'killjoys' that nobody wants to know:

Silvana (London): "A lot of things I do sort out myself. But I will go and moan to my friends – but I don't expect them to do anything ... Because they are terrified when you ask them something. And that was one of the hardest things to cope with when my circumstances changed. I had friends that I considered to be very good friends. When my circumstances changed they got absolutely terrified that I was going to become a traumatic person."

Although such considerations were not entirely absent in Berlin as well, there was a tendency that lone mothers expected a higher degree of personal involvement by their friends. People who were not prepared to be there for them when needed were not considered to be 'true friends'. This referred to all aspects of supportive behaviour and even includes financial support.

Children's fathers

Children's fathers did not play an equally important role as informal supporters as family or friends. Nevertheless, they provided a significant part of informal support in regard to certain support types. Every fourth interviewee in Berlin (in London only 13 per cent) mentioned that the child's father was looking after his child in emergencies. But only a few of them provided childcare on a regular basis. In London, only parents provided more financial support than the children's fathers. Ex-partners accounted for a fifth of the financial main supporters there, but not even a single child father in Berlin was named. Although they provided financial support then, they did so reluctantly in many cases, and the mere fact that lone mothers had to ask them resulted in an enormous amount of stress for them. This fifth meant that first, there was either no-one else to ask or that lone mothers felt that their ex-partners ought to pay, and second that they eventually *got* the money this way. It was reported as difficult and humiliating to ask for support this way:

Line (Berlin): *"If I were to ask, my daughter's father would probably lend me money. He supported me financially for some time - though this had a lot to do with begging - when I didn't get Sozialhilfe because they required me to cash in my life insurance, until this was all sorted out. But I had to beg a lot which I did only very reluctantly."*

Kitty (London): *"In the last 2 months he started paying for odd things. But for nearly 5 years he hasn't. He's re-married - and the new wife thinks he should pay."*

Sarah (London): *"He's got plenty of money. He is not forthcoming. He's all the time wearing Armani suits and Montana suits."*

Finally, a few considerations concerning reasons for cross-national differences in support provision are taken. The different roles of fathers illustrate the interaction between informal and formal means of support. Where a maintenance advance payment (*Unterhaltsvorschuß*) by the state exists fathers play only a marginal role as financial supporters. It may be the case that the relations between fathers and their children are less strained in the absence of financial pressures. This could explain why fathers are more involved in childcare in Berlin than in London.

Other supporters

The main supporters of lone mothers were identified previously. The residuum of informal support provision was spread across several groups: acquaintances,

neighbours, colleagues, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, boyfriends, and sometimes also members of the child father's family. This enumeration encompasses the variety of these supporters. The small number of their occurrence is the only thing they have in common. Therefore, a quantitative analysis is not practical. The only time that one of these groups played a significant role was material support in Berlin. Every fifth respondent could fall back on acquaintances for mobilisation of clothing. It was quite common to join mutual exchange networks where parents lend each other clothes *not yet needed* or *not needed anymore*. The following quotes illustrate how these exchange rings work:

Bali (Berlin): *"The child of my friend - she is in-between [my daughters] in terms of her age - always gets what my eldest had worn before, and I get the things back again if they are still OK plus those things my friend bought for her daughter."*

Juli (Berlin): ***This 'children clothing pool' - how does it work?** "Everybody has got vast amounts of clothes by the time of birth already which didn't fit their own child by that time. This was passed then on to a child that had the appropriate size already and then returned again." ... **How many women take part in this pool?** "That was the group of pregnant women which was formed here [at VAMV] - 8 to 10 people. But I also exchanged clothes with three other women."*

The role of distant relatives as supporters of lone mothers was rather marginal in both samples. A few women in Berlin reported relying on aunts and uncles for childcare. However, they pointed out that they did not maintain close relationships with them. The reason they asked them for help was almost always that their own mothers did not live locally. Relations with neighbours were ambiguous. Some lone mothers were in the comfortable position of maintaining good neighbourly relations with them. In such cases it was possible to include neighbours in the stable network of childcarers. Finally, colleagues were named as sources of support as well. The research design required considering lone mothers with children of pre-school age only. Thus, many of them were not employed. It is likely that colleagues will play a more prominent role in their support networks once their children are older and they have returned to work.

Now it can be concluded who the main supporters of lone mothers are. Informal support in the conceptual meaning of this research was primarily provided by members of lone mothers' original families. Their importance was only surpassed in case of emotional support which is predominantly provided by friends. The fact that friends are turned to for emotional support most often suggests that they are the preferred choice in this

regard even when family is available. A result of this analysis is that friends can generally also provide all other informal support types relevant for lone mothers – as the example of Berlin demonstrates. It is striking, though, that lone mothers only ask their friends for support when their original family is unable to help. Obviously, friends and family are often regarded as mutually exclusive alternatives.

Who are the friends of lone mothers?

The object of this section is to answer the question of whether lone mothers tend to recruit their friends from a similar social background as themselves. If this was the case, lone mothers and their friends would share a number of demographic characteristics. Similarity in this respect would imply that such networks produce almost identical services whereas network members compete for the same resources to satisfy similar needs. A number of researchers found that social networks of lone mothers are dominated by particular social groups – mainly other women, other parents, and other lone mothers (Leslie/Grady 1985; Heiliger 1991; Schönning et. al. 1991; Niepel 1994b). This was interpreted as an unintended outcome of network recruiting mechanisms mediated by their children's interests.

The lone mothers interviewed for this research project shared another characteristic – they were all members of lone parent organisations. It would be expected that these women recruit their friends to a degree even higher than other lone parents. An indication of the validity of this assumption is that many interviewees appreciated most the opportunity to meet and to make new friends with other lone parents in lone parent organisations, as we have seen in the previous chapter. Let us begin to explore who the friends of lone mothers are. First, some demographic properties of lone mothers and their friends will be compared. Thereby, only those friends will be considered who supported lone mothers. Friends with whom lone mothers only socialised will not be included. Secondly, it will be discussed how lone mothers' friendship networks changed in the wake of lone motherhood. And finally, it will be examined whether societal attitudes towards lone mothers influenced their friends behaviour towards them after they became lone mothers.

Let us begin with the comparison of demographic data. In both samples lone mothers' friends were almost exclusively women – as many as 94 per cent. This confirmed the results of previous research. They named merely 17 male friends, compared to an overwhelming majority of 255 women. Who are these exceptions? Two

'types' of male friends could be distinguished: they were either partners of female friends or long-standing friends. Male friends mainly helped out with practical skills (mending and repair jobs). The age structure of lone mothers' friendship networks was more diverse than anticipated. Most had friends of roughly the same age as themselves. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of almost 40 per cent of their friends were more than four years older or younger. Even friends who were ten or more years older were not rare. In London, the age difference was nearly a year larger on average. Another characteristic that showed a high degree of similarity was employment status. A distinct majority of slightly more than 60 per cent of all friends had the same employment status (employed⁵³ vs. not employed) as the lone mothers interviewed. Most friends had jobs within the same occupational class as employed interviewees or, at least, they had a similar training background.

Most friends (73 per cent) were parents as well – but not necessarily lone parents. Other lone mothers did indeed form the largest group in friendship networks: 40 per cent of all friends mentioned were also lone parents. This means at the same time, however, that the majority of friends were *not* lone parents. Another 40 per cent lived in stable relationships (30 per cent were married, 10 per cent cohabited). A fifth were singles. Thus, our earlier assumption that membership in lone parent organisations resulted in dominance of other lone parents in friendship networks was falsified.

These characteristics were typical for lone mothers' friends in all but one support category. The only exceptions were those few friends who provided financial support. The typical financial supporter was male, significantly older, had no children of his own, and was employed. This makes sense since employed individuals who have not got children themselves are more likely to be in a position to help out financially. Apart from this it was noticeable that almost all helpers with material support were also parents and most childcare providers were not employed – both preconditions for support provision in these cases. Summarising, it can be said that friends with certain demographic characteristics do indeed dominate lone mothers' informal support networks of friends – but to a lesser degree than previous research suggested. Typical friends of lone mothers were other women who also had children. Some of them lived in

⁵³ Students in higher or further education were counted as 'employed'. Seen from a networking perspective they were equally restricted in creating and maintaining their social networks as lone mothers in employment.

stable relationships, others were lone mothers as well. Most had the same employment status and were of about the same age as the lone mothers interviewed.

Next, changes of friendship networks will be discussed. Almost all interviewees reported dramatic changes of their friendship networks since they had become lone parents. Apparently, these changes occurred in several phases. First, in the wake of the separation from their former partners many joint friends were lost. Secondly, after their children's birth contact with friends who did not have children loosened. Their children's needs had the highest priority now, socialising with friends became secondary. This was caused by restricted mobility, different life styles, and other interests. Now, it will be looked at how lone mothers' friendship networks changed. By doing this, changes to old friendships on one hand and the emergence of new friendships on the other can be observed.

Three directions in which old friendships can develop are possible: (1) Some friendships may loosen or be cut off altogether, (2) other friendships may remain unchanged in their quality and intensity, and (3) others again may intensify. Evidence was found for the occurrence of all three options.

(1) Most lone mothers mentioned examples of former friendships that did not survive the changes incurred by lone parenthood. Those cases where joint activities formed the basis of friendship were the first to be lost. Besides a variety of spare time interests this included friendships with colleagues at work. Many interviewees indicated losing interest in relationships with former friends who they felt did not understand them anymore:

Line (Berlin): *"It is a long-standing friendship, we have known each other for a very long time. But now the contact is not as intensive as it used to be. Because she is married it is a different level. She's got other problems."*

On the other hand, some former friends also decided that they were unable to cope with the strain these changed relationships imposed on them. Many friends felt overwhelmed by the extent of comfort needed by lone mothers in the acute crisis:

Rache (London): *"I was physically quite ill [following her separation]. It was just a self-perpetuating cycle – and I couldn't get out of it for quite a long time. Although I had one or two very close friends ... But I don't have them anymore because they felt overwhelmed by my needs."*

Steffi (Berlin): *"At the beginning of the separation phase it was too much for all of my friends. Then the grain was separated from the chaff. There were only very few"*

who could still listen – perhaps because it was also very much what I was going through.”

(2) In contrast, some lone mothers managed to maintain relationships almost unchanged. These friends turned out to be reliable supporters in distress: they listened, they comforted, they offered practical help, and they were there when support was needed. They became a backup that lone mothers could rely on.

Katharina (Berlin): “The unplanned pregnancy and lone parenthood really were a revelation for me of what fantastic friends I have. Otherwise, I would be unable to cope. ... I did not need to ask for help.”

(3) Everyone has very old friendships, dating back to youth or childhood. These friendships rest on the common ground of many years of shared experiences which produced a high degree of mutual knowledge, understanding, and intimacy. Geographical distance and different phases in family life and partnership may have loosened contact in the past but were never completely lost. If a crisis event occurs – such as separation from a partner or lone parenthood – such friends become preferred contacts and intensify significantly. These long-standing friendships became central parts of lone mothers’ new support networks.

Max (Berlin): “I found again the contact to those people who I partly lost sight of. And since they’ve also got children it looks like a fresh beginning of a friendship.”

Once the acute crisis phase was over a period of re-orientation started. Many lone mothers started to make new friends. A radical change in the structure of these emerging new friendship networks is striking: lone mothers recruited their new friends predominately from among other lone mothers. This indicates a prevalent need to meet other lone mothers. Many women reported not knowing any lone parent prior to becoming lone parents themselves. A considerable number of interviewees indicated that they joined Gingerbread or VAMV with the intention of meeting other lone parents. Initial contacts became new friendships in the end. Friendships with other lone mothers were characterised by shared experiences and a mutual understanding without further ado. Of course, not all new friendships were the outcome of deliberate efforts. In their daily life lone mothers predominantly meet other mothers – at playgrounds, childcare facilities, in parks, at the bus stop, etc. This is another way for new relations to develop.

Birgit (Berlin): “It was my first divorce. This is an extraordinary situation. The people I know mainly live in stable relationships. Since I joined VAMV I also know

lone parents. But before that I didn't know who to talk to, regardless which problem. They encouraged me or simply listened. I feel that I cannot burden any other friends with my problems. Some appear to be slightly annoyed."

Marion (London): *"I have always lived in this neighbourhood. I have always met the same people on my way to the nursery. And then some of the children I knew already went to the same school— and this way the contact continued and the circle was extended more and more. ... The conversation mostly revolved around the children."*

The object of this section was to analyse friendship networks of lone mothers. It was demonstrated who the friends of lone mothers were and how friendship networks changed in the wake of lone parenthood. Moreover, it was established that their networks tend to be homogenous in regard to selected demographic properties. This is mainly a result of their recent networking efforts. Nevertheless, most lone mothers managed to keep at least one or two old friends who make sure that a certain degree of heterogeneity persists. Both old and new friends play specific roles in informal support networks. New friends who are parents as well are invaluable sources of emotional support as well as advisors when they have problems with their children. In contrast, old friends can provide material and financial support.

As it was stated earlier on, there is a tendency for lone mothers' friendship networks to become more homogeneous over time, caused by the inclusion of other lone mothers⁵⁴. Does the prevalent public stigmatisation of lone parents contribute to this trend? At the beginning of this thesis the widespread stigmatisation of lone mothers, particularly in the UK was pointed out (see chapter 3). Therefore, it was expected that other lone mothers accounted for a larger share of friendship networks in London. This would suggest that it was more difficult for lone mothers in London to recruit friends among married and single individuals and a strong solidarity effect among lone mothers. Contrary to this assumption, their proportion in London was even lower (38 per cent, compared to 43 per cent in Berlin). How can this result be explained?

This question cannot be answered based on quantitative evidence alone. Public stigmatisation experiences are a common phenomenon. But it is far more difficult to find out whether public attitudes towards lone mothers have an impact at an interpersonal, social network level as well. There is plenty of evidence for predominantly negative political attitudes towards lone mothers, especially in the

context of the ‘underclass’ debate (Murray 1994; Morgan 1995; Lewis 1997; Duncan/Edwards 1997b, 1999) (for a detailed analysis see chapter 3). The ‘Family and Changing Gender Roles II’ module of the 1994 International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) confirmed that half of the British⁵⁵ and West German population believed that lone parents were unable to bring up children as well as two parents together. Obviously, negative attitudes towards lone parents are manifested at an individual level as well. The question is whether these attitudes are shared by friends, i.e. by individuals who have known that person for a considerable time period and who have developed a close personal relationship. Since it was impossible to ask friends for their attitudes towards lone mothers, it was looked for indications of changed friendship relations in lone mothers’ statements. Thanks to the specific design of this study I am in the comfortable position of being able to supplement quantitative data with contextual, qualitative information from open, non-standardised questions.

In the following a mechanism that explains the hidden effects of public stigmatisation of lone mothers’ friendship networks which was typical for many interviewees will be explained. Only very few indicated that friends actually withdrew from them because of their new status as lone mothers. Some reported that former friends made them feel not wanted anymore – for fears that they may become traumatic, troublesome individuals who might pinch their partners in the end or because they did not want to know ‘such people’ (welfare cases) in the first place. But reports of such personal experiences were rare. On the other hand, almost everybody had heard a story of another lone parent who was stigmatised in this or another way – and was more than happy to tell this story. Moreover, many lone mothers reported that they felt uncomfortable in the company of former friends who were not lone parents.

Lea (London): *“I can always turn to my friends if I need them. But the thing is, they’ve all got boyfriends, all have got partners! And I find at Christmas time, when I go round to my friends’ houses or their boyfriends houses ... and I feel like a gooseberry really. All I want is to go home! Because I don’t fit in ... You know, it was OK when they were single and we were out together. But when they are there with their boyfriends I feel, I don’t belong. I feel uncomfortable.”*

In other words, even in the absence of stigmatisation by their friends they *feel* stigmatised and singled out as lone parents. Obviously, this feeling is not so much

⁵⁴ This only refers to the situation in the immediate aftermath of lone parenthood. I am unable to extrapolate this trend. A longitudinal survey would be required to do that.

⁵⁵ Excluding Northern Ireland.

caused by own experiences of stigmatisation – it is mainly caused by their fear that others may regard them as inferior. There are a number of variations to this inferiority complex shared by nearly all lone mothers: the fear of not being good mothers, the assumption of being regarded as selfish, irresponsible individuals, the fear of being seen as different, as deviating from others. Attributes used to describe ways in which they were seen as different included: traumatic, boring, etc. Lone mothers are very much aware of public perceptions of lone parents. They take the slightest hint in this direction very seriously.

Wiena (Berlin): *“And then this statement – you couldn’t overhear it: well, she is a lone mother – and then she leaves her child alone [to go out for work]. ... What also happens very often is that when there are children behaving deviantly they stick much more out of the crowd when you are a lone mother. I haven’t experienced this myself yet but I have heard it frequently already.”*

As a consequence, contacts with people who are not lone parents are minimised. At the same time, they deliberately look for contacts with other lone mothers. This was the phase during lone motherhood when most interviewees found their way to VAMV or Gingerbread. There they were able to meet others in the same situation who understand their problems without talking a lot. The following quote by a lone mother from Berlin gives a very realistic account of lone mothers’ emotional world in this situation:

Fortune (Berlin): *“That you get pregnant and are left – that only happens in movies. Exactly as it is with cancer or Aids – that doesn’t happen to yourself. That’s what you think before it happens. When it happens, you don’t want to believe it. Although it is quite common in the world and in Germany, it is embarrassing. I didn’t want to talk about it – that someone left me, that I fell for someone like that, that I couldn’t anticipate it, that I showed not enough insight into human nature. And then I needed to talk. When I talked to two of my friends, it didn’t help at all. They felt sorry for me, they also called him names. But I didn’t feel understood. There [at VAMV] are only lone parents – you only need to hint and they know how much pain, how much work, how many fears there are behind some words. You don’t need to explain. That’s a good feeling.”*

Shared experiences resulted in a close community within the group and a powerful solidarity effect with other lone parents. Although the value of lone parent organisations can hardly be overestimated – particularly in the early stage of lone parenthood (for details see chapter 7) – this group setting has a number of unintended side-effects. First of all, these groups tend to polarise. They develop a very close community, a very strong identity as lone parents, feelings of ‘us and them’. The drawback of this as such positive contribution is a reinforcement of negative perceptions about their environment as

potentially hostile ('them'). Lone mothers who belong to an organisation that attempts to influence the public perception of lone mothers actively are even more sensitive to public attitudes towards lone parents.

At the beginning of this section was the question of whether public stigmatisation of lone parents contributed to the observed trend towards more homogeneity of lone mothers' friendship networks. An indication for more homogenous friendship networks in London could not be found, despite more public stigmatisation there. Two explanations are possible: (1) The membership in lone parent organisations results in greater sensitivity towards public stigmatisation of lone mothers, independently of national context. As a consequence, *perceived* stigmatisation of lone mothers may be exactly the same in both samples. But perhaps, the notion of 'varying degrees of stigmatisation' is mistaken altogether and the only thing that matters is whether there is perceived stigmatisation or not. (2) It seems plausible that this trend was caused by the specific circumstances of lone parenthood rather than a particularly hostile public environment. Lone mothers predominately live in settings where they only meet other parents.

Give and take – the principle of reciprocity

In the previous sections we have looked at who the supporters of lone mothers are. So far, lone mothers were pictured as being at the receiving end. In this section we will leave this perspective to focus on a new aspect of informal support mobilisation – the *exchange* of resources between lone mothers and their supporters. Alone the fact that a significant proportion of their support networks are formed by other lone mothers suggests that lone mothers also *provide* support. A variety of resources are exchanged among lone parents, including childcare, clothes, food, care, comfort, affection, and money.

Social exchange is inherent to human relations in general (Blau 1964; Coleman 1990). When someone gives us something an unspecific obligation to repay emerges. The nature, extent and time frame of repayment remain indefinite. This requires mutual trust that 'debtors' will meet their obligations. This exchange mechanism is called a reciprocity norm as Gouldner (1960) pointed out. Reciprocity means that give and take will level out in the end. Violation of the reciprocity norm results in guilty conscience, loss of trust and reputation, and eventually social isolation. Reciprocity does not

necessarily require that given support is 're-paid' immediately. Reciprocity can be postponed, it can be returned to other individuals, and services can be exchanged for status (respect, power, influence).

Reciprocity is common in family and friendship relations alike. As long as we are children we take and our parents give. But once we have grown up and our parents are old and frail it is our turn to support them (Rossi/Rossi 1990). Reciprocity in friendship relations is slightly different. Unlike family relations we enter friendships voluntarily. As a consequence, these relations can also be resolved. Thus, reciprocity among friends has a different meaning. If we experience friendship relations as continuously imbalanced we will terminate them. Lone parents are in the difficult position of relying on support while they have not much to offer. They do not dispose of much time, money, or other resources which makes it difficult to maintain reciprocal relations. Therefore, it should be interesting to see how reciprocal relations are realised in informal support networks of lone mothers. More specifically, the importance of reciprocity in friendship as well as family relations will be examined.

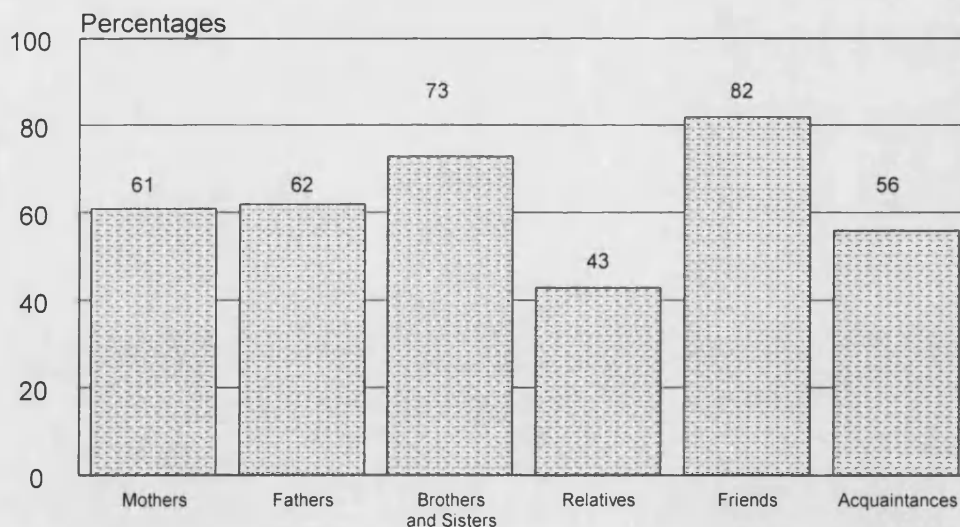
The importance of reciprocity ought to be identifiable and measurable. All respondents were prompted with a number of norms, including the reciprocity norm 'If one gets support from somebody one should provide help in turn'. This was followed by a differently formulated version of that statement. As expected, a huge majority agreed to this norm. There was no difference at all between the London and Berlin samples. However, this outcome was combined with several surprises. First of all, almost 30 per cent did not agree to this norm (this includes 6 per cent 'don't knows'). The second surprise was that more than 80 per cent disagreed to another statement measuring reciprocity: 'One should not ask for help if one cannot provide support in turn'. That means that 80 per cent supported the violation of the reciprocity norm. Remarkably, this response pattern is not in accordance with the theoretical assumptions about reciprocity of the narrow interpretation of rational choice theory (see chapter 4). The rational economic man would not provide support unless s/he can expect support in turn.

It seems that the former formulation of the reciprocity norm was indeed perceived as a general norm whereas the latter was answered thinking about a concrete situation affecting themselves. However, in the absence of an indication as to why interviewees responded in the described way it is not possible to explain this divergence. Finally, this different understanding resulted in both norms loading on different factors in a factor analysis. Confirming the first norm, more than 90 per cent agreed to the very general

norms that family members/friends should help each other. Although these findings were more diverse than anticipated most lone mothers had internalised the reciprocity norm.

In the next step it will be explored how reciprocity is realised in informal support relations. In this, reciprocity is defined as the mutuality of support relations. The interviewees were asked for every support relation to indicate whether they returned support in exchange. At this point, extent and nature of reciprocated support is not of interest. Generally speaking, almost three quarters (72 per cent) of all relations were reciprocal⁵⁶. Returning to the reciprocity hypothesis as stated at the beginning of this thesis it will be examined whether relations with different types of supporters are characterised by varying degrees of reciprocity as well. More specifically, the reciprocity levels of friendship relations and kinship relations will be compared. For that purpose the reciprocity rates for exchange relations with mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters, and relatives on one hand and friends and acquaintances on the other were calculated. Figure 8.3 below summarises the results.

Figure 8.3: Overall reciprocity rates in support relations



Source: own data, n=116

When the reciprocity rates in lone mothers' relations towards parents and friends are compared the expected outcome emerges: reciprocity is far more prevalent in friendship relations than in relations to one's parents. The reciprocity rate for friendships was the

⁵⁶ Reciprocity rates were computed by setting the number of all reciprocal relations in relation to all relations. The total number of examined relations was 552.

highest of all observed relations at 82 per cent. This result confirms our assumption that reciprocity is indeed seen as crucial for the stability of friendship relations. Contrarily, low reciprocity rates were expected in relationship to one's parents. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the interviewed lone mothers still made an effort to reciprocate help received from their parents, as reciprocity rates of higher than 60 per cent demonstrate. Received help was not reciprocated tit for tat since needs varied considerably. Resources which lone mothers can offer are not needed by their parents (Parents do not normally need help with childcare or clothing). On the other hand, they are not so old and frail yet that they would require care. The difficulty in identifying the existence of reciprocity in child-parent relations was that many exchanges were regarded as normal interaction within families – and not as reciprocation of help. Some parents rejected the mere idea that their children might give them something – because they either had everything they needed or because they still regarded them as children.

Katze (Berlin): "When I help my mother these are little things. Whether I give her a lift to the station or take care of something for her or pick her up from work. Also that she can always turn to me when she is not feeling well or something happened."

But how do other relatives fit in? Unexpectedly, the lowest reciprocity rates existed in relations to distant relatives (43 per cent). This reciprocity rate is much lower still than in mutual relationships to parents. Distant relatives only very rarely provided support at all. They were only approached when no-one else was available. At the same time, distant relatives regarded their nieces, granddaughters, or cousins as part of the family towards whom they had a high commitment. Reciprocity is here part of an internal exchange process within the extended family. That means that support given to one family member can be reciprocated by another. In contrast to distant relatives, relations to brothers and sisters were characterised by high levels of reciprocity. Nearly three quarters (73 per cent) of all support relations to brothers and sisters were reciprocal. In this respect, relations to brothers and sisters are more like friendship than kinship relations. Supportive relations with sisters in particular were of specific importance in London. A theme frequently recurring in support relations with sisters was postponed reciprocity – as expressed in the following example:

Rache (London): "I've always helped my sisters with childcare anyway, I've always helped them in emotional ways. We can, we will help each other out. My oldest sister's daughter is much older – so I was always there while she was having her. It's payback time!"

Reciprocity within families does not refer to support recipient and supporter – it covers all members of the family, as long as they live. This applies to all members of the extended family. Supportive kinship relations are needs based: the reciprocity principle ‘I give, so you give’ is replaced with ‘I support you because you need help’. Exchange relations between brothers and sisters are therefore more reciprocal because it involves two sides who need help.

Support provided by acquaintances was reciprocated only in every second case. The low degree of reciprocity is not an indicator here for high levels of commitments in close relations. It rather marks the difference between acquaintances and friends. But why do acquaintances provide support at all if they cannot expect help in turn? Three typical situations in the absence of direct reciprocity occurred:

(1) A common situation was ad-hoc provision of clothing for children that resulted from a conversation with another child’s mother (e.g. at a nursery). In a sense, help was mediated through their children’s familiarity. Although relations were superficial there was some degree of continuity mediated through their children.

(2) Another, structurally completely different setting were acquaintances whose contact was mediated by a member of stable support networks, such as the sister’s friend or the mother’s colleague. In such cases reciprocity referred to the relation between supporter and mediator.

(3) Thirdly, relations were sometimes characterised by cascade reciprocity (Nye 1979; McLanahan et. al. 1981). That means, received support is reciprocated to others, and not to the supporter. A typical example is when the lone mother A passes on clothes to the person B which were initially given to her by person C. However, there were mutual support relations with acquaintances as well. The already described children’s clothes exchange rings in Berlin were typical examples. Reciprocity is here an essential prerequisite for the functionality of this support mechanism. Violation of the reciprocity norm results in exclusion from exchange, i.e. nobody will exchange clothing with that person again. Exchange in these networks involves acquaintances as well as friends.

Finally, I will make a few remarks about reciprocity in friendship networks. Friendship is characterised by mutual give and take. Although lone mothers live in deprived circumstances they pay very much attention to reciprocating help received from friends. It is important for them to neither feel taken advantage of nor have to ask for help all the time. Next, we will investigate which support forms are exchanged

between friends. Is received support reciprocated by the provision of similar services or are there variations? Considering their limited resources lone mothers provided a remarkable variety of supportive actions. Most frequently mentioned were emotional support and childcare. Let us return to the support scenarios the respondents were prompted with. There were support relations which were characterised by exchange of the same sort of support. This was particularly the case with emotional support, partly also with childcare. Beside that many interviewees maintained relationships where help was not provided tit for tat. Thus, childcare was repaid by giving a lift to the airport, emotional support with decorating a flat, advice with legal and benefits issues through help with housework. In some cases lone mothers could pay with obligations from the past, in others the women trusted that they could repay their debt later.

Postponed reciprocity is a common phenomenon among friends. However, in supportive relations involving other lone mothers reciprocity was not normally postponed. The women tried to respond to help provided by other lone mothers not long afterwards and in similar ways. Generally speaking, imbalances in support provision were temporarily acceptable as long as help recipients believed in their ability to reciprocate at some stage and helping friends trusted that this would happen some time. The longer lasting and the closer a friendship was the more willingly friends were prepared to turn a blind eye towards reciprocity – especially in times of need. Some trusted that it would be returned some time, others did not mind at all and regarded support provision as a normal aspect of friendship. The other side of the coin was, however, that women who constantly were on the receiving end felt bad about not being able to reciprocate – even when they knew that their friends did not mind. Thus, reciprocity can become a serious problem for lone mothers.

Cola (Berlin): "I have to say that I often regret that I cannot do as much for her as she does for me. And then I feel bad about it. And then it is sometimes difficult when she wants me to do something and I can't. ... The only thing I can do for her is to listen to her problems. I can invite her and this is also nice for her. But this isn't so much help – it's more normal socialising."

This quote illustrates how difficult it is for lone mothers if they cannot reciprocate support in an appropriate way. This comes along with diminished confidence and the feeling of being dependent on others. In cases where this situation persisted for some time some lone mothers withdrew from their friends because they felt inadequate for not being able to reciprocate. When problems occurred they would rather accept hardship for themselves than ask friends for help. A lone mother from London reported not

having eaten anything but a few slices of dry bread for a week because she needed the money to buy new shoes for her daughter. Another form of imbalanced reciprocity is when people are taken advantage of. A few interviewees reported providing help to many other people while they got hardly anything in return. In the following example, a lone mother from London explains why she feels taken advantage of by other lone mothers:

Joyce (London): *"You know, I have close friends that I'm there for, I am always there for. When I need help nobody is there for me! Because nobody believes that I haven't got it! They think, I'm just pretending. They come to me for financial help. They think: 'We are lone parents. We are suffering.' When I turned round and said to them: 'Sorry, I don't have the money.' They said: 'Are you sure?' ... And I feel so much hurt!"*

Others call a halt to such relationships before it is too much strain for them. In such cases dissatisfaction with one-way support provision is sometimes combined with a concern about taking on more than they can shoulder.

Cooky (Berlin): *"I am rather cautious towards these friends because I am concerned that they will drag me down. One is depressive, the others are also in difficult circumstances. I tend to block the contact – for self protection."*

Imbalanced relations of this kind were exceptions and not the rule. Balanced exchange relations have an impact on happiness with support provision and general life satisfaction, as will be shown in the subsequent section.

Based on an exchange theoretical concept the importance of reciprocity in informal support networks of lone mothers was analysed. Give and take was a norm shared by most respondents. Most lone mothers have tried hard to maintain reciprocal relations with their supporters. It was confirmed that the extent of reciprocity varies between kinship and friendship networks. Several patterns of realised reciprocity were identified for different supporter groups. Direct reciprocity determined the exchange behaviour among lone mothers. Mediated reciprocity and reciprocity which was passed on to others was common in lone mothers' relations with acquaintances. Postponed reciprocity was typical for friendship relations. Kinship relations were to a lesser degree characterised by reciprocity and more by needs based support. Finally, evidence of imbalanced relations – which turned out to be problematic for supporter and help recipient alike – was found. Thus, the reciprocity hypothesis was confirmed.

8.4. Winners and losers in informal support mobilisation

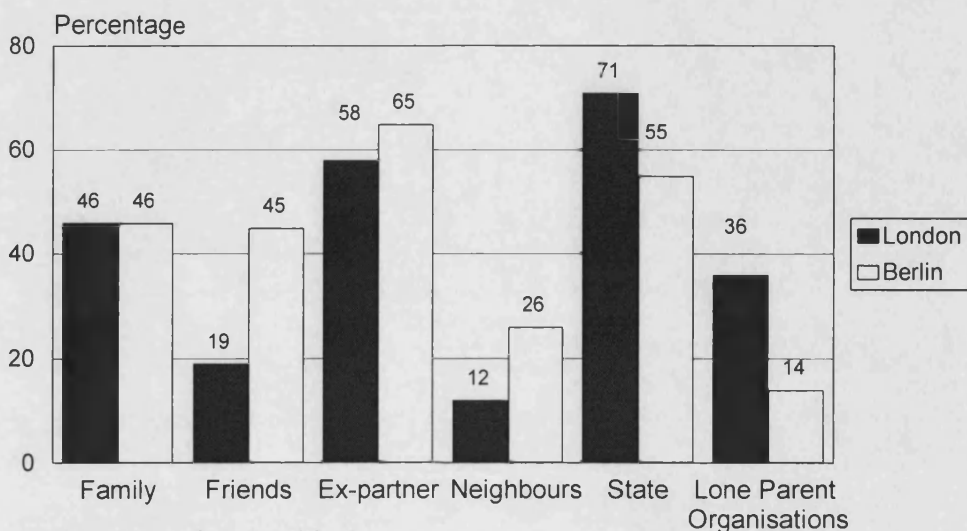
At the heart of this research is the importance of informal support for the well-being of lone mothers. In the previous sections we have looked in detail at relations between lone mothers' informal supporters and the extent of informal support provision. The question of whether the interviewees were happy with the support received has remained unanswered so far.

Individual satisfaction with informal support

Already one of the 'classics' of social support research, Cobb (1976) introduced individual perception of received support as vital criterion for individual welfare. Informal support only encourages well-being when the help recipients are happy with the received support. Following this logic, lone mothers who get a lot of support are not necessarily happier than those who do not get much support. Therefore, the correlation between receipt of informal support and satisfaction with the received support will be explored.

In the final section of the questionnaire the interviewees were confronted with questions concerning their general life satisfaction as well as their happiness with the informal support they received. The emerging picture was very heterogeneous. Figure 8.4 contains the percentages of respondents who indicated not being happy with received support and who wished for more support from that particular support source. Satisfaction with state support was included as a control variable although it will be the object of more detailed analysis in chapter 9.

Figure 8.4: Dissatisfaction with informal support in London and Berlin



Source: own data, n = 116

As expected, lone mothers in both samples were most unhappy with the informal support provided by their children's fathers. Additionally, almost a third of lone mothers in London and 16 per cent in Berlin did not want any support from their children's fathers and, thus, could not be dissatisfied with their support. Half of the respondents were satisfied with the support they received from their original families, 46 per cent wished for more support. The role friends played in informal support provision was again evaluated differently in both cities. More than twice as many lone mothers in Berlin were dissatisfied with support provided by friends. This result was surprising since friends in Berlin provided a higher proportion of lone mothers' informal support than in London. Neighbours were expected least to help. But again, more than twice as many lone mothers in Berlin wished for more support from their neighbours. Taking lone parent organisations into consideration as well it was found that a significant minority wanted more support from them. It was noteworthy that their proportion in London was more than twice as high as in Berlin. Finally, the highest dissatisfaction scores that were found referred to a formal support source, the state. More than half in Berlin and almost three quarters in London wanted more support from the state.

These findings gave an overall impression of the dissemination of dissatisfaction per support source. Next, the focus will be on the extent of individual dissatisfaction with informal support. For this a dissatisfaction index⁵⁷ was computed measuring dissatisfaction with support provided by family, friends, children's fathers, and neighbours. This index enabled me to analyse the extent of individual dissatisfaction. Every sixth respondent was satisfied with the informal support she received. It is striking, however, that hardly any person from Berlin was among them. A third were unhappy with one informal support source only. Another fifth wanted more support from three or all informal support sources – most of them were from Berlin.

Based on these outcomes the correlation between support provision and satisfaction with received informal support can now be explored. The correlation between the extent of informal support (number of support units) and satisfaction with received support (dissatisfaction index) was statistically significant and negative ($r = - .20^*$). In other words, the more informal support an interviewee received the lower was her dissatisfaction with those support sources. An even stronger correlation with dissatisfaction than the extent of informal support provision was the average support

⁵⁷ The index ranged from 0 (no dissatisfaction at all) to 4 (dissatisfied with all four informal support sources).

provision per informal supporter ($r = -.29^{**}$). Obviously, it was more important for the perceived satisfaction with informal support that much support was received from each informal supporter than the total amount of informal support. Neither number of informal supporters nor reciprocity in support relations had an impact on satisfaction with informal support. The strength of the correlation coefficients suggests that the extent of informal support provision influences satisfaction with informal support – but does not determine it⁵⁸. Another indication for the validity of these results was lone mothers' self-description as people who got more/less support than others. One should expect that those who indicated getting more support than others were more satisfied with the informal support received. However, there was no significant correlation ($r = -.12$).

Finally, variables that influence lone mothers' satisfaction with the informal support provided will be looked at. A multivariate regression model was computed for this purpose, with the dissatisfaction index being the dependent variable (see table 8.13 below – complete results can be found in table A 6 in the annex).

Table 8.13: Standardised regression coefficients of a multiple regression model (OLS) with dissatisfaction with informal support as dependent variable

Variable list	Beta
Age of lone mother (years)	.28 *
Never married vs. ever married	- .18
Number of children	- .09
School education (years)	.15
London/Berlin indicator	.07
Employment status	.22
Income Support/Sozialhilfe recipient	.14
How long in current flat? (years)	- .25 *
Travel time to mother (min.)	- .13
Av. travel time to broth./sisters	.34 *
Total number informal supporters	- .05
Total amount of support units	- .22 *
Number of non-reciprocal relations	.13
Adjusted R ²	.30

Variable description: Never married/ever married: never married = 0, ever married = 1; London/Berlin: London = 0, Berlin = 1; employment status: not employed = 0, employed = 1; IS/SH recipient: no = 0, yes = 1.

Significance levels: * = .05, ** = .01

⁵⁸ Otherwise, correlation coefficients should be closer to 1.

The model explains 30 per cent of the variance in discontent with the informal support provision. Controlling for demographic characteristics the following variables are predictors for *increasing* discontent with informal support provision: travel time to brothers and sisters and age of the lone mother. Duration of residence in the same neighbourhood and the extent of informal support had *decreasing* effects. The extent of non-reciprocal relations had the expected positive effect on dissatisfaction – but it was not statistically significant. The total number of informal supporters did not have an effect.

The outcome of the multivariate regression analysis confirmed the earlier correlation. The more informal support someone receives the higher her satisfaction. Again, network structural variables had strong effects, especially geographical distance to brothers and sisters and residence in the same flat and neighbourhood. To control these results the regression was tested for each sub-sample separately. Basically, these findings were confirmed. However, the network structural variables lost their significance in London. In Berlin, the geographical closeness to brothers and sisters was extremely important for satisfaction with informal support. As indicated earlier, lone mothers in Berlin had fewer brothers and sisters. Most of them lived much further away than their equivalents in London. The second significant difference was the age of lone mothers. Only for London did it apply that the older a lone mother was the less satisfied she was.

Summarising the results of this section we note that lone mothers' satisfaction with informal support varied considerably. The extent of informal support had an impact on satisfaction/dissatisfaction with informal support. But the subjective perception whether a lone mother received more/less support compared to other lone mothers had no effect at all. Finally, satisfaction with informal support was determined to a larger extent by a lone mother's age and network structural variables than by the extent of informal support provided. The age of lone mothers was a strong positive predictor of dissatisfaction with informal support in London whereas it had no significant impact in Berlin.

Winners and losers of informal support mobilisation

Based on the major outcomes of this chapter four types of lone mothers will be distinguished in this final section, in regard to informal support mobilisation. This typology serves the purpose of visualising specific problem constellations. The two

main sources of informal support for lone mothers with pre-school age children – original families and friends – were combined in figure 8.5 on the next page. Family support and support by friends thereby mark two completely different dimensions of informal support mobilisation. Family support is provided based on kinship and need. Support by friends presupposes individual effort: friendships need to be made and maintained since they rely on mutuality.

Much family support requires the existence of family members, geographical closeness, and a close relationship. Little family support is characterised by the absence of contact with family members, the non-availability of family support due to long distance, premature death, severe illness, or strained relationships. The same distinction was chosen for friendship support. No support here means either the absence of friendship networks or the inability to mobilise support from them. If friends provided any support it was categorised accordingly. In order to ascribe each interviewee to a particular type a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used. Quantitative measures which were introduced earlier on in this chapter as well as the results of a content analysis of text passages were considered. Five distinct types of informal support mobilisation were identified (see figure 8.5 below).

Figure 8.5: A typology of informal support mobilisation

		Informal support by original family		
		much	little	
Informal support by friends	much	I 'Mobilisers'	II 'Compensators'	
	little	III 'Family type'	IVa 'Loners'	IVb 'Losers'

Type I – 'Mobilisers' – represent the ideal of informal support mobilisation, i.e. people who can rely on their families for support and, at the same time, are utilising their friendship networks. They maintain close relationships to their families. Additionally, friends provided a significant amount of support. In some cases, much support was provided by many friends, in others it was the outcome of very close and intensive relations among few friends. Compared to the other types mobilisers have more children, the majority are employed and do not receive Income Support/*Sozialhilfe*.

They are most satisfied with their life as well as with the support they get. Mobilisers are self-sufficient and need the least formal support.

Zoe (London), 32, single, 3 children

Zoe has lived in London all her life. Currently she is studying at a college. Her parents and brothers and sisters live locally. All of them support her frequently, her mother four times a week. Additionally, she has six close friends who support her as well. Moreover, she is a committee member of her local Gingerbread group. Zoe is happy with the support she gets and reasonably happy with her life in general.

Type II – ‘Compensators’ – manage to substitute for lack of family support through friendship networks. To this category belong women who tried hard to create such support networks since they were either aware of the lack of a family support or wanted to maintain their independence. Compensators were particularly common in Berlin. In both cities most of them had one child only, three quarters had A-levels, and the vast majority were not employed because their children were still very young. Hence, the majority received Income Support/*Sozialhilfe*. Compensators were generally happy with their lives. In the crucial life period following birth of their children, women of this type need considerable state support to guarantee their livelihood. Later, they invest a lot of effort to build their own support networks. Most of them will return to work once their children have reached a certain age.

Juli (Berlin), 31, single, 1 child

Juli's daughter is 8 months old. Her father died, her mother lives 700 km away and, therefore, cannot help her very often. She used to work as physiotherapist but is on parental leave now. Juli knows many friends and acquaintances (12-15) who support her emotionally and with clothing. Five close friends support her regularly in all respects. She is happy with the support she gets and her life in general.

Type III individuals can rely on their families for support. Family types live close to their families, have close relationships to family members, and meet them frequently. Their parents are their main supporters but brothers and sisters as well as other relatives often help as well. They do not need to put in extra effort to create new support networks. In a sense, they are self-sufficient due to their family's solidarity. Most of them have friends as well but they do not need to ask them for help. A small group of women who unsuccessfully asked friends for support also fall into this category. Family type individuals are particularly common in London. They are rather young, most of them have O-levels. Although their children are older already, the majority are

dependent on Income Support/*Sozialhilfe*. They are happy with the support they receive but less so with their lives in general. Family type individuals need less formal support than others due to their families' support.

Lou (London), 27, single, 1 child

Lou was born in London. Her parents and her brother live down the road. She has a very close relationship with her parents. They meet several times per week. Her parents are her only supporters who support her in every respect, including emotional support. Nevertheless, Lou thinks she does not get enough support from her family. She would like her mother to stop working to become a full-time carer for her 5 year old son. Lou has only a few friends of whom she does not expect any help. She is on Income Support and attends a college three times per week. She is not happy with her life.

Finally, type IV are the most disadvantaged of informal support mobilisation. They can neither rely on their original families nor on friends for support. Some have no family who could support them – due to long distances, death or ill health of a parent. In other cases relations with their families are strained to such an extent that they do not get support from this end. In any case, they are not able to compensate for the loss of family support through friends. These women hardly have any close friends at all and are very isolated. Within type IV two sub-types are distinguished. Both share the deprivation of support by family and friends. But apart from this, they have very little in common. Type IVa individuals prefer to sort out their problems on their own. They are too proud to ask for help and fear that others would regard them as failures. In their case, lack of family support goes along with their inability to create and to maintain supportive relations with friends. Therefore, they were labelled 'loners'. This type was particularly common in Berlin (see table 8.14). Most are well educated and in full-time employment which makes them relatively independent financially. But in the absence of informal support it is very difficult for them to organise their daily routines. They are dissatisfied with their lives and with the support they get.

Heike (Berlin), 32, single, 1 child

Heike has lived all her life in Berlin. Her mother died. Her father and her sister live not far away but they only meet at Christmas. She does not have any friends and only few acquaintances. Heike is working 30 hours a week in accounting which she does not enjoy. She is not very happy with her life. She finds it difficult to ask for help: 'I would get support if I would ask for it. But I don't ask.'. She sorts out all her problems on her own. Nevertheless, she indicates that she would like more support from almost all support sources.

Type IVb individuals are those worst off. Many of them come from broken homes. Their families do not support them. They are not employed, dependent on Income

Support/ *Sozialhilfe*, and have lived in poverty for years. They have no incentive to return to work since their poor qualifications will not earn them enough to escape the poverty trap. Most type IVb individuals are older than average (about 40) and have more than one child. All lone mothers with more than three children belonged to this category. They have hardly any friends and live isolated from their social environment. Of all four types they receive the least support. They are very dissatisfied with their lives. Thus, they were labelled ‘losers’. Most of them lived in London.

Jackie (London), 44, divorced, 4 children

Jackie moved to London with her former husband only 4 years ago. She had a traumatic childhood – when she was 10 she came into foster care. Even when still married Jackie and her 4 children lived in poverty. She does not get any support from the child father, and she does not know his whereabouts. She has not been employed for more than 10 years. She does not have any prospects of returning to work since her wage will not be enough to compensate for the loss of social benefits. Jackie hardly gets any support at all– only her sister supports her when she asks for help. Although her mother lives nearby she does not support her. She does not have any close friends. Jackie is not happy with her life at all.

Type IVb individuals are most in need of *formal* support. Without state support they would be unable to maintain even the basic standards. These women and their children are socially excluded to a high degree. They have been out of work for many years, thereby losing any qualifications they may have had. Hence, they need considerable formal support with advice on re-training and re-training opportunities. Eventually, affordable quality childcare is required to enable them to escape the poverty trap and to earn their living. My impression during the interviews was that most of these women were anxious to find a way out of this vicious cycle. They placed great hopes in state programmes that would give them a chance to return to work (‘welfare to work’)⁵⁹. Following the discussion of support mobilisation types an overview of their distribution in both samples will be given next (see table 8.14).

Table 8.14: Distribution of informal support mobilisation types (in per cent)

Type	London	Berlin
I ‘Mobilisers’	21	16
II ‘Compensators’	19	34
III ‘Family types’	31	16
IVa ‘Loners’	12	26
IVb ‘Losers’	17	8

Source: own data, n = 116

Although this typology was theoretically deduced all cases were relatively evenly distributed across all categories. The main difference between London and Berlin can be found in types II and III that confirm the different roles of family and friends in both cities. As mentioned before, many interviewees in Berlin had no close relatives living locally. More than half in London had significant kinship support (types I and III) whereas only a third in Berlin was in the same position. Hence, it is not surprising that compensators were particularly prevalent in Berlin. Finally, those deprived of kinship and friendship support alike accounted for approximately a third in the sample. In Berlin, type IVa was more common. The most problematic mobilisation type IVb occurred more frequently among lone mothers in London. In principle, individuals can complement or substitute informal support through formal support. In the next chapter formal support mobilisation will be taken into consideration as well.

⁵⁹ The interviews were carried out in 1998.

CHAPTER 9

THE INTERACTION BETWEEN FORMAL AND INFORMAL SUPPORT MOBILISATION

At the heart of this chapter is the interdependence between formal and informal support mobilisation. Informal support was discussed in detail in the previous chapter. Now the formal support dimension will be introduced. Lone mothers in both samples used a variety of formal support sources to solve problems. Therein, the state with its responsibility for public welfare is of central importance. It is not an ambition of this research to analyse formal support provision for lone mothers in detail. The socio-economic circumstances of lone mothers, including receipt of social benefits, childcare, and employment are well documented in social research (for a detailed account see, for example, Bien 1996; Bauerreiss et al. 1997; Statistisches Bundesamt 2000b for Germany; Marsh et al. 1997; Millar et al. 1997; Kiernan et al. 1998 for the UK). Nevertheless, receipt of monetary transfers from the state and the context of different social welfare states are important background variables that can influence support mobilisation behaviour in crisis events. Therefore, this chapter begins with a brief description of financial circumstances of lone mothers in our sample. Following that, formal support sources which lone mothers turned to in the crisis scenarios will be looked at. Determinants for the utilisation of formal support will be identified. Only then I will be able to analyse the interdependence of informal and formal support mobilisation. This chapter will be concluded with considerations on satisfaction with support.

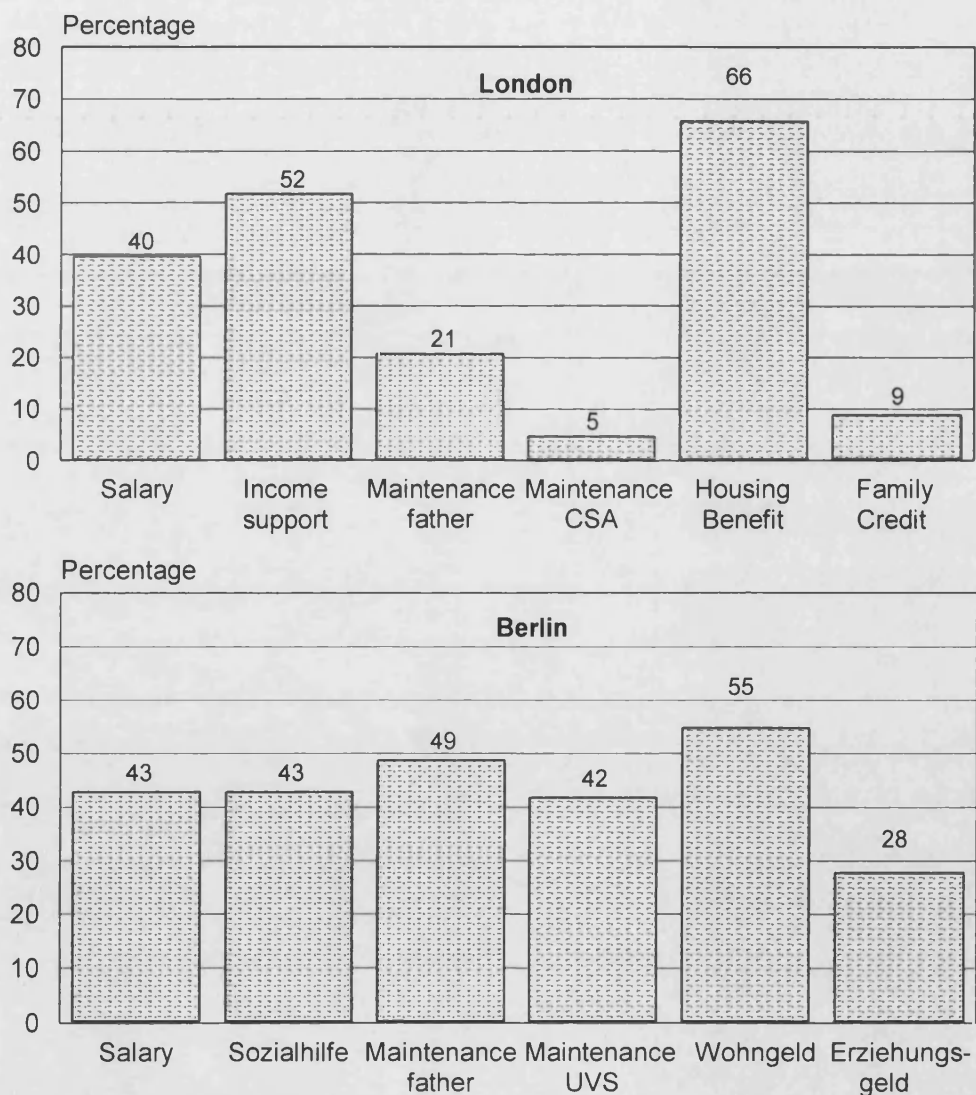
9.1. Sources and extent of formal support

Income sources – between employment and Income Support/Sozialhilfe

The purpose of this section is the identification of formal income sources of the interviewed lone mothers. These data are needed for the classification of the interaction between formal and informal support. In a first step, the use of monetary transfers, most of all state benefits and maintenance will be described. Figure 9.1 shows the distribution

of income sources as indicated by the interviewees. The primary income sources in both samples were Income Support/Sozialhilfe: more than half in London and 43 per cent in Berlin received it. In three cases Income Support was paid supplementary to top up earned income (in figure 9.1 they are included in both Income Support and salary categories). About 40 per cent were employed and earned enough to finance their and their children's livelihood. The remainder received either enough maintenance for their children and themselves to cover all expenditures or social insurance based benefits, such as Invalidity Benefits or Job Seekers Allowance/Arbeitslosengeld.

Figure 9.1: Lone mothers' income sources in London and Berlin (in per cent)⁶⁰



⁶⁰ excluding Child Benefit/*Kindergeld*

Beside these primary income sources lone mothers received other incomes as well. Maintenance was another important income source of lone mothers. But whereas almost all respondents in Berlin received maintenance or *Unterhaltsvorschuß* (UVS) (maintenance advance payment) respectively merely a quarter of their counterparts in London got maintenance from their children's fathers or through the CSA. The most frequently mentioned income source was Child Benefit/*Kindergeld* which all respondents received. Therefore, it was not included in figure 9.1. Moreover, Housing Benefit/*Wohngeld*⁶¹ was an income source that most interviewees received – two thirds in London and more than half in Berlin. More than a quarter of the interviewees in Berlin received *Erziehungsgeld* (parental leave benefit), five interviewees in London reported receiving Family Credit. If those women who did not receive Income Support/*Sozialhilfe* at the time of the interview but did so at some time since they have been lone parents are added it can be deduced that Income Support/*Sozialhilfe* is clearly the dominant income source for lone mothers with pre-school age children. Two thirds received Income Support/*Sozialhilfe* at some point of lone parenthood. In the first two years of her child the typical single mother in Berlin maintained her livelihood with a combination of *Sozialhilfe*, *Erziehungsgeld*, *Kindergeld*, and *Unterhaltsvorschuß* or maintenance respectively. Once their child was two or three years, most of them returned to work. In contrast, the typical lone mother in London lived on a combination of Income Support, Child Benefit, and Housing Benefit and *did not* receive any maintenance.

The majority of the interviewed women were not employed because they preferred to care for their children. Nevertheless, 39 per cent of the interviewees were full-time, part-time, or self-employed. Surprisingly, three quarters of the respondents in full-time employment came from London, whereas most of the employed interviewees in Berlin were part-time employed. These outcomes contradicted my expectations. Official statistics indicate that two thirds of West German lone mothers are employed while the same proportion in the UK is not employed (Bauerreiss et. al. 1997; Kiernan et. al. 1998). British lone mothers are less likely to be in full-time employment than married mothers while West German lone mothers are more likely (Bradshaw et. al. 1996; BMFSFJ 1998). Obviously, the sample is biased in regard to lower rates of employment. The selection criterion of including only lone mothers with children in pre-school age

⁶¹ This includes housing supplements which are part of *Sozialhilfe* payments.

had a considerable impact here. This confirms the well-established correlation between age of the youngest child and employment propensity (Ford 1996, 1998). Moreover, membership of lone parent organisation might presuppose spare time that most employed mothers do not have.

What prevents lone mothers being employed? Many interviewees explained in detail their reasons for not being currently in work. A lot of these reasons were of personal nature. The majority of respondents could be classified in one of two groups. The first emphasised economic arguments: these women did not know how to escape the poverty trap. Low skills and out-of-date qualifications were likely to result in low wages which would not counterbalance the loss of social benefits. Almost all lone mothers who cited the poverty trap argument were from London, where it was by far the most frequently mentioned reason. The second group preferred to stay with their children, in most cases until they reached nursery or school age.

Many interviewees indicated wanting to re-enter the labour market once their children were old enough. This was the main argument in Berlin. Most women there were going to return to their old jobs following parental leave – a right which is legally guaranteed. Nevertheless, another group made their return to employment dependent on labour market trends, and especially the opportunity of getting a part-time job which was compatible with their family carer role. In London, many stressed the need of getting new qualifications first. Quite a few had enrolled in re-training courses already. The following examples mark the extreme ends of a re-entry into the labour market continuum. At one end there was Max who had to return to work despite parental leave legislation:

Max (Berlin), 37, 1 child, 6 months old: "I am forced to work because of my financial circumstances ... If I do not start to work my contract expires and then I will be unemployed. I was full-time employed but I would like to work only 30 hours. I hope that it works out this way. I cannot use parental leave fully because I cannot afford it financially. One day I will have exhausted all my savings. I do not get any financial support from any source. The Sozialamt requires me to sell either my car or my life insurance before they will accept an application for Sozialhilfe."

At the other end was Dona who wanted to return to work but could not find a way of escaping the vicious cycle of the poverty trap:

Dona (London), 49, 1 child, 5 years old: "I want to start at 9.30 a.m. and want to finish at about 2.30 p.m. If not, then I'm going to have to find some sort of childcare. ... But whatever I do is going to affect my finances anyway. Because it will obviously affect my Housing Benefit – I won't be able to claim that anymore."

It shouldn't affect my maintenance money. But I have to pay for her school dinners, I have to pay towards medical costs, I have to pay Council Tax – not everything is free. When people are on Income Support most things are free.”

The maintenance trap

Maintenance is a form of financial support that someone is legally required to pay in order to support his/her child or former spouse. The entitlement to child maintenance is ruled by the principle “...that both parents of a child have a duty to contribute to the maintenance of that child.” (CPAG 1998: 2) The amount of maintenance payments is the result of divorce settlements in court or is set by a specific state agency (Child Support Agency (CSA) in the UK, *Jugendamt* (Youth Welfare Office) in Germany). Maintenance payments are to be made on a regular basis (monthly, weekly) and in advance. If maintenance payments are not made or are not made in time these payments can be enforced by the state.

In this study, the interviewees were asked whether they received maintenance payments on a regular basis. Regular maintenance payments by children’s fathers were the exception and not the rule. Only a third of all respondents – most of them from Berlin – received maintenance on a regular basis (see table 9.1). In other words, the great majority of absent fathers in London avoided their financial responsibilities towards their children. Nearly 60 per cent of all interviewees did not receive any maintenance payments from the father. In Berlin, however, almost all of these women received *Unterhaltsvorschuß* (UVS) (maintenance advance payments) instead. Lone mothers can apply for it at the *Jugendamt* if either the father cannot pay maintenance or does not pay regularly, or if a court ruling was not made within three months after maintenance action was issued.

Table 9.1: Maintenance payments for children of lone mothers (in per cent)

	London	Berlin
no maintenance	63	7
irregular maintenance	11	2
regular maintenance	14	49
other payments ⁶²	7	-
CSA / UVS	5	42

Source: own data, n = 116

⁶² Payments for mortgage, bills, etc. as part of divorce settlements.

As can be seen in table 9.1 the majority of lone mothers in London did not get any maintenance from the children's fathers. It is surprising that only three women got maintenance through the Child Support Agency. Why did these women not get maintenance? Based on an analysis of qualitative context information the following reasons for non-payment were mentioned. Most common were lone mothers who received Income Support and, thus, had no incentive of claiming maintenance since it would have been deducted from their benefits anyway. This correlation has been analysed in detail elsewhere (Clarke et al. 1994, 1998). In many cases fathers were unemployed and, thus, incapable of paying maintenance. Others lived abroad, were in prison, or dead. Some lone mothers had good reasons for avoiding any contact with the children's fathers: some had lived in violent relationships, one person was married to a paedophile. Other problematic cases included self-employed ex-partners whose income was difficult to assess by the CSA.

Obviously, most fathers did not pay maintenance for their children regardless of their children's and former partner's financially difficult circumstances. It remains unclear, however, whether some of the interviewed lone mothers had come to a tacit agreement with the fathers about informal ways of financial support that did not affect their entitlement to Income Support. Clarke and colleagues (1994) described very convincingly how children's fathers contributed financially to lone mothers' livelihood despite not formally paying maintenance.

Formal support in crisis events

This section examines sources of formal support which were used by lone mothers in emergencies, as measured in the four crisis scenarios. The respondents were confronted with typical crisis scenarios which were constructed to measure four different types of informal support: personal, material, financial, and emotional support. At the beginning of each crisis event the interviewees were prompted with the question about what they did when the crisis occurred. Many respondents mentioned informal supporters first but quite a few also indicated that they approached formal support sources. In the case of emergency childcare merely five respondents mentioned having contacted formal supporters - employers, health visitor, *Krankenkasse* (sickness fund), *Jugendamt* (youth welfare office). Obviously, emergency childcare is seen as primarily dependent on the individual concerned. Lone mothers either stayed at home looking after their children themselves or they organised informal childcare.

Similarly, only four women from London used formal sources for buying urgently needed clothing for their children. These sources were private loans from a bank or mail-order companies which had to be paid off weekly. In one case, a lone mother was so desperate that she approached a 'loan shark'. Seasonal extra payments for clothing as part of Sozialhilfe/Income Support were not considered as formal support in emergencies since all recipients are entitled to it regardless of urgent needs⁶³. It is, however, also possible to request extra payments for clothing if an emergency occurs. Remarkably, not a single interviewee indicated having used this opportunity. Most lone mothers anticipated emerging needs of their children and obtained clothing well in advance. Bazaars and street markets were extensively used as affordable alternatives to high street markets. So-called 'baby bazaars' and second-hand shops are well established sources for buying (and selling) affordable clothing in Berlin. These forms of shopping were not classified as formal support sources. I regarded them as means of self-help, although admittedly this is arguable.

Financial support was the support type where most formal support was expected, especially state support. However, only a quarter of the respondents turned to a formal support source when financial support was needed for urgent household repairs. In both samples the most frequently mentioned was the Benefits Agency/*Sozialamt* (8 cases), followed by landlords (5), and bank loans (4). In a few cases mail-order companies and charities were approached. The majority of respondents who indicated having experienced such a crisis had already referred to self-help or used informal support. Many waited until they could afford the repair.

Almost every interviewee had experienced emotional upset in the past. Emotional support is typically provided by friends. Therefore, it was expected that only few lone mothers would turn to formal sources. In contrast, as many as a third of all respondents were seeking professional help. Almost half of them talked with a counsellor or took part in psychotherapy. Another quarter approached Gingerbread or VAMV for advice or psychological counselling (VAMV), a fifth sought help from social services. The remainder was distributed among self-help groups other than lone parent organisations, charities, the church, social workers, family counselling, and telephone help lines. The most striking result of this analysis was the high number of lone mothers who participated in psychotherapy, especially when we consider hidden therapies provided

⁶³ Sozialhilfe recipients in Berlin are entitled to two extra payments for clothing per year.

by other support sources, such as lone parent organisations, charities (e.g. Newpin, Dignity), family counselling, or telephone help lines. This is an indication of the enormous psychological stress lone mothers have to cope with.

Summarising the outcomes of this section, it can be said that many lone mothers lived in financially difficult circumstances. The most common income sources were monetary state transfers. Since many fathers did not meet their maintenance obligations towards their children the state was paying on their behalf (through *Unterhaltsvorschuß* in Germany and Income Support in the UK). Almost all lone mothers wanted to take up employment after they had spent the early years with their children. Some successfully mastered the re-entry but a significant proportion of lone mothers in London failed since they were unable of escaping the poverty trap. Formal help in emergencies was only used by a minority and then almost exclusively in regard to emotional and financial support. However, when a formal support source was approached it was usually the main supporter.

9.2. Users of formal support

After this analysis of formal support sources attention now was turned to the question of who used it.

Multivariate analysis of formal support utilisation

Exactly half of the interviewees indicated having used formal support on at least one occasion. Usually only one source was mentioned. Only a small minority used more than one formal supporter in one or several support incidents (see table 9.2).

Table 9.2: Number of formal supporters in emergencies (in percent)

	London	Berlin
no formal supporter	47	53
one formal supporter	40	28
two formal supporters	5	14
three formal supporters	8	5

Source: own data, n = 116

Who were the users of formal support? Next, background variables encouraging use of formal support will be identified. Are there circumstances that require this kind of support? Although the utilisation was well distributed across the data set it was very

difficult finding common characteristics of formal support users. Lone mothers who approached formal emotional supporters, such as a counsellor, a doctor, or who took part in a psychotherapy did not look for formal financial support and vice versa. Hence, it was necessary to examine financial and emotional support incidents separately. The other two support incidents were omitted since they did not provide enough cases.

As shown in the previous chapter, the financial crisis scenario was relevant for 83 interviewees. A quarter of these turned to a formal financial support source. In order to differentiate between individuals who used this support form from those who did not it was necessary to compute a logistic regression (Andreß et al. 1997). Results of the analyses are presented as a series of odds ratios. These display the log of the probability that an interviewed lone mother will use a formal financial supporter in emergencies compared to the probability that she will not. Odds ratios above 1 indicate a positive correlation, odds ratios below 1 a negative correlation. The results of this regression model are summarised in the second column of table 9.3 below (complete results in table A 7 in the annex).

Three variables had significant effects on the likelihood of the utilisation of *formal financial support*, after controlling for other variables: education, receipt of Income Support/*Sozialhilfe*, and the number of informal financial supporters. Receipt of Income Support/*Sozialhilfe* had a strong positive effect: it increased the odds of turning to formal financial support sources in emergencies by a factor of 3.63. A value below 1 for education means that with an increasing number of years spent on education the odds of using formal financial support decrease. This is a plausible result since better educated people tend either to be employed in relatively well paid jobs that enable them to accumulate savings for times of need or come from resource rich social backgrounds that are more capable of providing equivalent support (Bourdieu 1982; Shavit and Blossfeld 1993; Goldthorpe 1996). In a similar way the odds of using formal financial supporters decrease with an increasing number of informal financial supporters. Every informal financial supporter reduces the odds of turning to formal financial support by the factor .27 (i.e. by 73 per cent). These outcomes applied to both sub-samples alike. The demographic variables age of respondent, number of children, and age of youngest child had no significant effect.

Table 9.3: Odds ratios of formal support use in selected crisis events

Variable list	Financial support	Emotional support
School education (in years)	.57 *	1.07
Age of lone mother (in years)	1.05	1.07
Never married / ever married (1 = ever married)	.61	4.27 *
London / Berlin indicator (1 = Berlin)	1.23	.93
Number of children	1.02	.49 *
Age of youngest child	1.14	.97
Receipt of Income Support/Sozialhilfe (1 = yes)	3.63 *	2.07
Number of informal supporters	.27 **	1.04
Duration lone motherhood (years)	.99	1.01
Regular use of childcare facility (1 = yes)	not computed	2.94
Friends should regularly talk about personal concerns. (1 = yes)	not computed	2.98 *
Pseudo R ²	.21	.13

Significance levels: * = .05, ** = .01

McFadden's Pseudo R² is defined as $1 - L_1/L_0$.

L_1 is the log-likelihood including all variables. L_0 is the log-likelihood containing the regression constant only.

Almost all interviewees (n = 111) had experienced emotional distress to an extent that they needed someone else's support. A third of them turned to formal supporters for help. Again, a logistic regression was used for estimating the odds for using formal support in an emotional crisis event. The odds ratios can be found in the third column of table 9.3. Based on theoretical considerations regular attendance of a childcare facility and a norm that friends should regularly talk about personal concerns were included into analysis as well. Three variables other than those in case of the financial support incident had significant effects on the odds of utilising *formal emotional support*: a never married vs. ever married indicator, the necessity that friends should regularly talk about personal concerns, and the number of children. The never married vs. ever married indicator had a strong effect. The odds of using formal emotional support for ever married lone mothers were four times higher than those for never married ones. Dissolution of a marriage often involves very dramatic changes of socio-economic circumstances and social networks alike that come along with high levels of emotional distress. The odds of using formal emotional support were three times higher for interviewees who did not perceive the necessity of talking with friends about personal concerns regularly. This suggests that individuals who do not want or cannot talk about their problems with friends may be more prepared to undergo therapy or medical

treatment. Surprisingly, each additional child significantly decreased the odds of turning to a formal emotional supporter.

In contrast to the financial support model, neither the number of informal supporters nor education had an effect on the odds of formal emotional support. Since the relationship between formal and informal support is the object of thorough analysis in the subsequent section I will not deal with it here. Moreover, it was expected that people on Income Support/Sozialhilfe would use formal emotional support since they live in deprived circumstances imposing stress, dissatisfaction, and disillusionment. Furthermore, they have more time than employed lone mothers to undergo therapy or see the doctor for emotional problems. A positive coefficient confirms this assumption – but it is not statistically significant (significance level = .18). Attendance of childcare facilities was considered as well since it was expected that it would give lone mothers more time for themselves, thereby reducing stress. Contrary to these expectations, attendance at childcare facilities increased the odds of using formal emotional support (significance level = .11). Again, a possible explanation is that these women had enough time to undergo therapy, compared with those who cared for their children full-time.

These results confirm that it was correct to carry out separate analyses for both support incidents. Not a single predictor was significant in both models. Utilisation of formal financial support was predominantly dependent on receipt of Income Support and the availability of informal alternatives. Formal emotional support was mainly dependent on pre-lone motherhood marital status and norms guiding the behaviour in friendship networks.

Formal supporters as main support sources

So far, merely use vs. non-use of formal support was distinguished. Next, I will look at those interviewees who used more than one formal supporter. Hereby, it is of particular interest to see whether several formal support sources were used within the same dimension or whether they were spread across two or more dimensions. Only a small group indicated having used more than one supporter (n = 19). Qualitative procedures were chosen for identifying patterns of formal support mobilisation in this group.

The majority of respondents who turned to more than one formal support source did so in regard to one dimension only, in most cases emotional support. Only six used professional help in two support incidents, usually a combination of material/financial support and emotional support. Formal support in three support incidents was a rare

exception. A typical example for each of these cases was selected which was then analysed in detail. The first example is a lone mother who used several formal supporters in one scenario only – emotional support. Ginger is 30 years old, divorced, and has two boys. She has been a lone parent for more than four years. When she separated from her husband she returned to London. Her youngest was only six months old by that time. This time was very hard for her. She hardly had any support since her family was living a long way off. In this phase of her life she turned to the NHS.

“I got a lot of support from my health visitor. My youngest son was still so little that she still was coming to see me. And in the end I got a lot of help from my doctor as well. And social services paid for a childminder for my youngest son for one month after playgroup to give me like an hour or so on my own, to have a bath, or read a book, or just do nothing. And that really helped! They were very supportive!”

Ginger used a wide range of support for coping with an acute crisis which enabled her to regain control of her life. However, this was a unique situation in her life. In other problematic situations she either helped herself or received support from her family and a friend. Now she is fairly satisfied with her life. She became an active member of Gingerbread. A week after the interview she returned to employment in an office job.

Next, our attention is turned to an example of a lone mother who utilised formal support in two separate scenarios. Karina from Berlin is 43, divorced, and still on parental leave. Her daughter is almost two. She married late in her life wishing to have a child. When she was pregnant her husband forced her to leave their matrimonial home. The start into her new life as a lone mother was very difficult since she hardly received any support at all. During the interview she explained why she did not get any help from her family. Karina described her childhood as unloved and hard. Her parents made her feel a burden. She describes the relationship to her parents below:

“I have only superficial contact to my mother. But she is my mother. I maintain the contact to her by writing occasionally a formal letter. I don't want to know my father and he also doesn't show any interest in his grandchild. I tried it again when the little one was born – but I didn't succeed.”

Only one friend who is also divorced helped her occasionally. She helped her a few times in critical situations, when she was ill or when she needed someone to look after her daughter. When several problems occurred at the same time it was getting too much for Karina:

“I had toothache that day, the little one was ill as well and the people were telling me that the child had not developed properly because she didn't talk enough. This was also the day of my divorce, and my ex-husband explained that the child was looking traumatised. And that I was not mentally stable anyway ... You know, when such things happen at the same time it is too much for me! I was always searching for an opportunity to cope with these situations. After a year I had the chance to join a therapy group at VAMV.”

This therapy group at VAMV showed her new ways of mastering her life. Karina particularly appreciated the opportunity of getting professional practical guidance – something she could not get from conversations with other lone mothers. Beside emotional support she also used financial formal support. Her main income source has been Sozialhilfe – which was supplemented by Erziehungsgeld in the first two years. She gets maintenance for her child – but her ex-husband is self-employed and only pays the minimum required by the law. When she needed a new fridge she went to the Sozialamt where she received the money for purchasing a new one. Obviously, she neither felt inhibited to go there nor did she encounter any problems at the Sozialamt. She described the civil servants as supportive. Karina is an example of lone mothers who hardly get any informal support. If she cannot sort out a problem herself she turns to formal or semi-formal support sources (VAMV). In contrast to Ginger these were not isolated incidents. She has attended this therapy group for more than a year and has lived on Sozialhilfe for nearly three years. Considering her positive experiences, it is very likely that she will turn to formal supporters again when the necessity arises.

Finally, I will look at a case who used formal support in three crisis events. Similarly to Karina, she had developed a strategy of turning exclusively to formal support sources. Regina, 23, has been a single mother since her son was born two years ago. She was the only German interviewee who did not complete school. She comes from a broken home. The child's father who is Turkish helps her as much as he can although he is unemployed. He is the only informal supporter she has. Regina's case was unique – she generally expected state institutions to help her organise her life and sort out her problems. On one occasion she said:

“Now I have an appointment at a vocational guidance centre at the Job Centre because I haven't got a plan of how things shall go on. But unfortunately, I don't know where to start. I don't understand the labour market. I don't know what I can do, what I want, what is worth it.”

When she felt that the care for her child was getting too much for her she went to the Sozialamt to ask for help. They got her a childminder and paid for her. That was not the

only occasion when the Sozialamt helped her. When her washing machine exploded they purchased a new one for her. Also in emotional crises she exclusively used formal support:

“Everything happened at once: a friend let me down, everything in the flat was broken [following a fire]. The child was constantly ill, scalded his hand and nearly poisoned himself – all within six months. And when I thought it cannot possibly get worse my washing machine exploded. That was the time when I asked for help.”

She went to the Sozialamt who helped her with a crisis loan and referred her to the Jugendamt. Social services staff talked her situation through with her, advised her on what to do next and where she could find support. They recommended her to attend a VAMV meeting to meet other lone parents. And so she did.

Again, Regina’s case is unusual compared to other interviewees. She has difficulties mastering her life on her own. Knowing that, she deliberately asks for formal support and expects the state to assist her in sorting out her problems. This open-mindedness towards formal support, however, is her biggest asset. Unlike others who withdraw from their social environment and suffer in silence she does not have any inhibitions to ask for state support. On the other hand, Regina does not trust anyone and is, therefore, unable to make friends. If social services had not referred her to VAMV she probably would not have found her way there. Regina was unique in the sample because she represents a type of lone mothers who do not normally get in touch with lone parent organisations. This underlines the disadvantage of exclusively interviewing members of such organisations in that the most needy lone mothers were grossly under-represented: women from broken homes, with low educational attainments, teenage mums, ethnic minorities, and other social problem groups.

To sum up, only a small proportion of all respondents turned to more than one formal supporter. The three examples encompass the range of formal support utilisation. Whereas most interviewees turned to formal supporters only in order to cope with a unique crisis situation some lone mothers needed formal support on a more regular basis. In these cases, a lot of formal support was necessary for a limited time period to overcome these difficulties. Individuals like Regina need continuous formal support. Success in this matter is dependant on the commitment of the staff of state institutions. These examples show that there are individuals who developed explicit formal support mobilisation strategies.

Experiences with state support – determinants of support mobilisation?

As was just outlined the commitment of state agencies' staff can be crucial for the welfare of lone mothers. Therefore, it was investigated whether there is an association between negative perceptions of Benefits Agency/Sozialamt, Child Support Agency/Jugendamt, etc and utilisation of state support. Negative experiences there may discourage lone mothers from using formal support which they are entitled to. It is striking that three quarters of all respondents who ever had to deal with the Benefits Agency/Sozialamt felt inhibited going there in the first place. However, when asked to evaluate the performance of Benefits Agency/Sozialamt staff nearly half confirmed that they were supportive and trying to help them as best as they could. How can this apparent contradiction be solved? The respondents were encouraged to describe their experiences at the Benefits Agency/Sozialamt at length.

Negative experiences were common. The most prevalent effect resulted from the mere fact of being dependent on social benefits. These interviewees felt uncomfortable independent of staff behaviour. Many had internalised the central norm of the liberal work ethic that everybody ought to earn her living. This attitude was particularly common among lone mothers who had worked for a number of years. Many felt that they needed to justify their receipt of social benefits. Statements frequently used included: 'I've always paid my way' or 'I felt ashamed', 'degraded', 'embarrassed'. This critical self-evaluation was very common in London, reflecting the prevalence of a liberal work ethic and a public discourse on lone motherhood that pictured them as 'scroungers' and as 'social threat' (see chapter 3). A related theme that interviewees in both sub-samples shared was the concern of being stigmatised as 'being on the dole'. In Berlin, the majority of social benefits claimants complained that they felt like 'petitioners' who had to beg for a right they were entitled to. They were sensible of being 'a social problem group' that needed and was entitled to state support. A negative self-perception accounted for more than a third of all responses. Although prevalent in both samples it was even more persistent in London. The qualitative analysis provided evidence that some interviewees with this negative self-perception did not claim state support in financial crises. They would rather cut down on their limited resources than go to the Benefits Agency/Sozialamt. In some cases, this motivation also had a reinforcing effect on a premature return into the labour market.

Another group felt more disturbed by the negative circumstances at the Benefits Agency/Sozialamt. A quarter of all responses corresponded to this category.

Interviewees in London and Berlin alike complained about long waiting hours and a children-unfriendly environment (dirt, smoke, aggressive people). Other respondents were explicit in their negative assessment of staff behaviour (15 per cent of all responses). Many of them were unhappy with staff who lacked competence and were not advising them correctly. As a consequence, they did not get all benefits they were entitled to. Others reported of harassment. Conversations with the interviewed lone mothers suggested that these negative experiences may influence formal support mobilisation behaviour. However, evidence for this was not found in the analysis of the crisis scenarios. Only a tenth expressed their satisfaction with their treatment and the advice they got at the Benefits Agency/Sozialamt, 15 per cent were indifferent.

It was shown why individuals who generally made positive experiences at the Benefits Agency/Sozialamt felt inhibited about going there nevertheless. This was caused by self-stigmatisation of many interviewed lone mothers. Utilisation of state support was not determined by experiences at the Benefits Agency/Sozialamt. It happened only in a few cases that women preferred solving their problems informally rather than asking for state support. But this pattern was not common. Obviously, it is not so much negative experiences that determine formal support mobilisation behaviour. It is more a combination of urgent need and knowledge of entitlements that encourages lone mothers to claim state support. Lone parent organisations play a crucial role in spreading this kind of knowledge.

9.3. The interaction between formal and informal support

In this section the interaction between informal and formal support sources will be investigated. A basic principle of human behaviour is that people who are capable of solving their problems will do so. If we are unable to help ourselves we can either ask for help or leave the problem unsolved. Whereas informal support is an exemplar of human community, entitlement to formal support is the outcome of the emergence of modern welfare states. Thus, people in need have principally two options – asking families, friends, neighbours, or other members of their personal networks for help or turning to institutionalised supporters, such as state agencies, medical services, employers, landlords, charities. In the context of this study the former was referred to as informal support and the latter as formal support.

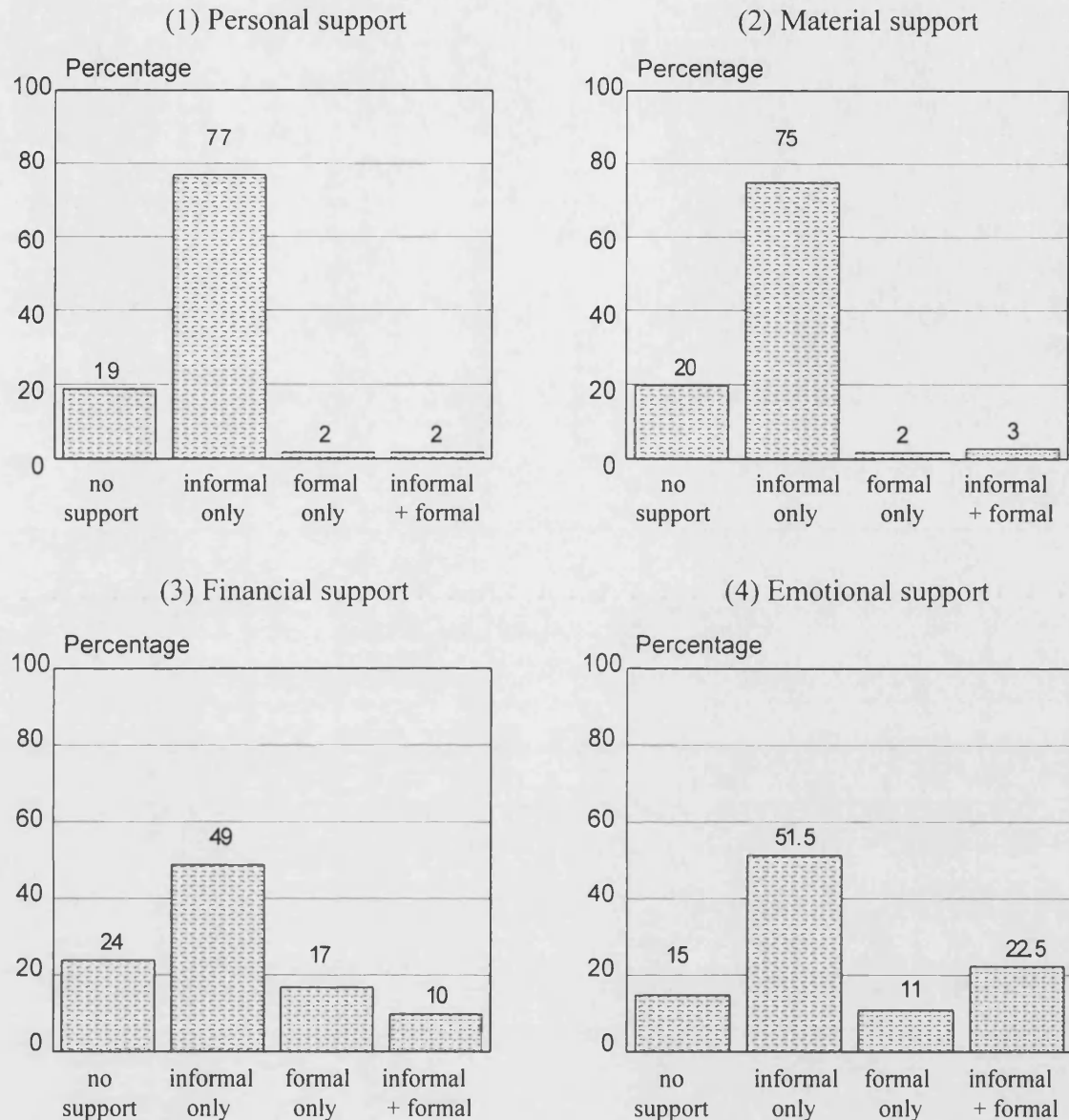
Theoretical assumptions and occurrence of formal and informal support

In this section the main results of this thesis will be brought together to answer the fundamental question that was formulated in the main hypothesis. There, an interdependence between informal and formal support mobilisation was proposed. The main hypothesis was specified in three partial hypotheses. In the first sub-hypothesis the dominance of informal support was proposed (*dominance hypothesis*). In line with the subsidiarity principle it was expected that someone who has informal support for satisfaction of her needs will not turn to formal support sources. Thus, it was expected that interviewees asked for informal support first before they considered asking for formal support (*subsidiarity hypothesis*). Conversely, it was assumed that someone who does not have recourse to informal support will turn to formal support sources instead (*compensation hypothesis*). Let us now summarise criteria for hypothesis testing. If the main hypothesis was valid all respondents should typically use either informal or formal support. According to the dominance hypothesis they should use predominantly informal support. In theory, individuals who used a combination of informal and formal support should not exist, unless informal support was proven as being insufficient and formal help was only asked for following that.

In the following discussion, the interaction between informal and formal support will be analysed in detail. Thereby, the dominance hypothesis will be tested. To this end, an overview of the utilisation of formal and informal support in the four scenarios will be presented. Four support mobilisation patterns are posited: individuals who used neither informal nor formal support (first bar in figure 9.2), those who used only informal support (second bar), interviewees who exclusively referred to formal support (third bar), and finally respondents who utilised both informal and formal support (fourth bar). The outcomes of these frequency counts are presented in figure 9.2 on the next page. This only refers to those who had experienced the scenario before (missings were not included).

Utilisation of merely one support form dominated across all scenarios: the exclusive use of informal support was far more prevalent than the exclusive utilisation of formal support. Formal support only played a secondary role in regard to financial and emotional support where it accounted for 17 per cent and 11 per cent respectively. It was almost insignificant in regard to the other two support types (only one case each). Personal and material support were almost solely covered through informal support.

Figure 9.2: Support mobilisation patterns



Source: own data, n = 116

A combination of informal and formal support was a rare exception in the first two scenarios – but nearly a quarter used it for coping with emotional problems. About ten per cent used a combination of both support forms for overcoming financial emergencies. Finally, some lone mothers managed to sort out their problems on their own or had to go without help. These results applied unequivocally to both samples.

Utilisation of informal support clearly dominated in all scenarios. This outcome confirms the validity of the dominance hypothesis. In the first two scenarios almost exclusively informal support was chosen (77 and 75 per cent respectively). In regard to financial and emotional support, however, a significant number of respondents used

formal support. Hence, I focused on the examination of an interdependence between informal and formal support in the financial and emotional support scenarios only.

The extension of the informal support mobilisation typology

Another opportunity of disproving the main hypothesis is given if formal support is used without considering use of informal support in the first place. Therefore, attention is now turned towards those who exclusively used formal support. If the compensation hypothesis is to be valid formal support users should not have informal support alternatives. This is precisely the group that was described as type IV in the typology of informal support mobilisation in chapter 8.4. This typology will now be re-introduced to investigate whether there were significant differences in the utilisation of formal support. The findings are summarised in table 9.4 below.

Table 9.4: Support mobilisation patterns (in per cent)

Support patterns	I Mobi- lisers	II Compen- sators	III Family types	IVa Loners	IVb Losers
(1) formal support only	-	-	-	5	6
(2) either formal or informal	14	16	11	36	47
(3) mix in each scenario	5	16	7	9	-
(4) mainly informal support	81	68	82	50 ⁶⁴	47
n	21	31	27	22	15

Statistical significance: $\chi^2 = 20.1$; $df = 12$; $Sig. = .06$

Source: own data, $n = 116$

In the first column support mobilisation patterns are listed which were used by the respondents. These vary compared to those in figure 9.2 in two regards: first, individuals who received no support at all across all scenarios were not found and, therefore, this category was not considered in the table. Secondly, at this point two kinds of mixed types have to be distinguished. Line (2) is assigned to respondents who used exclusively formal support in one scenario and exclusively informal in another one. Line (3) contains those interviewees who mobilised a mix of formal and informal support in each scenario. Interviewees in line (1) used formal support only. Finally, the fourth pattern included respondents who used predominantly or exclusively informal support (4).

⁶⁴ The result that almost half of them used mainly informal support nevertheless seems to contradict the earlier verdict. The classification in the deprived category was based on a comprehensive qualitative

Let us begin with the *mobilisers* who managed to generate most informal support from both family and friends. It was expected that they would use formal support to a lesser extent since they did not rely on it. This assumption was confirmed: the vast majority of the mobilisers used predominantly informal support (81 per cent). Nobody used exclusively formal support. However, 14 per cent used formal support in solving a particular problem. Only one person repeatedly used a mix of both support forms.

Similar was the situation of *compensators*. Compensators counterbalanced the lack of family support through active networking efforts thereby creating informal support networks consisting of friends – which resulted in a dominance of informal support mobilisation (68 per cent). Compensators more often than mobilisers used a mix of informal and formal support in sorting out crises (a third). Most respondents who used a support mix used formal supplementary support.

Family types maintained very close relations to their family who supported them in almost every respect. Thus, they did not need to ask friends for support. As a consequence of their family orientation it was expected that they also needed less formal support. This assumption was confirmed. In their support mobilisation behaviour they were very much like mobilisers.

In sharp contrast to these three types are the two sub-categories of type IV who were characterised as being deprived of informal support in the previous chapter. In line with the compensation hypothesis it was expected that they would compensate for the lack of informal support through formal support. This expectation was confirmed. ‘Loners’ and especially ‘losers’ used formal support to a much larger extent than the other types. More than half of the IVb type and exactly half of type IVa used formal support at one or more occasions – which is more than twice as much as mobilisers and family types and still considerably more frequently than compensators. The only two individuals who exclusively used formal support belonged to these types. Generally speaking, formal support was the dominant support source in at least one scenario for those deprived of informal support. The extension of the informal support typology to formal support confirmed the validity of the compensation hypothesis. Lone mothers who were deprived of informal support made use of formal support to a much greater extent, thereby compensating for the lack of informal support. Conversely, lone mothers who mobilised a lot of informal support used less formal support. In particular, they hardly

analysis of their informal support networks. Informal support in this category merely indicates that at least one informal supporter was mentioned and no formal supporter.

used exclusively formal support. But why did some of them make use of formal support at all? This contradicts our hypothesis. Therefore, I will have a closer look at the combination of informal and formal support in the following section.

Causes for support mix use

In this section, I leave the general level of support mobilisation patterns in table 9.4 to have a closer look at those individuals who made use of formal support despite having recourse to informal support as well. Nearly a third of all interviewees used a mix of support forms in one or more scenarios. I will proceed in three steps: first, lone mothers who used both formal and informal support sources to solve a financial crisis will be the considered. Secondly, those who used a combination of both support forms to cope with emotional strain will be examined. Finally, individuals who utilised formal support without considering the use of informal support first will be looked at. The existence of these three groups has the potential to reject the subsidiarity hypothesis. In order to test the validity of that hypothesis the sequence of this behavioural pattern as well as motives for a chosen way of action were investigated, using a case study approach.

Support mix in regard to financial support

In regard to financial support eight respondents made use of a support mix. In other words, there were lone mothers who turned to informal and formal supporters alike for solving financial crises. According to the subsidiarity hypothesis this is unproblematic if informal support is approached first – and formal support only, if the former was insufficient. Therefore, attention was paid to the sequence of support mobilisation and motives for seeking formal help. Five out of eight interviewees did, indeed, approach family and friends first before they accessed formal support. In the right column of table 9.5 on the next page brief outlines of each case can be found. Three cases, however, turned to formal support in the first place although informal support was available as well (left column). What happened there?

First, the attention is turned to the cases in the left column. All of them are reasonably clear. The first and second cases required asking for formal support since informal sources was insufficient. In case of Susie the support incident was covered by a private law contract. Thus, the subsidiarity hypothesis is rejected. That means, formal support is also first choice when the support incident is subject to insurance or other contracts, regardless of the availability of informal support alternatives.

Table 9.5: Sequences of informal vs. formal financial support mobilisation

Formal support first, then informal	Informal support first, then formal
<p>Regina (Berlin), 23, single, 1 child <i>Regina received a lot of support from the child's father, including financial support. Since he is unemployed he is unable to pay for major repairs. In such cases she goes to the Benefits Agency.</i></p>	<p>Leslie (London), 44, divorced, 6 children <i>When Leslie's washing machine was broken her adult daughter bailed for the purchase of a new one until it was paid off. Although Leslie is on Income Support she did not ask for help at the Benefits Agency. In another crisis event a charity granted her financial support.</i></p>
<p>Rache (London), 38, divorced, 2 children <i>When Rache did not have the money to pay for repairs and rent at the same time her landlady accepted late payments at several occasions. Generally, she is supported financially by her ex-husband through the CSA. However, this support is not sufficient when a crisis occurs.</i></p>	<p>Silvana (London), 30, single, 2 children <i>If Silvana can't sort out a problem herself a friend who works as caretaker will help. But he is unable to support her financially. When her stove broke down she applied for a grant at the Benefits Agency – and got it.</i></p>
<p>Susie (London), 29, single, 1 child <i>Susie needed financial support only once when her fridge was broken. That was, however, <u>rented from the landlord and part of her licence agreement.</u> Therefore, she required the landlord to fix it.</i></p>	<p>Chris (Berlin), 31, single, 1 child <i>Chris got a grant from 'Stiftung für Mutter und Kind' (a state foundation for mothers and children) when her washing machine was broken. The Sozialamt refused to help her. Initial help provided a neighbour whose washing machine she could use.</i></p>
	<p>Vicky (London), 32, single, 3 children <i>Vicky gets a lot of financial support from her family. But she feels annoyed by her dependence on them. Therefore, she bought a washing machine from a catalogue and pays it off monthly.</i></p> <p>Tracy (London), 28, divorced, 4 children <i>When her car was out of order she asked her dad for help who had a look at it. <u>But when her washing machine was broken she went straight away to the Benefits Agency to ask for a grant which she got.</u></i></p>
n = 3	n = 5

Secondly, in five cases lone mothers approached their informal supporters first before they asked for formal support. Three of them only asked for formal support when informal help was lacking. Vicky insisted on using a mail-order company although she usually received support from her family in emergencies. This is a borderline case. Here, formal support was used because the reciprocity norm in informal support relations was violated. But Vicky's family has always supported her financially and is very likely to step in should she encounters problems with the re-payment. In fact, only the support of her family enables her using this specific form of formal support mobilisation.

It is a different story with Tracy. Although she asked for informal support on one occasion she instantly turned to formal support when her washing machine was broken since she knew that she might be eligible for a state grant. This example also falsifies the subsidiarity hypothesis. The underlined cases in table 9.5 provide evidence that entitlements to social benefits as well as to private law contracts result in direct use of formal support, regardless of informal support alternatives. Thus, the hypothesis has to be specified for inclusion of the dimension of entitlement. This presupposes knowledge of entitlement. However, this is not automatic. As Leslie's example shows not everybody claims such entitlements.

Support mix in regard to emotional support

I will now have a closer look at those lone mothers who used a combination of informal and formal support solving their emotional problems. They accounted for more than a fifth of all respondents. These 25 respondents were separated into two groups depending on whether formal help was used as main or supplementary support. In this case it was less important to identify the sequence of approaching informal and formal supporters. Most emotional problems are first discussed with friends or family members. The question is, however, whether this is regarded as support. Therefore, it was more important to find out who the main support source in an emotional crisis was. Table 9.6 on the next page summarises motives of the utilisation of formal emotional support and illustrates this using two examples each.

Three quarters (right column) merely supplemented informal emotional support through formal support. In these cases, the interviewees indicated formal supporters as third, fourth, or fifth supporter. Lone parent organisations were the most frequently mentioned institutional support source. Many went there with the intention of meeting other lone parents, thereby extending their informal support networks – as was discussed in-depth in chapter 7. Others used therapy groups (VAMV) and consultations for solving emotional problems. Obviously, severity of a problem was a critical intervening variable. The remaining quarter (left column) was seeking primarily professional help to handle serious emotional crises. Here, counsellors, medical services, and social services were the dominant formal supporters. Informal helpers were unable to provide adequate support in this regard or the respondents regarded them as unsuitable.

Table 9.6: Motives for formal emotional mobilisation despite of informal alternatives

Formal support main, informal supplementary	Informal support main, formal supplementary
<p>Line (Berlin), 37, single, 1 child <i>Line tries to sort out emotional problems on her own. She also talks with friends and her mother about it but they do not understand her. Most of her friends do not have children. Therefore, she was seeking counselling to solve her problems.</i></p>	<p>Birgit (Berlin), 33, divorced, 1 child <i>Birgit has a lot of friends. Whenever there is a problem, she talks with them and her parents. But she is concerned that her friends might be overwhelmed by her problems. Therefore, she turned to VAMV to solve a more serious crisis. Here, she got counselling and joined a therapy group.</i></p>
<p>Vicky (London), 32, single, 3 children <i>Vicky had a lot of problems with her ex-partner. She got an injunction to get him out of the house. Following that, he destroyed her car and threatened her, so that she called the police to arrest him. In this situation informal support was inappropriate. But normally, she gets a lot of support from her family.</i></p>	<p>Nova (London), 28, married, living separated, 1 child <i>Nova comes from a broken home. When she has emotional problems she usually talks with her closest friends about it who help her finding a solution. When her husband was sent to prison, she was seeking counselling and joined the therapy group Newpin .</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concern to overburden informal helpers • friends don't understand their problems • insufficient informal support • problems too serious for informal help • delicate, intimate problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concern to overburden informal helpers • concern to lose respect of friends • extend social network, meet lone parents • medical services necessary • other quality of support
<p>Dominance of counselling + Social Services</p>	<p>Dominance of lone parent organisations</p>
<p>n = 7</p>	<p>n = 18</p>

Formal and informal emotional supporters cover different needs. Although both counsellor and friends provide emotional support the services they offer are not equivalent. Principally the same applies to lone parent organisations and friends. Lone mothers have the emotional need of meeting other lone parents. They feel understood, get comfort, and very specific advice and guidance. They can satisfy this need in lone parent organisations. Most of their old friends are not lone parents and, therefore, cannot see the world through their eyes. As a consequence, parallel utilisation of both support forms is common. Does this result confirm or falsify the hypothesis? If it was argued that lone mothers turn to formal supporters because their informal support sources are insufficient the hypothesis would be immunised against falsification. In other words, the informal support of every interviewee who turned to formal support was inadequate. In the event, the hypothesis was neither confirmed nor falsified in regard to emotional support: the data do not indicate whether the interviewed lone mothers would have been able to cope by using their old support networks only. What I do know is that all

respondents described emotional support by lone parent organisations and other formal supporters as improving their situation.

Why do people make use of formal support despite sufficient informal support?

In the previous two sections was the group of support mix users described. Next, the attention is turned to those respondents who used exclusively formal support on at least one occasion despite having recourse to informal support alternatives (see line 2 in table 9.4). The question is why individuals who belonged to the groups of mobilisers, compensators, and family types did do that. This group consisted of eleven lone mothers. Motives reported here are similar to those mentioned in regard to the support mix pattern (see tables 9.5 and 9.6).

Four of the interviewees who had informal alternatives turned directly to formal supporters because they were entitled to a particular formal service: three required their landlord to pay for a major repair since this was part of their licence agreements, another person claimed a new washing machine from the Social Fund. Only two individuals utilised exclusively formal emotional support. One person applied for a cure to overcome a long-lasting depressive illness. The other needed counselling to master a severe personal crisis. Although she got a lot of support in regard to other support incidents she did not have any close friends providing emotional support. Another three individuals used banks or mail-order companies to pay for major repairs or purchases. The opportunity to pay off rates weekly enabled these lone mothers to pay for major purchases. Although their parents offered financial support they insisted on solving these problems on their own. Based on the definition introduced at the beginning of this thesis these were classified as formal support sources as well. According to this definition, everything that contributes to the solution of a problem was classified as support. Two more individuals were seeking professional legal advice i.e. a service without an informal equivalent.

Summarising it can be said that four out of 11 cases involved entitlements that were claimed independent of informal support alternatives. Another four cases required formal support since there were no informal equivalents. Finally, three more individuals used formal financial support since they were unable to reciprocate informal support. It is concluded that these causes of formal support utilisation support the hypothesis extension which was suggested in the previous subsection. Individuals use formal

support when they believe to be entitled or when they know that there are no informal alternatives.

Summary: the interdependence between informal and formal support

To begin with, the main results concerning informal and formal support mobilisation will be summarised. Four support incidents were constructed in order to explore to which extent lone mothers use informal and formal support. In these four scenarios, 114 out of 116 respondents indicated having used informal support to cope with a crisis. Furthermore, it was found that the extent of informal support provision was mainly dependent on network structural properties. Here, the number of and propinquity to informal supporters were crucial. It was shown that lone mothers turned predominantly either to their original family on one hand or friends on the other. The context of different welfare state systems did not have an effect on the extent of informal support provision (see table 8.10 on page 163). In this chapter it was shown that exactly half of the interviewed lone mothers used formal support on at least one occasion. This almost exclusively referred to financial and emotional crises. Receipt of Income Support/*Sozialhilfe* reinforced the utilisation of formal financial support (see table 9.3). A strong negative effect of the number of informal supporters on the use of formal financial support was also found. This was not valid for emotional support, though.

Finally, the validity of the main hypothesis will be examined. Let us begin with the partial hypotheses. Utilisation of informal support clearly dominated in all scenarios. In regard to personal and material support informal means were almost exclusively used. Informal support was used by a majority in regard to financial and emotional support. This confirms the dominance hypothesis. The universal validity of the subsidiarity hypothesis was rejected although most lone mothers used formal support only if no informal support was available. The original version of the subsidiarity hypothesis has to be amended in two respects since there were respondents who used formal support independently of informal support. These individuals claimed entitlements resulting from private law contracts or welfare state legislation. Moreover, a number of respondents indicated that their emotional problems were so serious that they could not be solved by using informal support. In such cases individuals instantly turned to formal supporters, such as counsellors, doctors, or solicitors. The compensation hypothesis was confirmed. It was found that lone mothers who had little or no informal support mobilised formal support more frequently than interviewees who had access to much

informal support. This compensation is not always successful since some interviewees had to cope without support.

In conclusion I want to examine the validity of the *main hypothesis*. It was stated that there is an association between informal and formal support mobilisation. Most interviewees were consistent in their coping strategy with regard to a particular crisis. Once they decided in favour of informal support they stuck to this choice. Utilisation of formal support to cope with a crisis was the exception, not the rule. Altogether, only a few respondents changed a chosen strategy. If a strategy change occurred in regard to financial support it was because informal support alternatives were insufficient or no informal support was available. In contrast, informal and formal support supplemented each other in regard to emotional support. Next, the overall correlation between both support forms will be discussed.

A bivariate correlation between the numbers of formal and informal supporters was negative but neither statistically significant nor very large. The correlation between the number of formal supporters and the amount of informal support was nearly zero. This result appears to falsify the main hypothesis. It is, however, not appropriate to test total measures of informal support mobilisation in relation to formal support. Since formal support was only prevalent in significant numbers⁶⁵ in financial and emotional support it was only sensitive to set it in relation to these scenarios. Personal and material support needs were almost exclusively covered by informal support or self-help respectively. This result clearly confirms the main hypothesis. When informal help was used no formal support was utilised. For financial support the main hypothesis was confirmed as well. The correlation coefficient for the number of informal and formal supporters in that scenario was negative and highly significant ($r = -.28^{**}$). That means that with increasing numbers of formal supporters the number of informal supporters decreases and vice versa – which was also confirmed in the logistic regression. In the emotional support scenario informal and formal support were not mutually exclusive. This was justified by the seriousness of a crisis. It was impossible within this study to verify whether an emotional crisis required psychotherapeutic assistance for its solution or not. Therefore, it was decided neither to falsify nor to confirm the main hypothesis for emotional support. Since the interdependence between informal and formal support

⁶⁵ Formal childcare was used by four, formal material support by five interviewees.

mobilisation was confirmed for the first three scenarios the main hypothesis was retained.

9.4. Satisfaction with formal and informal support

At the heart of interest in this final section is satisfaction with received support. Therefore, it was looked at the question as to what satisfaction/dissatisfaction with received support depends on. Beyond that, the consequences of satisfaction for the well-being of lone mothers were explored. The concept of general satisfaction will be used for the analysis of the importance of sufficient support. As was shown in chapter 8 the perception of received support is equally important for satisfaction as extent of and quality of support.

To begin with, the results of dissatisfaction with informal support sources and the state which were introduced in section 8.4. are recalled. Following that new data concerning dissatisfaction with formal support sources – which include the state, public and private health services, employers, and lone parent organisations – are presented. Two support sources predominate as the ones by whom lone mothers feel most neglected: the state and absent fathers. Furthermore, interviewees indicated that they wanted more formal support from employers, health services, and local authorities. Contrary to my expectations, demands for more support did not exclusively refer to concrete benefits with the potential for improving their material situation. A significant number of interviewees expressed their wish to receive more understanding and ideal support from society and politics. This referred to more friendliness and occasional everyday support by other people (e.g. at the bus stop or in a shopping centre) as well as verbal comments on lone mothers in public.

Why are lone mothers dissatisfied with state support? Many lone mothers reported negative experiences with supportiveness, competence, speed, and advice by staff of state agencies. Another cause of dissatisfaction was – particularly in London – lack of public childcare. Dissatisfaction with the extent of monetary state transfers was also expected. General demands for more financial support were accompanied by claims for support in a specific situation only, especially re-entry into the labour market. In London, the New Deal for Lone Parents was criticised for ignoring freedom of choice, giving poor advice, and providing insufficient financial means of escaping the poverty trap. A variety of other complaints were mentioned, ranging from the wish to take the children on a holiday trip to more appreciation of their work as parents.

Now, it will be looked at variables that influence lone mothers' satisfaction with formal support that will then be compared with satisfaction with informal support. A multivariate regression model was computed for this purpose. Dissatisfaction with formal support was the dependent variable (see table 9.7 below and table A 8 in the annex). Formal support sources considered here included state, health services, employers, and lone parent organisations. Lone parent organisations were treated as separate category throughout this research. They are formal organisations that provide formal and informal services alike. Here, however, they were subsumed under formal support since they do clearly not belong to lone mothers' family and friendship networks.

Table 9.7: Standardised regression coefficients of a multiple regression model (OLS) with dissatisfaction with formal support as dependent variable

Variable list	Beta
Age of lone mother (years)	-.10
School education (years)	.08
London/Berlin indicator (1 = Berlin)	-.31**
Income Support/Sozialhilfe recipient (1 = yes)	-.08
Satisfaction with support through Benefits Agency / Sozialamt (1 = supportive)	-.43**
State responsibility for childcare (#) (1 = yes)	.01
State responsibility for jobs (#) (1 = yes)	.24*
Importance of lone parent organisations (5 = v. important)	.09
Number of formal supporters	-.13
Informal dissatisfaction index	.29**
Adjusted R ²	.29

Variable description: (#) Is it the state's responsibility to provide every child with affordable childcare/jobs?

The model explains 29 per cent of the variance in dissatisfaction with formal support provision. Controlling for demographic characteristics the following variables are predictors for dissatisfaction with formal support. The highest effect related to individual experiences at the Benefits Agency/*Sozialamt*. Lone mothers who made experiences with not supportive, unfriendly, or incompetent staff were significantly more dissatisfied with formal support. Dissatisfaction in this respect had clearly the strongest effect. Moreover, for the very first time in this study the London/Berlin indicator had a significant effect. Interviewees from Berlin were clearly more satisfied with formal support than their counterparts in London. This is interpreted as an indication of different welfare state contexts.

The number of formal supporters had a decreasing though not significant effect. The more formal supporters were approached the lower was the dissatisfaction with formal support. Receipt of Income Support/Sozialhilfe did not have an effect at dissatisfaction. In the model two norms were considered that measured state responsibility to provide affordable childcare and to get everyone willing to work in an appropriate job. The norm that it was the state's duty to provide jobs had a strong effect. Individuals who supported this norm were considerably more dissatisfied with formal support. An appropriate norm for public childcare provision had no effect since 90 per cent agreed to this norm⁶⁶. Dissatisfaction with informal support was included to control for general dissatisfaction with support. The effect was considerable and highly significant. The importance of lone parent organisations did not have an effect on the total model. For examination purposes both models were – as always – estimated separately for each sub-sample. Lone mothers who regarded Gingerbread important were more dissatisfied with formal support. In Berlin, a similar correlation was not found.

I am at last able to compare the determinants of satisfaction with formal and informal support. The main outcome of this comparison is that the determinants for satisfaction vary considerably although part of the variables were included in both models. While satisfaction with informal support was determined by network structural properties and the extent of informal support, formal support was a function of national context: principally experiences at the Benefits Agency/Sozialamt, and welfare state norms. Both models have in common that demographic variables have no effect on satisfaction with support. The only exception was the age of lone mothers. With increasing age lone mothers were more dissatisfied with informal support they got. This applied to both samples. But only in Berlin were older lone mothers more satisfied with formal support than younger ones. Summarising it can be said that satisfaction with support increases with the extent of received support.

Concluding I will reflect on the correlation between satisfaction with informal and formal support. Although the bivariate correlation was weak and not significant ($r = .14$) an indication for an effect was found in the multivariate regression. Dissatisfaction with informal support increased dissatisfaction with formal support considerably (see informal dissatisfaction index in table 9.7). The inclusion of a formal dissatisfaction index in the regression equation of table 8.13 (dissatisfaction with informal support

⁶⁶ The correlation between both norms was weak ($r = .24 **$).

provision as dependent variable) resulted in a moderately increasing, but not significant effect (significance level = .14). Obviously, there is a general disposition for dissatisfaction with support provision. It remains unclear whether these respondents really needed more support than others or whether their personality made them more receptive for dissatisfaction.

Finally, the attention is turned to general life satisfaction which was described in section 6.2. General life satisfaction reflects well-being in its entirety. The purpose of the following analysis is to examine whether general life satisfaction of lone mothers is determined by the actual provision of informal and formal support or by the perception of this support provision, measured through satisfaction with support. The outcomes are presented as sequence of bivariate correlation coefficients which are represented by arrows and circles in table 9.8.

Table 9.8: Correlation between support and general life satisfaction

	General life satisfaction	
	London	Berlin
actual formal support	○	↓
actual informal support	○	○/↑
satisfaction with formal support	↑	○
satisfaction with informal support	↑	↑
general satisfaction with support	↑	↑

○ no significant effect; ↓ negative effect; ↑ positive effect; ↑ strong positive effect⁶⁷

Let us begin with the comparison of actual support and general life satisfaction. Actual support considered whether support was provided in the first place, the number of supporters, and the extent of informal support. It was expected that lone mothers who received much formal/informal support were happier with their lives. This was, however, not the case. In London, there was no significant association between actual support provision and general life satisfaction at all. That means that general life satisfaction was independent of received support. A negative correlation between use of formal support and general life satisfaction was found in Berlin. Although these bivariate correlation coefficients do not indicate the direction of this association it seems that receipt of formal support is accompanied by deprived circumstances which, in turn, result in low satisfaction scores. Only the association between informal support

⁶⁷ correlation coefficients > .40 and significance level of .01

mobilisation and general life satisfaction was positive in Berlin. Thereby, only the number of informal supporters was significant. The extent of informal support provision (measured as support units) did not have an effect at life satisfaction at all.

Now, satisfaction with support provision will be examined. The satisfaction indices of informal and formal support provision were combined into a general support satisfaction index (line 6 in table 9.8). It contains the total number of all support sources the respondents were dissatisfied. The range was from 0 for satisfaction with all support sources to a maximum of 8 dissatisfaction scores. High satisfaction with support provision is generally associated with high levels of general life satisfaction. In London, this effect was even more pointed than in Berlin. Satisfaction with informal support and general life satisfaction were related in a similar way. Individuals who were happy with received support were also happy with their overall circumstances. In regard to formal support, however, there was no correlation in Berlin while there was a moderate effect in London. Although receipt of formal support had a decreasing effect on general life satisfaction in Berlin the satisfaction with formal support had no influence.

How can the discrepancy between actual and perceived support provision be explained? A misunderstanding that translates a lot of support directly into happiness because it presupposes that all problems will be solved if there is simply enough support may contribute to this end. The measures for actual support provision in this research are biased in the sense that they over-emphasises those who get much support. But there are diverging support needs. People who receive much support may have more serious problems which influence their life satisfaction negatively. Extreme cases in this research included an interviewee who had to care for a disabled child, a mother working as stewardess on long-distance flights (from Frankfurt – not Berlin – to South Africa and Korea), and a woman who was struggling to combine the demands of a job as social worker, as group leader of a Gingerbread local group, and as family carer for three young children. People also vary in their capacity to solve problems on their own. Some individuals are capable of mastering most of their problems alone or do not have many problems. They have lower support scores since they do not normally ask for help. Thus, they are satisfied with their lives in general although they do not get much support. Both women with extensive support needs and those with hardly any need of support influenced the result that general life satisfaction does not automatically increase when much support is provided. This confirms Cobb's (1976) findings that general life satisfaction is primarily determined by perceived support.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSIONS

We are enmeshed by social networks that provide key supportive services. These consist of individuals who are emotionally and geographically close to us, although kinship relations have lost a significant proportion of their former role as material welfare providers. Modern welfare states guarantee security in case of retirement, old age care, sickness, invalidity, and unemployment independent of families. Nevertheless, kinship relations maintained a central role in our social networks. Especially when children are born or when we are getting old members of our families become particularly important reference individuals (Glatzer 2001). Support provision is a complex process that continuously changes over the course of a lifetime. There are multiple support sources and a broad variety of supportive actions. The complexity of the support terminology results in a variety of access and operationalisation opportunities. In this research exchange theories, network and social support approaches were combined into an integrated theoretical model with the intention to provide evidence for an interaction between informal and formal support mobilisation.

The starting point was the assumption that the costs of formal support had an impact at the utilisation of formal and informal support. Moreover, it was assumed that individuals who received little informal support would turn to formal support sources. The mobilisation of informal support was described as a process in which social capital, in particular norms and obligations, played a major role. In order to test these assumptions four crisis scenarios were constructed. Their analytical strength was that they measured support that was actually provided. This enabled us to capture the extent and types of support, as well as support providers. The disadvantage of this procedure was that particularly needy individuals might be over-emphasised.

A social group that particularly relies on external support are lone mothers. Being a lone mother is accompanied by a high risk of being affected by poverty and social exclusion. Due to the double burden of being the sole breadwinner and family carer they face enormous mental and physical demands. A strength of this research is its focus on lone mothers with pre-school age children. The selection of this comparison group was motivated by the expectation that they needed formal and informal support to a large

extent. For this purpose 116 lone mothers were interviewed. The chosen procedure to combine qualitative and quantitative methods in a semi-structured questionnaire proved efficient in realising the objectives of this research. Samples in two different countries were selected based on the assumption that different welfare state regimes would cause differences in individual support mobilisation behaviour. A bonus of using lone parent organisations as gatekeepers was that the role of voluntary organisations as support providers for lone parents could be investigated at the same time.

Informal vs. formal support mobilisation

Let us summarise the most important findings of this research. Lone mothers predominantly turned to informal supporters when help was needed. Close relatives were the preferred source of support in emergencies. In addition, friends played a major role, especially when close relatives were not living locally or when the relationship with them was strained. In contrast to relations with close relatives, support provision by friends required reciprocity. The majority was well engaged in social networks and received a considerable amount of support this way. Nevertheless, a group of lone mothers who were deprived of kinship and friendship support alike was identified. The availability of support was a function of a family history of divorce/separation and network structural variables, such as network size, geographical distance, and relationship quality.

It was expected that formal support would be utilised when access involved little effort or costs. Formal support that required high financial costs (e.g. professional childcare) or high access costs (e.g. maintenance claim through the CSA⁶⁸) were only rarely used. In contrast, means-tested benefits that also involved high access costs in terms of bureaucratic effort, long waiting hours, unfriendly staff, and stigmatisation were utilised to a great extent. In this regard, need, entitlement, and lack of alternatives were decisive for the utilisation. Social benefits with low access costs, such as Child Benefit or Housing Benefit were used by all entitled individuals. Formal support was also used in emergencies, in particular when financial or emotional crises occurred. The utilisation of formal financial support was dependent on receipt of Income Support/*Sozialhilfe*, education, and the number of informal supporters. In contrast, use of formal emotional support was determined by demographic variables and norms. An

⁶⁸ Additionally, many did not expect high benefits to come out of this.

unexpected result was that many lone mothers were seeking professional help in case of psychological and psycho-somatic problems⁶⁹. Financial access costs were either low or did not occur. However, resort to therapy presupposes a considerable time commitment. Formal support in crises was used when either no informal support was available or it was not suitable for solving a particular problem. Individuals who had no or little informal support mobilised formal support to a larger extent compared to lone mothers who had access to a lot of informal support. Subsidiarity in support mobilisation occurred but was not a consistent behavioural pattern. Formal support was used independent of informal support in cases of entitlements resulting from welfare legislation and private law contracts. Hence, the subsidiarity hypothesis embraced these aspects as well.

The impact of different welfare states

Another central aspect of this research was the examination of the impact of different welfare state settings on individual support mobilisation behaviour. The British and German welfare states differ significantly in a number of ways. Based on different historical developments, political ideologies, and welfare stratifications they are classified in different welfare state types: as liberal, residualist (UK) and conservative, corporatist (Germany) (Esping-Andersen 1990). Therefore, it was expected that lone mothers with young children would face different welfare opportunities in both countries. Three main differences in welfare provision were identified. First of all, childcare was to a lesser extent a problem in Berlin, both in terms of general availability and as a financial cost factor. Secondly, German *Erziehungsurlaub/Erziehungsgeld* (parental leave/parental leave benefit) legislation in combination with means-tested benefits enabled mothers of very young children in Berlin to live in relative financial security. However, after expiry of the entitlement period recipients of means-tested benefits in London were better off financially compared to recipients of means-tested benefits in Berlin. Thirdly, most lone mothers in Berlin received maintenance or *Unterhaltsvorschuß* (maintenance advance payment) while their counterparts in London received no or no regular maintenance – which was, however, partly counterbalanced through Income Support.

⁶⁹ This may be a sampling effect. There are no data on the utilisation of professional emotional support by lone mothers in general.

Yet, somewhat contra-intuitively the research results indicate that lone mothers who were dependent on means-tested benefits experienced similar degrees of social security, despite divergent policy logics and varying social policy instruments. The examination of welfare state effects on individual behaviour was approached in three ways: an explicit comparison of important characteristics, use of a dichotomous cross-national indicator (especially in the multivariate analysis), and computation of separate models for both samples with a subsequent comparison of results. Critically, although differences in welfare provision existed they had no effect on formal and informal support mobilisation in crisis events. That means, in essence, the utilisation of support was determined by individual circumstances and not by residence in either the UK or Germany. In other words, the similarity of their overall situation as lone mothers was more important than variations in formal welfare provision. For example, the need to seek professional emotional support was prevalent in both samples. Assistance was provided by different welfare providers (VAMV or sickness funds in Germany, NHS in the UK). But seen from the perspective of lone mothers these were functional equivalents – and formal. Thus, in the end no differences in the utilisation of formal support occurred. The decision to focus exclusively on crisis events contributed to this outcome. Formal supporters are limited in their capacity to provide emergency support. The question as to what consequences these different welfare state settings had for everyday support and general income situation could not be answered on the basis of these data.

Finally, most demographic variables had no effect on support mobilisation of lone mothers. Well educated women were more likely to mobilise financial support from their informal support networks. Better educated individuals tend either to be employed in relatively well paid jobs or come from resource rich social backgrounds that are more capable of providing support. In contrast, women who had many children mobilised less informal support. The combination of lone motherhood and divorce experience resulted in a higher likelihood of using psycho-therapeutic support. The following table 10.1 gives a final overview of the validity of the central hypotheses in this research.

Table 10.1: Validity of central research hypotheses

(I) Dominance hypothesis	Confirmed
(II) Subsidiarity hypothesis	Amended to include formal entitlements
(III) Compensation hypothesis	Partly confirmed, partly no examination possible
(IV) Welfare state hypothesis	Rejected
(V) Demography hypothesis	Partly confirmed, partly rejected
(VI) Reciprocity hypothesis	Confirmed

The value of the theoretical approach

The central research hypotheses of this research were theoretically deduced. They were used as ‘auxiliary hypotheses’ as defined by Lakatos (1970) to specify the underlying theoretical assumptions. The theoretical foundations of this research are manifold. Its core concept was the work of Coleman (1990) who developed a sophisticated social theory based upon an action theoretical approach – a variant of rational choice theory – to explain the emergence of social structures as outcomes of individual action. The explanatory power of his concept rests upon multilevel propositions about transitions from the macro-level of society i.e. social structures to the micro-level of society i.e. individual action and vice versa. Following this research programme⁷⁰, rational choice theory was selected as action theoretical approach to explain the emergence of social structures, such as social networks. Social networks were described as materialisation of social exchange processes, initiated by self-interested, purposive rational actors. Returning to Popper (1934) and Lakatos (1970) again, I will reflect upon the value of the selected theoretical approaches for this research in the light of empirical evidence.

The basic problem this research set out to explain was the individual *decision* between informal and formal sources of support. Therefore, it was necessary to select a theory with an explicit decision rule. Based upon cost-benefit-calculations rational choice theory adopts a very clear decision rule. However, the explanatory power of this rigorous decision rule was restricted in situations where decisions were made based upon non-rational considerations. Rational choice theory covers only one out of four types of rationality in Weber’s (1972, 1988) famous notion of social action – *zweckrational* action. It does not apply to *wertrational*, traditional, or affectual action. Nevertheless, rational choice theory can still be a useful instrument to make *zweckrational*, purposive strategic considerations about support mobilisation explicit and to deduct auxiliary hypotheses based upon these assumptions.

The operationalisation of rational choice theory, however, presupposes that all factors influencing individual choices can be controlled – an assumption that could not be realised facing the complexity of situations in which lone mothers mobilise support. Furthermore, the question whether an action was the result of a strategic rational choice was difficult to answer using a post-hoc design, such as the four crisis scenarios this research is based upon. Summarising it can be said that rational choice theory soon faces

⁷⁰ The notion of research programmes as heuristic devices was explained in detail by Lakatos (1970).

its limits when applied to explain the complex process of individual support mobilisation behaviour in detail. Nevertheless, the integrated model of individual support mobilisation that was developed in chapter 4 (see figure 4.2 at page 84) contributed to the explanation of the emergence of social structures that form the basic elements at the macro-level of society. It also contributed to the explanation of the effect (or the lack of it) of macro-structures in constraining individual action at the micro-level of society.

Lone parent organisations as support providers

Another finding of this research referred to the role of lone parent organisations as welfare providers. Both Gingerbread in London and VAMV in Berlin contributed significantly to the well-being of lone mothers and their children. Despite existing in different welfare state systems Gingerbread and VAMV are equivalent in their social roles and their importance for lone parents. Their history, their mission, their leadership and organisation structure, and their services for lone parents are very similar. This result contradicts the development of traditional voluntary organisations that emerged in interaction with particular welfare state types.

Lone mothers are supported by lone parent organisations in direct and indirect ways. Table 10.2 below summarises the services of lone parent organisation and sets them in relation to poverty dimensions following the *Lebenslage* concept (Döring et al. 1990; Glatzer/Hübinger 1990).

Table 10.2: Reduction of poverty by lone parent organisations

Poverty dimensions	Services reducing social inequality
• Income and employment	Advice concerning social benefits, legal issues, combination of family and employment
• Education	Seminars, workshops
• Housing	Advice concerning legal aspects of tenancy, housing benefits
• Health	Attempts to reduce psychosomatic illnesses
• Participation in social, cultural, and political life	Socialising in local groups; political participation which results in higher social integration
• general attitude towards life (with consequences for all other dimensions)	Attempts at empowerment - Self-confidence, life energy; enable people to take their lives into their own hands

Although they cannot improve lone parents' income situation directly they help indirectly by giving advice on social benefits entitlements, how to deal with relevant

state agencies, and on legal issues. More directly effective is their support in other ways: the community of individuals in similar circumstances enables lone parents and their children to participate in social, cultural, and political activities in a natural way. Lone parents learn in these self-help groups to handle their specific circumstances and to support each other. Thus, they re-gain self-esteem and confidence – an empowerment that enables them to master their lives as lone parents and to re-build their lives.

Yet making a general conclusion that strengthening voluntary organisations would be sufficient to improve the circumstances of lone parents would be naive. Support provided by lone parent organisations appeals to some individuals more than to others. Well educated women who are older than average lone mothers are clearly over-represented. The most disadvantaged lone mothers, such as teenagers, members of ethnic minorities, and mothers with more than two children are clearly under-represented. This research has exclusively focused on lone mothers who are members of lone parent organisations. A disadvantage of this procedure was that the specific effects of lone parent organisations for the well-being of lone mothers could be described, but not really examined. It could be a profitable area for future research to extend the objectives of this research to other comparison groups: lone mothers who are not affiliated to lone parent organisations, lone fathers, and married mothers.

Social policy implications of this research

What are the implications of these findings for social policy and society in general? Lone mothers are a heterogeneous social group. Therefore, it is impossible to deduce policy implications from these results that meet the needs of all lone mothers. Lone mothers share particularly difficult circumstances caused by multiple stressors. These include difficulties in combining the roles of being breadwinner and family carer, and, for the majority, the aftermath of partnership breakdown. However, many of them need state support only as long as their children are still young or until they find another partner. Are social policies specifically targeted towards lone mothers really necessary?

While there are no specific social policy measures for lone parents in Germany, the British Labour government favours welfare-to-work programmes specifically targeted at lone parents, as implemented in the New Deal for Lone Parents in 1998. Such programmes are only successful if they are accompanied by in-work support that make this step sustainable in the long run. If successful, these programmes can relieve lone mothers of the immediate financial and material pressures. Their success, however,

hinges on a number of conditions: financial incentives that make employment worthwhile compared to a life on social benefits, training opportunities, the provision of affordable and good quality childcare, and flexible working hours. The New Deal for Lone Parents addresses these issues through the implementation of supporting measures (National Child Care Strategy, Working Families Tax Credit, Children's Tax Allowance, national minimum wage)⁷¹. This programme is an enormous experiment targeted at long-term dependants on means-tested benefits. It is expected that the success of this programme is influenced by the availability of informal support. An examination of these effects could be a profitable area for future research.

A programme similar to the New Deal does not exist in Germany. Social policies for lone parents are largely the products of family policy instruments. Although lone motherhood is acknowledged as a major risk factor in causing poverty in public discourse (see, for example, Fünfter Familienbericht 1994; Zehnter Kinder- und Jugendbericht 1998; Armutsbericht 2001) the necessity of explicit policies for lone parents has never been seriously considered. Nevertheless, the existing *Erziehungsurlaub/Erziehungsgeld* (parental leave / parental leave benefit) programme works, in fact, as a welfare-to-work programme for mothers once the entitlement period expired. At this point, lone mothers have two options: either to return into the labour market or to continue receiving social benefits. Mädje/Neusüß (1996) argue that a significant number of lone mothers in Germany perceive continued receipt of means-tested benefits as a temporary alternative to earned income. These women make the deliberate decision to focus on upbringing their children for a few more years and, thus, regard social benefits as compensation for their family work. However, this does not apply to all lone mothers. Long-term recipients of means-tested benefits often experience receipt of Sozialhilfe as life in poverty that is not subject to choice. In my point of view, this latter group – which accounts for about a tenth of all Sozialhilfe recipients in Germany (Leisering 1995; Statistisches Bundesamt 2000b) – needs specific activating policies similar to the British New Deal programmes.

In this research a number of individuals with multiple disadvantages (type IVb in figure 8.5) were identified: older women (aged about 40) with more than two children who have been long-term recipients of means-tested benefits and who are deprived of informal support at the same time. Principally, social policy can offer two solutions:

⁷¹ For a review of the New Deal programmes see Millar 2000.

either to concentrate intensive state effort at introducing these individuals gradually to employment (as the British New Deal programmes do) or to compensate them for their family work. Conventional social policy has focused on conditions of a successful combination of employment and family care. Ultimately, these policies emphasise the paramount importance of employment compared to family care and, therefore, develop supportive measures to enable parents to get employed.

A completely new departure attempts to treat both paid and unpaid work equally by demanding a compensation for family care. In contrast to the concept of a family wage⁷² this compensation would be paid directly to the family carer and not to the breadwinner. Most European welfare states introduced policy measures that contain elements of compensation for family work (child benefits, marriage subsidies, parental leave). Neither in Germany nor in the UK does a separate salary exist which is paid solely in exchange for family care. Family care is traditionally seen as private matter of parents. However, it can be argued that family care is a public good. The outcomes of family care are socialised in form of future employment, taxes, and social insurance contributions. Hence, there are good reasons to socialise its costs through payment of a parental salary (Leipert/Opielka 2000)⁷³. This would remove the unnatural division in paid and unpaid work and give parents a free choice between employment and family work. The introduction of a parental salary would reduce the necessity of informal support provision. However, it remains to be seen whether the British and German societies are prepared to accept the resulting additional expenses for funding it.

Moreover, neither the British New Deal programmes nor any policies in Germany sufficiently address problems that can emerge as a consequence of employment. This includes additional stress resulting from the combination of employment and family care. The findings of this research demonstrated the prevalence of psychological and psycho-somatic problems among lone mothers that required professional help. As the example of VAMV in Berlin shows, lone parent organisations can help to alleviate these problems by providing tailor-made psychological care for lone parents. It would be desirable if Gingerbread or other voluntary organisations in the UK could provide similar services. Leaving the level of acute support, long-term preventive measures are desirable. I think that the introduction of relaxation exercise courses and conflict management should be part of education curriculum for everybody. Of course, this does

⁷² For a recent review of family wage policies in Europe see Montanari 2000.

⁷³ For a review of the German debate on an *Erziehungsgehalt* (parental salary) see Opielka 2000.

not prevent the emergence of stressful events, but it equips everybody with the skills to alleviate their damaging effects.

The requirements of employment and family care are often contradictory. Overtime, shift work, long or weekend working hours are common examples for work requirements that employees are expected to fulfil. However, there are hardly any childcare facilities that meet these requirements. Facing this structural recklessness of the labour market informal support becomes a precondition for lone parents' employment – and, thus, also for the success of welfare-to-work programmes. This research provided evidence that close relatives, and in their absence friends, are the preferred source of support in such cases. What can social policy contribute to improve the availability of informal support?

Generally speaking, the impact of state policies on informal support provision is very limited. At maximum, the state can influence informal support provision indirectly: by creating a public climate that recognises the extraordinary importance of lone parents' family work, by encouraging mutual solidarity, by requiring staff of relevant state agencies to treat lone parents with respect, or by subsidising voluntary organisations to provide services for lone parents. Simple and inexpensive measures could result in new ways of dealing with lone parents, such as home visits for mothers of very young children or binding appointments at state agencies.

Furthermore, the state can create a legal framework that reduces stressors in the mutual relations of lone parents to their children's fathers. In the wake of their parents' separation children experience a radical change in their relations to the absent parent (Furstenberg 1990). Contact with their fathers, grandparents, and other members of their fathers' families is reduced or interrupted. Not only is it very important for children's well-being to maintain normal and regular contacts to both parents, it also increases the likelihood of informal support provision. As the findings of this research show, informal support provided by the children's fathers is the exception rather than the rule. Although a desire for more support was explicitly expressed by many respondents this support potential was hardly realised. State policies can remove formal obstacles to the normalisation of these relations. An extension of joint custody to include never-married lone parents could contribute to this end (for a critical review of joint custody proposals see Furstenberg 1990; Bradshaw et al. 1999; Silva/Smart 1999). Beside that, mediation and family counselling can assist in establishing caring relationships to both parents.

ANNEX

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Participating Gingerbread local groups in Greater London

Gingerbread is a dynamic and living body with some groups closing down and new ones emerging at the same time. A number of Greater London groups which still existed in 1996 had ceased to exist by 1998 (e.g. Clapham & Stockwell, Ealing) or could not be contacted (Holborn & Camden, Stamford Hill)⁷⁴. On the other hand, some of the groups visited in 1998 did not exist yet two years earlier (e.g. Deptford, Millwall, Stratford). Others again were in the process of being set up (Broadwater Plumstead, Clockhouse Woolwich). Coulsdon and Sutton merged in 1999 to form a joint group. This reflects the character of lone parenthood as a dynamic process with people re-marrying or re-starting relationships and others suffering partnership breakdowns at the same time. Some of the Gingerbread local groups seem to experience a high degree of fluctuation. Nearly a sixth (16 per cent) of interviewees attended a group meeting for the very first time when they were interviewed – which was more than three times higher than in Berlin.

Table A1: Gingerbread local groups where interviews were carried out (1998)

No.	Group name	Interview location	Neighbourhood character	Inter-views	Frequency of meetings
01	Havering	Romford	suburban – E	4	weekly
02	Barnet	Barnet	suburban – N	3	several times per week
03	Millwall	Tower Hamlets	inner-city – E	3	fortnightly
04	Twickenham & Teddington	Teddington	suburban – SW	3	weekly
05	Bexley & Sidcup	Sidcup	suburban – SE	3	weekly
06	Crystal Palace, Beckenham, Penge	Penge	outer-city – SE	3	fortnightly
07	Twickenham & Richmond	Richmond	suburban – SW	1	not regularly
08	Brent	Kensal Green	inner-city – NW	4	monthly
09	Deptford	Deptford	inner-city – SE	3	weekly
10	New Orpington	Orpington	suburban – S	6	weekly
11	Harrow	Harrow	suburban – NW	5	weekly
12	Coulsdon	Coulsdon	suburban – S	3	fortnightly
13	Redbridge	Ilford	outer-city – E	4	fortnightly
14	Wood Green	Wood Green	outer-city – N	3	fortnightly
15	Sutton	Sutton	suburban – S	2	monthly
16	Dartford & Erith	Dartford	suburban – SE	3	weekly
17	Stratford	Stratford	inner-city – E	5	weekly

Castle Point and Clockhouse Woolwich were willing to participate as well but interviews didn't materialise for reasons beyond both sides' control.

⁷⁴ One group was unsuitable for this research project because it consisted of lone fathers only (Chiswick).

Local residence of interview participants in Berlin

In contrast to Gingerbread in Greater London, VAMV in Berlin does not consist of separate local groups. A number of thematic groups, psychologically guided therapy groups, and informal self-help groups meet in facilities belonging to the central local/regional office in the Western part of Berlin (Wilmersdorf). There is also a Sunday afternoon cafe that gives lone parents and their children an opportunity to socialise on Sunday afternoons. The following table A 2 gives an indication of the *Stadtteile* (boroughs) where interview participants lived in Berlin. A categorisation of these *Stadtteile* according to overall neighbourhood characteristics which are commonly used in Britain (inner city, outer city, suburban) was not suitable for Berlin. Therefore, only a rough indication of geographical location in Berlin was given. All respondents lived in West Berlin. Lone mothers from the Eastern part of the city were not considered in this research since neither cultural/attitudinal differences nor variations in formal support provision (public childcare facilities), and possibly resulting effects for informal support could be controlled.

Table A2: Residence of interviewees in West Berlin (*Stadtteile*) (1998)

No.	<i>Stadtteil</i> (Borough)	Geographical location	Inter-views
01	Tiergarten	central	3
02	Charlottenburg	central	2
03	Wilmersdorf	central	11
04	Schöneberg	outer city	11
05	Tempelhof	outer city	4
06	Neukölln	outer city	5
07	Steglitz	periphery	7
08	Zehlendorf	periphery	5
09	Spandau	periphery	1
10	Wedding	central	6
11	Reinickendorf	periphery	3

Selected statistical results

Table A3: Multiple regression equation with the amount of informal support units per year as dependent variable (see table 8.10, p. 182)

Variable name	B	SE B	Beta	T	Sig T
Separation of parents in childhood	- 249.70	75.86	-.36	- 3.29	.001
Age of lone mother (years)	3.64	9.00	.06	.40	.69
Number of children	- 139.77	60.16	-.32	-2.32	.02
Age youngest child (years)	29.47	22.33	.16	1.32	.19
School education (years)	29.52	34.05	.11	.86	.39
London/Berlin indicator (1=Berlin)	-.86	79.56	-.01	-.01	.99
IS/SH recipient	82.42	71.55	.12	1.15	.25
How long in current flat? (years)	- 6.67	10.96	-.06	-.61	.55
Spare time with housework (1=yes)	- 188.04	82.62	-.27	- 2.28	.03
Number of supporter	31.88	15.56	.22	2.05	.05
How often talk with friends?	.76	.31	.29	2.47	.01
Travel time to own mother (min.)	- 1.10	.42	-.50	- 2.66	.01
Average distance to brother/sister	.49	.37	.24	1.32	.19
Friends should help each other (1=yes)	513.97	276.96	.19	1.96	.05
It is difficult to ask for help (1=yes)	- 94.29	88.76	-.13	- 1.06	.29
(Constant)	- 504.69	459.99		- 1.33	.19

$R^2 = .55$; Adj. $R^2 = .41$; Standard Error = 252.3; $F = 3.94$; Sig. $F = ,000$.

Table A4: All supporters of lone mothers in London and Berlin (see table 8.11, p. 186)
(percentage of all responses per support incident)

	(I) Personal support childcare when child/mother ill		(II) Material support second hand clothing		(III) Financial support money for repair		(IV) Emotional support everything too much	
	London	Berlin	London	Berlin	London	Berlin	London	Berlin
Original family								
Mother	37	21	22.5	7	18	24	8	9
Father	12	8	10	5	22	27	2	2
Sister(s)	13	5	17.5	5	13	3	7	2
Brother(s)	-	-	1	5	9	-	-	1
Other relatives ⁷⁵	1.5	8	1	3	7	3	2	-
New family								
Ex-partner	7	12	5	1	16	3	1	2
Ex-in-laws	1.5	5	3	1	-	-	-	-
Children	3	-	-	-	2	-	1	-
Boyfriend	-	4	1	-	-	-	-	2
Friends + others								
Friends	18	31	31	43	11	30	75	73
Acquaint.	-	1	4	21	-	7	3	6,5
Colleague	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	1
Neighbour	7	5	4	2	2	3	1	1.5
No. resp.	n = 38	n = 39	n = 40	n = 42	n = 29	n = 20	n = 41	n = 40

Source: own data ; n = 116

⁷⁵ Other relatives include: aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents.

Table A5: Main supporters of lone mothers in London and Berlin (see table 8.12, p. 186) (percentage of all first supporters per support incident)

	(I) Personal support childcare when child/mother ill		(II) Material support second hand clothing		(III) Financial support money for repair		(IV) Emotional support everything too much	
	London	Berlin	London	Berlin	London	Berlin	London	Berlin
Original family								
Mother	55	31	38.5	10	26	16	18	10
Father	8	10	5	2	22	32	3	-
Sister(s)	10	3	15	5	7	5	6	5
Brother(s)	-	-	-	10	7	-	-	-
Other relatives ⁷⁶	3	10	-	5	8	5	3	-
New family								
Ex-partner	8	13	8	2	19	-	3	-
Ex-in-laws	-	-	5	2	-	-	-	-
Children	3	-	-	-	4	-	3	-
Boyfriend	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Friends+others								
Friends	8	23	20.5	43	7	32	61	71
Acquaintances	-	2	8	17	-	5	-	5
Colleagues	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	3
Neighbours	5	8	-	2	-	5	3	3
No. respondent	n = 38	n = 39	n = 39	n = 42	n = 27	n = 20	n = 36	n = 38

Source: own data ; n = 116

⁷⁶ Other relatives include: aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents.

Table A6: Standardised regression coefficients of a multiple regression model (OLS) with dissatisfaction with informal support as dependent variable (see table 8.13, p. 207)

Variable name	B	SE B	Beta	T	Sig T
Age of lone mother (years)	.05	.02	.28	2.39	.02
Never married vs. ever married (ever married = 1)	-.38	.23	-.18	-1.65	.10
Number of children	-.13	.18	-.09	-.72	.47
School education (years)	.12	.10	.15	1.26	.21
London/Berlin indicator (Berlin = 1)	.15	.21	.07	.73	.47
Employment status (1 = yes)	.46	.32	.22	1.44	.15
IS/SH ⁷⁷ recipient (1 = yes)	.28	.32	.14	.89	.37
How long in current flat? (years)	-.08	.03	-.25	-2.48	.01
Travel time to mother (min.)	-.0008	.001	-.13	-.81	.42
Average travel time to brothers + sisters (min.)	.002	.0009	.34	2.17	.03
Total number informal supporters	-.02	.05	-.05	-.41	.68
Total amount of support units	-.0007	.0003	-.22	-2.04	.04
Number of non-reciprocal relations	.08	.07	.13	1.20	.23
Constant	-1.31	1.18		-1.10	.27

$R^2 = .41$; Adj. $R^2 = .30$; Standard Error = .86 $F = 3.75$; Sig. $F = .000$.

⁷⁷ IS = Income Support, SH = 'Sozialhilfe' (Social Assistance)

Table A7: Odds ratios of formal support use in selected crisis events
(see table 9.3, p. 223)

Formal financial support

Variable name	B	SE B	Wald	Sig	Exp (B)
Age of lone mother (years)	.04	.06	.49	.48	1.05
Never married vs. ever married (1=ever married)	-.49	.72	.47	.49	.61
Number of children	.02	.45	.003	.96	1.02
Age of youngest child (years)	.13	.24	.30	.58	1.14
School education (years)	-.57	.27	4.44	.03	.57
London/Berlin indicator (1=Berlin)	.21	.65	.10	.75	1.23
IS/SH recipient (1=yes)	1.29	.68	3.66	.05	3.63
Duration of lone motherhood (months)	-.01	.02	.20	.65	.99
Number of informal financial supporters	-1.32	.48	7.75	.005	.27
(Constant)	3.81	2.98	1.64	.20	

-2 LL = 75.74; GoF = 122.74; $\chi^2 = 20.36$; Sig. = .01; Formal support = 1.

Formal emotional support

Variable name	B	SE B	Wald	Sig	Exp (B)
Age of lone mother (years)	.07	.05	1.90	.17	1.07
Never married vs. ever married (1=ever married)	1.45	.58	6.35	.01	4.27
Number of children	-.71	.38	3.68	.05	.49
Age of youngest child (years)	-.03	.18	.03	.87	.97
School education (years)	.07	.21	.10	.75	1.07
London/Berlin indicator (1=Berlin)	-.07	.55	.02	.90	.93
IS/SH recipient (1=yes)	.73	.55	1.75	.18	2.07
Duration of lone motherhood (months)	.01	.01	1.13	.29	1.01
Regular use of childcare facility (1=yes)	1.08	.68	2.51	.11	2.94
Friends should regularly talk about personal concerns (1=yes)	1.09	.58	3.69	.05	2.98
Number of informal emotional supporters	.04	.11	.15	.69	1.04
(Constant)	-5.36	2.86	3.51	.06	

-2 LL = 109.91; GoF = 114.20; $\chi^2 = 16.99$; Sig. = .10.; Formal support = 1.

Table A8: Standardised regression coefficients of a multiple regression model (OLS) with dissatisfaction with formal support as dependent variable (see table 9.7, p. 242)

Variable name	B	SE B	Beta	T	Sig T
Age of lone mother (years)	-.016	0.02	-.10	-.95	.34
School education (years)	.05	.07	.08	.74	.46
London/Berlin indicator (1=Berlin)	-.53	.18	-.31	-2.86	.01
IS/SH recipient (1=yes)	-.13	.18	-.08	-.72	.47
Number of formal supporters	-.13	.10	-.13	-1.28	.21
Importance lone parent organisations (1 not important, 5 very important)	.08	.09	.09	.88	.38
Benefits Agency performance (1=supportive)	-.73	.19	-.43	-3.94	.00
Childcare state duty (1=yes)	.05	.36	.02	.14	.89
Job search state duty (1=yes)	.42	.18	.24	2.35	.02
Dissatisfaction with informal support	.24	.09	.29	2.68	0.01
(Constant)	1,77	1,02		1,73	,08

$R^2 = .62$; Adj. $R = .29$; Standard Error = .72; $F = 3.90$; Sig. $F = ,000$.

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***Informal Support Networks
of Lone Mothers
in the United Kingdom and Germany.
Questionnaire***

Interview number	Date	Location

Before we actually start I would like to ask you for a name or nickname that you would like to give yourself. Its purpose is that we can identify what a particular person said at a later stage - but you are the only person who knows who this name refers to. For example, if you would give yourself the name 'Kirsty', all information that you give us will be stored under the title 'Kirsty'. But you are the only one who actually knows who the person with that name is.

Interviewee name code:	Code

A. Housing situation

I would like to start with some questions regarding your housing situation nowadays and in previous years.

How long have you lived in this flat/house?	V 01

Where did you live before?	V 02
somewhere else in London	1
in a city, town in S / SE-England	2
in a village in S / SE-England	3
in a city, town elsewhere in England or Wales	4
in a village elsewhere in England or Wales	5
in a city, town in Scotland	6
in a village in Scotland	7
other (Please specify!):	8

How long have you lived in London?	V 03

Are you living in	V 04
Owner-occupation, owned outright	1
Owner-occupation, paying mortgage	2
Housing association accommodation	3
Privately rented accommodation	4
Council housing	5
your parents' home	6
other (Please specify!):	7

How much rent (mortgage) do you have to pay per week?	V 05
Rent per week:	

What do you think? Is your rent (mortgage):	V 06
much too high	1
too high	2
OK	3
low	4
very low	5

How many households, including yours, live in this house?	V 07

<i>Interviewer's assessment of neighbourhood, housing area:</i>	V 08

In some neighbourhoods neighbours have little contact, in others frequently. How is it in your case?	V 09
no contact at all	1
rarely contact	2
sometimes contact	3
at least once a week contact	4
daily contact	5

Which of the following statements describes the situation in your neighbourhood best ? <i>Please use the following list!</i>	V 10
We are a wonderful community. Everybody helps when someone has a problem.	1
People in our neighbourhood usually talk with each other.	2
Everybody lives her/his own life. We rarely talk to each other.	3
The neighbours complained about us several times already.	4
Life with our neighbours is a constant nightmare.	5

Which ones of the following facilities are within 15 min walking distance from your house? <i>Please use the following list!</i>	V 11
a) playground	yes / no
b) park	yes / no
c) Childcare facility (Kindergarten, nursery, etc.)	yes / no
d) medical services, GP's surgery	yes / no
e) shops, shopping centre	yes / no
f) post office	yes / no
g) Benefits Agency	yes / no

About how many times have you changed residence since you became a lone parent?	V 12
Number of changes:	

SUMMARY OPEN INFO SECTION A	V 13
------------------------------------	------

B. Family Background

The next section focuses on your family background. First, I would like to ask you some questions about your childhood.

When you were a child did you live with both of your biological parents?	V 14
Yes	1
No	0
Don't know	9
Refusal	99

If not, who did you live with?	V 15

Did anything in this situation change before your 18th birthday?	V 16
No changes	0
Parents got divorced / separated	1
Other changes (please specify!):	2
Refusal	99

SUMMARY OPEN INFO SECTION B	V 17
------------------------------------	------

C. Current family circumstances

The following questions shall give us a rough idea of your family circumstances.

Do you have any brothers and sisters?	V 18
Yes	1
No	0

How many brothers and sisters do you have?	V 19

How far away do they live (in minutes)?	V 20

How far away do your parents live (in minutes)?	V 21

May I ask you how old you are?	V 22
Age (in years):	

What is your marital status?	<i>Please use the following list!</i>	V 23
Single, never married		1
Married, living separated		2
Divorced		3
Widowed		4

How many children do you have?	V 24
Number of children:	

What's your girl's / your boy's name?	V 25	How old is s/he?	V 26
a.)			
b.)			
c.)			
d.)			

What is the highest educational attainment you reached?	<i>Please use the following list!</i>	V 27
None at all		0
None, still in education		1
O-Levels		2
A-Levels		3
University, polytechnics undergraduate degree (BA, BSc)		4
University, polytechnics postgraduate degree (MA, MSc, MPhil, PhD)		5
Other (<i>Please specify!</i>):		6

There are different reasons for people becoming lone parents. Here is a list of some of the most frequently mentioned reasons.

Could you please tell me which ones apply to you:	<i>Please use the following list!</i>	V 28
I enjoy living on my own.		1
I rather live on my own than in bad relationship.		2
My partner left me.		3
It is difficult to find a new partner.		4
My partner died.		5
Other (please specify!):		6

Have you always been a lone parent since your child(ren) was (were) born?	V 29
Yes	1
No.	0

For how long have you been a lone parent?	V 30
Duration:	

OPEN QUESTION C 1:	V 31
How has your life changed since you became a lone parent?	

SUMMARY OPEN INFO SECTION C	V 32
------------------------------------	------

D. Childminding arrangements

Beside some general questions I am interested in your child minding arrangements.

Does your child regularly attend a childcare facility (kindergarten, childminder, etc.)?	V 33
No	1
Yes	0

How often does your child attend a childcare facility?	V 34
every day, from Monday to Friday	1
less often, but several times a week	2
once a week	3
less often, but several times a month	4
once a month	5
less often (please specify!):	6

OPEN QUESTION D 1: What kind of childcare facility is it?	V 35
------------------------------------------------------------------	------

Do you pay a babysitter from time to time?	V 36
No	1
Yes	0

How often do you pay for a babysitter?	V 37
every day, from Monday to Friday	1
less often, but several times a week	2
once a week	3
less often, but several times a month	4
once a month	5
less often (please specify!):	6

OPEN QUESTION D 2: What kind of arrangement is it?	V 38
-----------------------------------------------------------	------

Altogether, how much do you pay for childcare per month?	V 39
Amount spent on childcare (per month):	

SUMMARY OPEN INFO SECTION D	V 40
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E. Social life

Everybody needs some time for herself, without the children. In the next short section I will ask you a few questions regarding what you do in your free time.

How often do you normally have some time for yourself?	V 41
Every day	1
Less often, but several times a week	2
On weekends	3
One day a week	4
Less often (please specify!):	5

How much time do you have then to do what you like?	V 42
Less than an hour	1
About 1 hour	2
Up to 2 hours	3
Up to 3 hours	4
An evening, an afternoon	5
A whole day	6
Other (please specify!):	7

OPEN QUESTION E 1: When you have time for yourself - what do you do?	V 43
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------

How many friends do you have?	V 44
Number of friends:	

How often do you normally talk?	V 45
Every day	1
Several times a week	2
Once a week	3
Several times a month	4
Once a month	5
Less often (please specify!):	6

How often do you normally meet?	V 46
Every day	1
Several times a week	2
Once a week	3
Several times a month	4
Once a month	5
Less often (please specify!):	6

OPEN QUESTION E 2: When you meet with friends - what do you normally do?	V 47
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SUMMARY OPEN INFO SECTION E	V 48
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F. Social support networks

Everybody sometimes gets into a situation where she cannot help herself and needs someone else's support. Next, I will introduce four crisis events that might have happened to you before. I would like to ask you to recall what you did when it happened to you for the last time.

1. Childminding when child is ill

Please imagine that your child got ill and has to be cared for at home. You cannot stay at home all the time because you have to go to work or because you have an important appointment. Did anything like that happen to you before?		V 49
Yes.		1
No.		0

How often did it happen to you?		V 50
Once		1
A few times		2
Quite often		3

OPEN QUESTION F 1.1: What did you do?	V 51
----------------------------------------------	------

Who did you turn to for help?		V 52
a)		V52a
b)		V52b
c)		V52c
d)		V52d
e)		V52e

I would like to know a little bit more about a) to e):

Person's name	a)	b)	c)	d)	e)	
Gender						V 53
Age						V 54
Relation to interviewee						V 55
Marital status						V 56
Number of children						V 57
Employment						V 58
Current occupation						V 59
Distance (travel time)						V 60
Frequency of support in previous year						V 61

OPEN QUESTION F 1.2: How would you describe your relationship to a) to e)?	V 62
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How often do you usually talk with each other?	V63a	V63b	V63c	V63d	V63e
Every day	1	1	1	1	1
Several days a week	2	2	2	2	2
Once a week	3	3	3	3	3
More often than once a month	4	4	4	4	4
Once a month	5	5	5	5	5
Several times a year	6	6	6	6	6
Once a year	7	7	7	7	7
Less often (please specify!):	8	8	8	8	8

And how often do you normally meet?	V64a	V64b	V64c	V64d	V64e
Every day	1	1	1	1	1
Several days a week	2	2	2	2	2
Once a week	3	3	3	3	3
More often than once a month	4	4	4	4	4
Once a month	5	5	5	5	5
Several times a year	6	6	6	6	6
Once a year	7	7	7	7	7
Less often (please specify!):	8	8	8	8	8

Did a) to e) help you before?	V65a	V65b	V65c	V65d	V65e
Yes.	1	1	1	1	1
No.	0	0	0	0	0

OPEN QUESTION F 1.3: How did they help you? V 66

Do you help a) to e) sometimes as well?	V67a	V67b	V67c	V67d	V67e
Yes.	1	1	1	1	1
No.	0	0	0	0	0

OPEN QUESTION F 1.4: How did you help them? V 68

2. Help with children's clothes

Please imagine that you suddenly need new clothes or shoes for your child(ren). You need to get new ones or second hand ones. Did anything like that happen to you before?	V 69
Yes.	1
No.	0

How often did it happen to you?	V 70
Once	1
A few times	2
Quite often	3

OPEN QUESTION F 2.1: What did you do? V 71

Who did you turn to for help?	
	V 72
a)	V72a
b)	V72b
c)	V72c
d)	V72d
e)	V72e

Did the interviewee mention a person who was NOT mentioned before?	
	V 73
Yes.	1
No.	0

*I would like to know a little bit more about a) to e)
[only if person was NOT mentioned before!!!]*

Person's name	a)	b)	c)	d)	e)	
Gender						V 74
Age						V 75
Relation to interviewee						V 76
Marital status						V 77
Number of children						V 78
Employment						V 79
Current Occupation						V 80
Distance (travel time)						V 81
Frequency of support in previous year						V 82

OPEN QUESTION F 2.2:	V 83
How would you describe your relationship to a) to e)?	

How often do you usually talk to each other?					
	V84a	V84b	V84c	V84d	V84e
Every day	1	1	1	1	1
Several days a week	2	2	2	2	2
Once a week	3	3	3	3	3
More often than once a month	4	4	4	4	4
Once a month	5	5	5	5	5
Several times a year	6	6	6	6	6
Once a year	7	7	7	7	7
Less often (please specify!):	8	8	8	8	8

And how often do you normally meet?					
	V85a	V85b	V85c	V85d	V85e
Every day	1	1	1	1	1
Several days a week	2	2	2	2	2
Once a week	3	3	3	3	3
More often than once a month	4	4	4	4	4
Once a month	5	5	5	5	5
Several times a year	6	6	6	6	6
Once a year	7	7	7	7	7
Less often (please specify!):	8	8	8	8	8

Did a) to e) help you before?	V86a	V86b	V86c	V86d	V86e
Yes.	1	1	1	1	1
No.	0	0	0	0	0

OPEN QUESTION F 2.3: How did they help you? V 87

Do you help a) to e) sometimes as well?	V88a	V88b	V88c	V88d	V88e
Yes.	1	1	1	1	1
No.	0	0	0	0	0

OPEN QUESTION F 2.4: How did you help them? V 89

3. Major repairs or purchases (washing machine, fridge, stove, car, etc.)

Please imagine that your washing machine, your refrigerator, or your car suddenly broke down. You need money for the repair or to buy a new one. Did anything like that happen to you before?	V 90
Yes.	1
No.	0

How often did it happen to you?	V 91
Once	1
A few times	2
Quite often	3

OPEN QUESTION F 3.1: What did you do? V 92

Who did you turn to for help?	V 93
a)	V93a
b)	V93b
c)	V93c
d)	V93d
e)	V93e

Did the interviewee mention a person who was NOT mentioned before?	V 94
Yes.	1
No.	0

I would like to know a little bit more about a) to e)
[only if person was NOT mentioned before!!!]

Person's name	a)	b)	c)	d)	e)	
Gender						V 95
Age						V 96
Relation to interviewee						V 97
Marital status						V 98
Number of children						V 99
Employment						V100
Current occupation						V101
Distance (travel time)						V102
Frequency of support in previous year						V103

OPEN QUESTION F 3.2: How would you describe your relationship to a) to e)?	V104
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------

How often do you usually talk to each other?					
	V105a	V105b	V105c	V105d	V105e
Every day	1	1	1	1	1
Several days a week	2	2	2	2	2
Once a week	3	3	3	3	3
More often than once a month	4	4	4	4	4
Once a month	5	5	5	5	5
Several times a year	6	6	6	6	6
Once a year	7	7	7	7	7
Less often (please specify!):	8	8	8	8	8

And how often do you normally meet?					
	V106a	V106b	V106c	V106d	V106e
Every day	1	1	1	1	1
Several days a week	2	2	2	2	2
Once a week	3	3	3	3	3
More often than once a month	4	4	4	4	4
Once a month	5	5	5	5	5
Several times a year	6	6	6	6	6
Once a year	7	7	7	7	7
Less often (please specify!):	8	8	8	8	8

Did a) to e) help you before?					
	V107a	V107b	V107c	V107d	V107e
Yes.	1	1	1	1	1
No.	0	0	0	0	0

OPEN QUESTION F 3.3: How did they help you?	V108
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Do you help a) to e) sometimes as well?					
	V109a	V109b	V109c	V109d	V109e
Yes.	1	1	1	1	1
No.	0	0	0	0	0

OPEN QUESTION F 3.4: How did you help them?	V110
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OPEN QUESTION F 3.5a: Since you have been a lone parent did you ever receive any other financial support from your family, friends, or other people?	V111
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OPEN QUESTION F 3.5b: Since you have been a lone parent did you ever provide any other financial support for your family, friends, or other people?	V112
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4. Emotional support

Since you have been a lone parent did you ever have the feeling that everything was getting too much for you, that you could not handle that situation alone?	V113
Yes.	1
No.	0

How often did it happen to you?	V114
Once	1
A few times	2
Quite often	3

OPEN QUESTION F 4.1: What did you do?	V115
----------------------------------------------	------

Who did you turn to for help?	V116
a)	V116a
b)	V116b
c)	V116c
d)	V116d
e)	V116e

Did the interviewee mention a person who was NOT mentioned before?	V117
Yes.	1
No.	0

*I would like to know a little bit more about a) to e)
[only if person was NOT mentioned before!!!]*

Person's name	a)	b)	c)	d)	e)	
Gender						V118
Age						V119
Relation to interviewee						V120
Marital status						V121
Number of children						V122
Employment						V123
Current occupation						V124
Distance (travel time)						V125
Frequency of support in previous year						V126

OPEN QUESTION F 4.2: How would you describe your relationship to a) to e)?	V127
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------

How often do you usually talk to each other?	V128 a	V128b	V128 c	V128d	V128 e
Every day	1	1	1	1	1
Several days a week	2	2	2	2	2
Once a week	3	3	3	3	3
More often than once a month	4	4	4	4	4
Once a month	5	5	5	5	5
Several times a year	6	6	6	6	6
Once a year	7	7	7	7	7
Less often (please specify!):	8	8	8	8	8

And how often do you normally meet?	V129 a	V129b	V129 c	V129d	V129 e
Every day	1	1	1	1	1
Several days a week	2	2	2	2	2
Once a week	3	3	3	3	3
More often than once a month	4	4	4	4	4
Once a month	5	5	5	5	5
Several times a year	6	6	6	6	6
Once a year	7	7	7	7	7
Less often (please specify!):	8	8	8	8	8

Did a) to e) help you before?	V130 a	V130b	V130 c	V130d	V130 e
Yes.	1	1	1	1	1
No.	0	0	0	0	0

OPEN QUESTION F 4.3: How did they help you?	V131
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Do you help a) to e) sometimes as well?	V132 a	V132b	V132 c	V132d	V132 e
Yes.	1	1	1	1	1
No.	0	0	0	0	0

OPEN QUESTION F 4.4: How did you help them?	V133
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Finally, I would like to ask you whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Do you agree with the following statements?		V134
Statements	yes/no	
It is not necessary that <i>family members</i> talk about personal concerns regularly.		V134a
It is not necessary that <i>friends</i> talk about personal concerns regularly.		V134b
<i>Family members</i> should help each other.		V134c
<i>Friends</i> should help each other.		V134d
<i>Family members</i> should support each other financially.		V134e
<i>Friends</i> should support each other financially.		V134f
When you get support you should provide help in turn.		V134g
You should not ask for help if you cannot provide support in turn.		V134h
It is difficult for me to ask for help.		V134i
I know many people who would help me at any time.		V134k

SUMMARY OPEN INFO SECTION F	V135
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G. Voluntary sector, lone parent organisations

Now I turn my attention to a slightly different question. There are several self-help groups or initiatives that care for lone parents.

Have you ever heard of any lone parent groups apart from Gingerbread? Which ones?	V136

Did you contact any of these organisations before?	V137
Yes.	1
No.	0

OPEN QUESTION G 1: How did you get in touch with Gingerbread (other organisations)? Why? How did they help you?	V138
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------

How often are you in touch with them?	V139
Several days a week	1
Once a week	2
More often than once a month	3
Once a month	4
Several times a year	5
Once a year	6
Less often (Please specify!):	7

How important is Gingerbread (are these organisations) for you?	V140
Very important	5
Important	4
Don't know	3
Not important	2
Not important at all	1

SUMMARY OPEN INFO SECTION G	V141
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H. Income and social benefits

There are different ways to earn one's livelihood. I will ask you a few questions regarding your occupation, employment status, and social benefits that you receive.

Are you currently in employment?	V142
Yes.	1
No.	0

Please have a look at the following list and tell me afterwards which item describes best your situation?	
Are you:	Please use the following list!
	V143
a) full-time employed (more than 30 hours per week)	1
b) part-time employed (more than 16 hours per week)	2
c) part-time employed (less than 16 hours per week)	3
d) occasionally employed	4
e) unemployed, but seeking a job	5
f) in full-time education	6
g) in further education or training	7
h) not employed	8
i) other (please specify):	10

If not, did you ever have a paid job before?	V144
Yes.	1
No.	0

Were you:	V145
a) full-time employed (more than 30 hours per week)	1
b) part-time employed (more than 16 hours per week)	2
c) part-time employed (less than 16 hours per week)	3
d) occasionally employed	4
e) other (please specify):	5

How long ago was it that you were employed for the last time?	V146
Number of months (years):	

OPEN QUESTION H 1:	V147
Can you please give me some details of your current or previous job?	

How long have you been employed in that job altogether?	V148
Number of months (years):	

Do you (did you) like that job?	V149
Yes	1
No	0
Don't know	9

Does (did) this job have negative consequences for you personally, your child, or your family life?	
	V150
Yes.	1
No.	0

If yes, please explain how it affects(ed) your life.	
Please use the following list!	V151
a) I do not have as much time for my child(ren) as I liked to have.	1
b) When I come home from work, I often feel exhausted, tired.	2
c) A lot of household work remains undone.	3
d) I do not have enough time for my friends.	4
e) I do not have enough time to do things that I would like to do.	5

=> CURRENTLY EMPLOYED GO TO V 153 – all others to V 152!

OPEN QUESTION H 2:	V152
If you are not employed – what does prevent you from getting a job? Under which circumstances would you be prepared to get a job?	

There are different ways to earn one's livelihood.

Here is a list of possible income sources. Please tell me the letter of those income types that you get! How long have you received it?			
Income type	V153	Duration	V154
a) Salary	1		
b) Maintenance	2		
c) Child Benefit	3		
d) Family Credit	4		
e) Income Support	5		
f) Housing Benefit	6		
g) others (please specify):	7		

Now have a look at the same list once again. Is there any income type that you do not get these days but that you received before?			
Income type	V155	Duration	V156
a) Salary	1		
b) Maintenance	2		
c) Child Benefit	3		
d) Family Credit	4		
e) Income Support	5		
f) Housing Benefit	6		
g) others (please specify):	7		

In recent research some people reported that they felt extremely uncomfortable at the Benefits Agency, the Child Support Agency, or any other state agency. Now I would like to ask you about your experiences with the Benefits Agency and other state agencies.

Did you ever feel inhibited when you had to go to the Benefits Agency?	
	V157
Yes	1
No	0
Don't know	9

OPEN QUESTION H 3:	V158
Could you please explain why you felt inhibited?	

How do you regard the Benefits Agency's performance in general? Do you think its staff is:	V159
Very helpful	1
Provides some help	2
Not helpful	3
Very unhelpful	4

SUMMARY OPEN INFO SECTION H	V160
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I. Summary

Finally, I would like to ask you a few questions relating to your general well being and general aspects of social support.

How satisfied are you with your life and your circumstances in general?	V161
Very satisfied	5
Quite satisfied	4
Not very satisfied	3
Not satisfied	2
Not satisfied at all	1

We have talked a good deal about support that you get at particular times.

There are always people who get more support than others. Do you think that you receive more support than others, about as much as support as others, or less support than others?	V162
More support than others	1
About as much support as others	2
Less support than others	3

I want to get an idea how satisfied you are with the support you get from particular support sources.	V163
a) family (your parents, brothers and sisters, grand-parents)	
b) friends	
c) ex-partner	
d) neighbours	
e) lone parent organisations	
f) Benefits Agency, CSA, other state agencies	
g) others (please specify):	

Do you believe that the state has the duty to provide every child with an affordable place in a childminding facility or do you believe that the state has no such obligation?	V164
The state's duty is to provide affordable childcare for everybody.	1
The state is not obliged to do that.	0
Don't know	9

Do you believe that the state has the duty to provide every citizen who is willing to work with an appropriate employment opportunity or do you believe that the state has no such obligation?	V165
The state's duty is to provide every citizen with an appropriate job.	1
The state is not obliged to do that.	0
Don't know	9

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***Informelle Unterstützungsnetzwerke
alleinerziehender Mütter
in Deutschland und Großbritannien.***

Fragebogen

London

August 1998

Interviewcode	Datum	Ort

Bevor wir mit dem Interview beginnen, würde ich Sie bitten, sich einen Namen oder Spitznamen zu geben. Mit Hilfe dieses Namens kann später festgestellt werden, was eine bestimmte Person gesagt hat, ohne den wahren Namen dieser Person zu kennen. Wenn Sie sich zum Beispiel den Spitznamen Susi geben, dann wird alles, was Sie während des Interviews sagen, unter dem Namen ‚Susi‘ gespeichert. Aber Sie sind die einzige Person, die weiß, wer Susi in Wirklichkeit ist.

Interview-Namenscode:	Code

A. Wohnungssituation

Ich würde gern mit einigen Fragen zu Ihrer Wohnungssituation beginnen.

Wie lange leben Sie schon in dieser Wohnung?	V 01

Wo haben Sie davor gewohnt?	V 02
in Berlin (West)	1
in Berlin (Ost)	2
in einer Stadt im Berliner Umland	3
in einem Dorf im Berliner Umland	4
in einer Stadt in Ostdeutschland	5
in einem Dorf in Ostdeutschland	6
in einer Stadt in Westdeutschland	7
in einem Dorf in Westdeutschland	8
andere (Bitte nennen!):	10

Wie lange haben Sie insgesamt in Berlin gelebt?	V 03

Leben Sie in:	V 04
Ihrem eigenen Haus, Raten abgezahlt	1
Ihrem eigenen Haus, Raten zahlend	2
einer Wohnungsbaugenossenschaft	3
zu privater Miete	4
in einer Sozialwohnung	5
der Wohnung Ihrer Eltern	6
andere (Bitte nennen!):	7

Wieviel Miete zahlen Sie pro Monat (Raten bei Hauseigentümern)?	V 05
Miete pro Woche:	

Was denken Sie? Ist Ihre Miete (Ratenzahlung):	V 06
viel zu hoch	1
zu hoch	2
OK	3
günstig	4
sehr günstig	5

Wie viele Haushalte, einschließlich ihres, wohnen in Ihrem Haus?	V 07

Interviewer-Beurteilung der Wohngegend:	V 08

In manchen Wohngegenden haben Nachbarn wenig Kontakt, in anderen häufig. Wie ist das in Ihrem Fall?	V 09
überhaupt kein Kontakt	1
kaum Kontakt	2
manchmal Kontakt	3
mindestens einmal pro Woche Kontakt	4
täglich Kontakt	5

Welches der folgenden Statements beschreibt die Situation in Ihrer Nachbarschaft am besten? <i>Bitte verwenden Sie die folgende Liste!</i>	V 10
Wir sind eine wundervolle Gemeinschaft. Jeder hilft, wenn jemand ein Problem hat.	1
Die Leute in unserer Nachbarschaft sprechen gewöhnlich miteinander.	2
Jede(r) lebt ihr (sein) eigenes Leben. Wir sprechen kaum miteinander.	3
Die Nachbarn haben sich schon mehrere Male über uns beschwert.	4
Das Leben mit unseren Nachbarn ist ein ständiger Alptraum.	5

Welche der folgenden Einrichtungen sind innerhalb 15 min Laufentfernung von Ihrer Wohnung? <i>Bitte verwenden Sie die folgende Liste!</i>	V 11
a) Spielplatz	ja / nein
b) Park	ja / nein
c) Kindereinrichtung (Kinderkrippe, Kindergarten, Kinderladen, etc.)	ja / nein
d) medizinische Einrichtungen (Ärztelhaus, Poliklinik)	ja / nein
e) Läden, Einkaufszentrum	ja / nein
f) Post	ja / nein
g) Sozialamt	ja / nein

Wie oft sind Sie umgezogen seit Sie alleinerziehend sind?	V 12
Anzahl der Umzüge:	

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG DER OFFENEN INFORMATIONEN SEKTION A	V 13
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B. Familienhintergrund

Der nächste Abschnitt bezieht sich auf Ihren Familienhintergrund. Zunächst werde ich Ihnen ein paar Fragen zu Ihrer Kindheit stellen.

Als Sie ein Kind waren, haben Sie mit Ihren beiden natürlichen Eltern zusammengelebt?	V 14
Ja	1
Nein	0
weiß nicht	9
Verweigert	99

Mit wem haben Sie zusammen gewohnt?	V 15

Hat sich an dieser Situation bis zu Ihrem 18. Geburtstag etwas geändert?	V 16
keine Veränderungen	0
Eltern haben sich scheiden lassen / sich getrennt	1
Andere (Bitte nennen!):	2
Verweigerung	99

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG DER OFFENEN INFORMATIONEN SEKTION B V 17**C. Gegenwärtige Familienumstände**

Die folgenden Fragen sollen uns einen groben Eindruck Ihrer Familienumstände geben.

Haben Sie Geschwister?	V 18
Ja	1
Nein	0

Wie viele Geschwister haben Sie?	V 19

Wie weit entfernt wohnen sie (in Minuten)?	V 20

Wie weit entfernt wohnen Ihre Eltern (in Minuten)?	V 21

Darf ich Sie fragen, wie alt Sie sind?	V 22
Alter (in Jahren):	

Was ist Ihr Familienstand?	<i>Bitte verwenden Sie die folgende Liste!</i>	V 23
ledig, nie verheiratet		1
verheiratet, getrennt lebend		2
geschieden		3
verwitwet		4

Wie viele Kinder haben Sie?	V 24
Anzahl der Kinder:	

Wie heißt Ihre Tochter / Ihr Sohn?	V 25	Wie alt ist sie / er?	V 26
a.)			
b.)			
c.)			

Was ist der höchste Bildungsabschluß, den Sie erreicht haben?	<i>Bitte verwenden Sie die folgende Liste!</i>	V 27
keinen		0
keinen, noch in Ausbildung		1
Hauptschule		2
Realschule, mittlere Reife		3
Abitur		4
Hochschulabschluß		5
Andere (<i>Bitte nennen!</i>):		6

Es gibt verschiedene Gründe weshalb Menschen alleinerziehend werden. Hier ist eine Liste einiger der am häufigsten genannten Gründe.

Können Sie mir bitte sagen, welche davon auf Sie zutreffen:	<i>Bitte verwenden Sie die folgende Liste!</i>	V 28
Ich lebe gern allein.		1
Ich lebe lieber allein als in einer schlechten Beziehung.		2
Mein Partner hat mich verlassen.		3
Es ist schwierig, einen neuen Partner zu finden.		4
Mein Partner ist gestorben.		5
Andere (<i>Bitte nennen!</i>):		6

Sind Sie seit der Geburt Ihrer Kinder immer alleinerziehend gewesen?	V 29
ja	1
nein	0

Wie lange sind Sie schon alleinerziehend?	V 30
Dauer:	

OFFENE FRAGE C 1: Wie hat sich Ihr Leben verändert, seit Sie alleinerziehend sind?	V 31
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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG OFFENE INFORMATIONEN SEKTION C	V 32
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D. Kinderbetreuung

Neben einigen allgemeinen Fragen interessiert mich besonders Ihre Kinderbetreuung.

Besucht Ihr Kind regelmäßig eine Kindereinrichtung (Kindergarten, -krippe, Tagesmutter, etc.)?	V 33
nein	0
ja	1

Wie oft besucht Ihr Kind eine Kindereinrichtung?	V 34
täglich, montags bis freitags	1
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals die Woche	2
einmal die Woche	3
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals im Monat	4
einmal im Monat	5
weniger häufig (bitte nennen!):	6

OFFENE FRAGE D 1: Was für eine Kindereinrichtung ist das?	V 35
------------------------------------------------------------------	------

Bezahlen Sie ab und zu einen Babysitter?	V 36
nein	0
ja	1

Wie oft bezahlen Sie einen Babysitter?	V 37
täglich, montags bis freitags	1
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals die Woche	2
einmal die Woche	3
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals im Monat	4
einmal im Monat	5
weniger häufig (bitte nennen!):	6

OFFENE FRAGE D 2: Was für eine Vereinbarung ist das?	V 38
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Alles zusammen genommen, wie viel zahlen Sie pro Monat für Kinderbetreuung?	V 39
Betrag für Kinderbetreuung (pro Monat):	

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG OFFENE INFORMATIONEN SEKTION D	V 40
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E. Freizeit

Jede(r) braucht etwas Zeit für sich selbst, ohne die Kinder. Im nächsten kurzen Abschnitt werde ich Ihnen ein paar Fragen dazu stellen, was Sie in Ihrer Freizeit machen.

Wie oft haben Sie normalerweise etwas Zeit für sich selbst?	V 41
jeden Tag	1
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals die Woche	2
an Wochenenden	3
an einem Tag in der Woche	4
Weniger häufig (bitte nennen!):	5

Wie viel Zeit haben Sie dann das zu tun, was Sie wollen?	V 42
weniger als eine Stunde	1
ungefähr 1 Stunde	2
bis zu 2 Stunden	3
bis zu 3 Stunden	4
einen Abend oder einen Nachmittag lang	5
einen ganzen Tag lang	6
sonstiges (bitte nennen!):	7

OFFENE FRAGE E 1: Wenn Sie Zeit für sich selbst haben – was tun Sie dann?	V 43
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Wie viele Freunde haben Sie?	V 44
Anzahl der Freunde:	

Wie oft unterhalten Sie sich normalerweise?	V 45
jeden Tag	1
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals die Woche	2
einmal die Woche	3
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals im Monat	4
einmal im Monat	5
weniger häufig (bitte nennen!):	6

Wie oft treffen Sie sich?	V 46
jeden Tag	1
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals die Woche	2
einmal die Woche	3
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals im Monat	4
einmal im Monat	5
weniger häufig (bitte nennen!):	6

OFFENE FRAGE E 2: Wenn Sie sich mit Freunden treffen – was tun Sie dann gewöhnlich?	V 47
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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG OFFENE INFORMATIONEN SEKTION E	V 48
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F. Soziale Unterstützungsnetzwerke

Jeder Mensch kommt manchmal in eine Situation, in der er sich nicht mehr zu helfen weiß und Unterstützung von jemandem anders braucht. Als nächstes werde ich vier mögliche Krisenereignisse vorstellen, die Ihnen vielleicht schon einmal passiert sind. Ich möchte Sie bitten sich zu erinnern, was Sie getan haben als es zum letzten Mal passiert ist.

1. Kinderbetreuung wenn ein Kind krank ist

Bitte stellen Sie sich vor, daß Ihr Kind krank geworden ist und zu Hause gepflegt werden muß. Sie können nicht die ganze Zeit zu Hause bleiben weil Sie zur Arbeit müssen oder weil Sie einen anderen wichtigen Termin haben. Ist Ihnen so etwas schon einmal passiert?		V 49
ja		1
nein		0

Wie oft ist Ihnen das schon passiert?		V 50
einmal		1
ein paar Mal		2
ziemlich oft		3

OFFENE FRAGE F 1.1: Was haben Sie getan?	V 51
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Wen haben Sie um Hilfe gefragt?		V 52
a)		V52a
b)		V52b
c)		V52c
d)		V52d
e)		V52e

Ich würde gern ein wenig mehr über a) bis e) erfahren:

Name d. Person	a)	b)	c)	d)	e)	
Geschlecht						V 53
Alter						V 54
Beziehung z. Befragten						V 55
Familienstand						V 56
Kinderanzahl						V 57
Erwerbstätigkeit						V 58
Gegenwärtige Arbeit						V 59
Entfernung (Fahrzeit)						V 60
Unterstützungshäufigkeit im vergangenen Jahr						V 61

OFFENE FRAGE F 1.2: Wie würden Sie Ihre Beziehung zu a) bis e) beschreiben?	V 62
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Wie oft unterhalten Sie sich normalerweise?	V63a	V63b	V63c	V63d	V63e
jeden Tag	1	1	1	1	1
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals die Woche	2	2	2	2	2
einmal die Woche	3	3	3	3	3
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals im Monat	4	4	4	4	4
einmal im Monat	5	5	5	5	5
mehrere Male im Jahr	6	6	6	6	6
einmal im Jahr	7	7	7	7	7
Weniger oft (bitte nennen!):	8	8	8	8	8

Wie oft treffen Sie sich?	V64a	V64b	V64c	V64d	V64e
jeden Tag	1	1	1	1	1
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals die Woche	2	2	2	2	2
einmal die Woche	3	3	3	3	3
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals im Monat	4	4	4	4	4
einmal im Monat	5	5	5	5	5
mehrere Male im Jahr	6	6	6	6	6
einmal im Jahr	7	7	7	7	7
Weniger oft (bitte nennen!):	8	8	8	8	8

Hat Ihnen a) bis e) vorher schon einmal geholfen?	V65a	V65b	V65c	V65d	V65e
ja	1	1	1	1	1
nein	0	0	0	0	0

OFFENE FRAGE F 1.3: Wie haben sie Ihnen geholfen? V 66

Tun Sie a) bis e) manchmal auch einen Gefallen?	V67a	V67b	V67c	V67d	V67e
ja	1	1	1	1	1
nein	0	0	0	0	0

OFFENE FRAGE F 1.4: Wie haben Sie ihnen geholfen? V 68

2. Hilfe mit Kinderkleidung

Bitte stellen Sie sich vor, daß Sie plötzlich neue Kleidung oder Schuhe für Ihre Kinder brauchen. Sie müssen neue oder gebrauchte besorgen. Ist Ihnen so etwas schon einmal passiert?	V 69
ja	1
nein	0

Wie oft ist Ihnen das schon passiert?	V 70
einmal	1
ein paar Mal	2
ziemlich oft	3

OFFENE FRAGE F 2.1: Was haben Sie getan? V 71

Wen haben Sie um Hilfe gefragt?	
	V 72
a)	V72a
b)	V72b
c)	V72c
d)	V72d
e)	V72e

Hat die Befragte eine Person erwähnt, die noch NICHT zuvor genannt wurde?	
	V 73
ja	1
nein	0

Ich würde gern ein wenig mehr über a) bis e) erfahren:
[nur wenn die Person noch NICHT vorher erwähnt wurde!!!]

Name d. Person	a)	b)	c)	d)	e)	
Geschlecht						V 74
Alter						V 75
Beziehung z. Befragten						V 76
Familienstand						V 77
Kinderanzahl						V 78
Erwerbstätigkeit						V 79
Gegenwärtige Arbeit						V 80
Entfernung (Fahrzeit)						V 81
Unterstützungshäufigkeit im vergangenen Jahr						V 82

OFFENE FRAGE F 2.2:	V 83
Wie würden Sie Ihre Beziehung zu a) bis e) beschreiben?	

Wie oft unterhalten Sie sich normalerweise?					
	V84a	V84b	V84c	V84d	V84e
jeden Tag	1	1	1	1	1
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals die Woche	2	2	2	2	2
einmal die Woche	3	3	3	3	3
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals im Monat	4	4	4	4	4
einmal im Monat	5	5	5	5	5
mehrere Male im Jahr	6	6	6	6	6
einmal im Jahr	7	7	7	7	7
Weniger oft (bitte nennen!):	8	8	8	8	8

Wie oft treffen Sie sich?					
	V85a	V85b	V85c	V85d	V85e
jeden Tag	1	1	1	1	1
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals die Woche	2	2	2	2	2
einmal die Woche	3	3	3	3	3
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals im Monat	4	4	4	4	4
einmal im Monat	5	5	5	5	5
mehrere Male im Jahr	6	6	6	6	6
einmal im Jahr	7	7	7	7	7
Weniger oft (bitte nennen!):	8	8	8	8	8

Hat Ihnen a) bis e) vorher schon einmal geholfen?	V86a	V86b	V86c	V86d	V86e
ja	1	1	1	1	1
nein	0	0	0	0	0

OFFENE FRAGE F 2.3: Wie haben sie Ihnen geholfen? V 87

Tun Sie a) bis e) manchmal auch einen Gefallen?	V88a	V88b	V88c	V88d	V88e
ja	1	1	1	1	1
nein	0	0	0	0	0

OFFENE FRAGE F 2.4: Wie haben Sie ihnen geholfen? V 89

3. Größere Reparaturen oder Anschaffungen (Waschmaschine, Kühlschrank, Küchenherd, Auto)

Bitte stellen Sie sich vor, daß Ihre Waschmaschine, Ihr Kühlschrank, oder Ihr Auto plötzlich kaputt gegangen sind. Sie brauchen Geld, um die Reparatur zu bezahlen oder um eine(n) neue zu kaufen. Ist Ihnen so etwas schon einmal passiert?	V 90
ja	1
nein	0

Wie oft ist Ihnen das schon passiert?	V 91
einmal	1
ein paar Mal	2
ziemlich oft	3

OFFENE FRAGE F 3.1: Was haben Sie getan? V 92

Wen haben Sie um Hilfe gefragt?	V 93
a)	V93a
b)	V93b
c)	V93c
d)	V93d
e)	V93e

Hat die Befragte eine Person erwähnt, die noch NICHT zuvor genannt wurde?	V 94
ja	1
nein	0

Ich würde gern ein wenig mehr über a) bis e) erfahren:
[nur wenn die Person noch NICHT vorher erwähnt wurde!!!]

Name d. Person	a)	b)	c)	d)	e)	
Geschlecht						V 95
Alter						V 96
Beziehung z. Befragten						V 97
Familienstand						V 98
Kinderanzahl						V 99
Erwerbstätigkeit						V100
Gegenwärtige Arbeit						V101
Entfernung (Fahrzeit)						V102
Unterstützungshäufigkeit im vergangenen Jahr						V103

OFFENE FRAGE F 3.2: Wie würden Sie Ihre Beziehung zu a) bis e) beschreiben?	V104
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Wie oft unterhalten Sie sich normalerweise?	V105a	V105b	V105c	V105d	V105e
jeden Tag	1	1	1	1	1
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals die Woche	2	2	2	2	2
einmal die Woche	3	3	3	3	3
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals im Monat	4	4	4	4	4
einmal im Monat	5	5	5	5	5
mehrere Male im Jahr	6	6	6	6	6
einmal im Jahr	7	7	7	7	7
Weniger oft (bitte nennen!):	8	8	8	8	8

Wie oft treffen Sie sich?	V106a	V106b	V106c	V106d	V106e
jeden Tag	1	1	1	1	1
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals die Woche	2	2	2	2	2
einmal die Woche	3	3	3	3	3
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals im Monat	4	4	4	4	4
einmal im Monat	5	5	5	5	5
mehrere Male im Jahr	6	6	6	6	6
einmal im Jahr	7	7	7	7	7
Weniger oft (bitte nennen!):	8	8	8	8	8

Hat Ihnen a) bis e) vorher schon einmal geholfen?	V107a	V107b	V107c	V107d	V107e
ja	1	1	1	1	1
nein	0	0	0	0	0

OFFENE FRAGE F 3.3: Wie haben sie Ihnen geholfen?	V108
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Tun Sie a) bis e) manchmal auch einen Gefallen?	V109a	V109b	V109c	V109d	V109e
ja	1	1	1	1	1
nein	0	0	0	0	0

OFFENE FRAGE F 3.4: Wie haben Sie ihnen geholfen?	V110
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OFFENE FRAGE F 3.5a: Seit Sie alleinerziehend sind, haben Sie jemals finanzielle Hilfe von jemandem bekommen?	V111
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OFFENE FRAGE F 3.5b: Seit Sie alleinerziehend sind, haben Sie jemals jemand anderem finanzielle Hilfe gewährt?	V112
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4. Emotionale Unterstützung

Seit Sie alleinerziehend sind, haben Sie jemals das Gefühl gehabt, daß alles zu viel für Sie ist und daß Sie die Situation nicht allein bewältigen können?	V113
ja	1
nein	0

Wie oft ist Ihnen das schon passiert?	V114
einmal	1
ein paar Mal	2
ziemlich oft	3

OFFENE FRAGE F 4.1: Was haben Sie getan?	V115
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Wen haben Sie um Hilfe gefragt?	V116
a)	V116a
b)	V116b
c)	V116c
d)	V116d
e)	V116e

Hat die Befragte eine Person erwähnt, die noch NICHT zuvor genannt wurde?	V117
ja	1
nein	0

Ich würde gern ein wenig mehr über a) bis e) erfahren:

[nur wenn die Person noch NICHT vorher erwähnt wurde!!!]

Name d. Person	a)	b)	c)	d)	e)	
Geschlecht						V118
Alter						V119
Beziehung z. Befragten						V120
Familienstand						V121
Kinderanzahl						V122
Erwerbstätigkeit						V123
Gegenwärtige Arbeit						V124
Entfernung (Fahrzeit)						V125
Unterstützungshäufigkeit im vergangenen Jahr						V126

OFFENE FRAGE F 4.2: Wie würden Sie Ihre Beziehung zu a) bis e) beschreiben?	V127
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Wie oft unterhalten Sie sich normalerweise?	V128a	V128b	V128c	V128d	V128e
jeden Tag	1	1	1	1	1
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals die Woche	2	2	2	2	2
einmal die Woche	3	3	3	3	3
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals im Monat	4	4	4	4	4
einmal im Monat	5	5	5	5	5
mehrere Male im Jahr	6	6	6	6	6
einmal im Jahr	7	7	7	7	7
Weniger oft (bitte nennen!):	8	8	8	8	8

Wie oft treffen Sie sich?	V129a	V129b	V129c	V129d	V129e
jeden Tag	1	1	1	1	1
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals die Woche	2	2	2	2	2
einmal die Woche	3	3	3	3	3
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals im Monat	4	4	4	4	4
einmal im Monat	5	5	5	5	5
mehrere Male im Jahr	6	6	6	6	6
einmal im Jahr	7	7	7	7	7
Weniger oft (bitte nennen!):	8	8	8	8	8

Hat Ihnen a) bis e) vorher schon einmal geholfen?	V130a	V130b	V130c	V130d	V130e
ja	1	1	1	1	1
nein	0	0	0	0	0

OFFENE FRAGE F 4.3: Wie haben sie Ihnen geholfen? V131

Tun Sie a) bis e) manchmal auch einen Gefallen?	V132a	V132b	V132c	V132d	V132e
ja	1	1	1	1	1
nein	0	0	0	0	0

OFFEN FRAGE F 4.4: Wie haben Sie ihnen geholfen? V133

Schließlich würde ich Sie gern fragen, ob Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder sie ablehnen.

- Zustimmung - 1
 Weiß nicht - 2
 Ablehnung - 3

Stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu?	V134
Aussagen	ja/nein
Es ist nicht notwendig, daß <i>Familienmitglieder</i> regelmäßig über persönliche Angelegenheiten sprechen.	V134a
Es ist nicht notwendig, daß <i>Freunde</i> regelmäßig über persönliche Angelegenheiten sprechen.	V134b
<i>Familienmitglieder</i> sollten einander helfen.	V134c
<i>Freunde</i> sollten einander helfen.	V134d
<i>Familienmitglieder</i> sollten einander finanziell unterstützen.	V134e
<i>Freunde</i> sollten einander finanziell unterstützen.	V134f
Wenn man Unterstützung von jemandem bekommt, dann sollte man ihr (ihm) auch helfen.	V134g
Man sollte nicht um Hilfe bitten, wenn man selbst keine Hilfe leisten kann.	V134h
Es fällt mir schwer, um Hilfe zu bitten.	V134i
Ich kenne viele Leute, die mir jederzeit helfen würden.	V134k

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG OFFENE INFORMATIONEN SEKTION F	V135
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G. Gemeinnütziger Sektor, Selbsthilfegruppen

Nun wende ich mich einer etwas anderen Frage zu. Es gibt verschiedene Selbsthilfegruppen oder -initiativen, die sich um Alleinerziehende kümmern.

Haben Sie schon einmal von einer solchen Selbsthilfegruppe gehört (außer dem VAMV)? Welche?	V136
VAMV,	

Haben Sie eine dieser Organisationen schon einmal kontaktiert?	V137
ja	1
nein	0

OFFENE FRAGE G 1: Wie kam es zu dem Kontakt mit dem VAMV (andere Organisationen)? Warum? Wie haben sie Ihnen geholfen?	V138
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Wie oft sind Sie mit ihnen in Kontakt?	V139
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals die Woche	1
einmal die Woche	2
weniger häufig, aber mehrmals im Monat	3
einmal im Monat	4
mehrere Male im Jahr	5
einmal im Jahr	6
Weniger oft (bitte nennen!):	7

Wie wichtig ist der VAMV (sind diese Organisationen) für Sie?	V140
Sehr wichtig	5
wichtig	4
weiß nicht	3
nicht wichtig	2
überhaupt nicht wichtig	1

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG OFFENE INFORMATIONEN SEKTION G	V141
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H. Einkommen und Sozialleistungen

Man kann seinen Lebensunterhalt auf unterschiedliche Art und Weise verdienen. Ich werde Ihnen nun ein paar Fragen zu Ihrem Beruf, Beschäftigungsstatus und Sozialleistungen, die Sie empfangen, stellen.

Sind Sie derzeit beschäftigt?		V142
ja		1
nein		0

Bitte schauen Sie sich die folgende Liste an und sagen Sie mir bitte danach, welcher Begriff Ihre Situation am besten beschreibt!		
Bitte verwenden Sie die folgende Liste!		V143
a) vollzeitbeschäftigt (mehr als 30 Stunden pro Woche)		1
b) teilzeitbeschäftigt (mehr als 16 Stunden pro Woche)		2
c) teilzeitbeschäftigt (weniger als 16 Stunden pro Woche)		3
d) Gelegenheitsarbeiter		4
e) arbeitslos, aber auf Arbeitssuche		5
f) in Ausbildung		6
g) in Umschulung oder Weiterbildung		7
h) nicht erwerbstätig		8
i) andere (bitte nennen):		10

Falls nicht, haben Sie jemals eine bezahlte Arbeitsstelle gehabt?		V144
ja		1
nein		0

Waren Sie:		V145
a) vollzeitbeschäftigt (mehr als 30 Stunden pro Woche)		1
b) teilzeitbeschäftigt (mehr als 16 Stunden pro Woche)		2
c) teilzeitbeschäftigt (weniger als 16 Stunden pro Woche)		3
d) Gelegenheitsarbeiter		4
e) andere (bitte nennen):		5

Wie lange ist es her, daß Sie zum letzten Mal beschäftigt waren?		V146
Anzahl der Monate (Jahre):		

OFFENE FRAGE H 1: Können Sie mir bitte detaillierter beschreiben, um was für eine Arbeit es sich dabei handelt?	V147
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Wie lange waren Sie in diesem Job insgesamt beschäftigt?		V148
Anzahl der Monate (Jahre):		

Machen Sie (Haben Sie) diese Arbeit gern (gemacht)?	V149
ja	1
nein	0
weiß nicht	9

Hat(te) diese Arbeit negative Konsequenzen für Sie persönlich, Ihr Kind oder Ihr Familienleben?	V150
ja	1
nein	0

Wenn ja, bitte erläutern Sie, wie es Ihr Leben beeinträchtigt hat. Bitte verwenden Sie die folgende Liste!	V151
a) Ich habe nicht so viel Zeit für meine Kinder wie ich gern hätte.	1
b) Wenn ich von der Arbeit nach Hause komme, fühle ich mich oft erschöpft und müde.	2
c) Es bleibt eine Menge Haushaltsarbeit liegen.	3
d) Ich habe nicht genug Zeit für meine Freunde.	4
e) Ich habe nicht genug Zeit, Dinge zu tun, die ich gern tun würde.	5

=> **DERZEITIG ERWERBSTÄTIGE ZU v 153 GEHEN – alle anderen zu v 152!**

OFFENE FRAGE H 2: Wenn Sie nicht erwerbstätig sind – was hält Sie davon ab, eine Erwerbstätigkeit aufzunehmen? Unter welchen Umständen wären Sie bereit, eine Arbeit anzunehmen?	V152
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Es gibt verschiedene Wege, seinen Lebensunterhalt zu verdienen.

Hier ist eine Liste möglicher Einkommensquellen. Bitte nennen Sie die Buchstaben der Einkommensstypen, die Sie derzeit bekommen! Wie lange beziehen Sie sie schon? verwenden Sie die folgende Liste!			Bitte
Einkommensstypen	V153	Dauer	V154
a) Gehalt	1		
b) Unterhalt	2		
c) Kindergeld	3		
d) Erziehungsgeld	4		
e) Sozialhilfe	5		
f) Wohngeld	6		
g) anderes (bitte nennen):	7		

Schauen Sie nun bitte noch einmal auf dieselbe Liste! Gibt es eine Einkommensart, die Sie zur Zeit nicht beziehen, die Sie aber schon einmal bezogen haben?			
Einkommensstypen	V155	Dauer	V156
a) Gehalt	1		
b) Unterhalt	2		
c) Kindergeld	3		
d) Erziehungsgeld	4		
e) Sozialhilfe	5		
f) Wohngeld	6		
g) anderes (bitte nennen):	7		

Haben Sie sich jemals unsicher gefühlt, zum Sozialamt zu gehen?	V157
ja	1
nein	0
weiß nicht	9

OFFENE FRAGE H 3: Können Sie mir bitte erklären, warum Sie sich vom Sozialamt eingeschüchtert gefühlt haben?	V158
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Wie schätzen Sie die Hilfe durch das Sozialamt im allgemeinen ein? Denken Sie, daß die Beamten:	V159
sehr hilfsbereit	1
etwas hilfsbereit	2
nicht hilfsbereit	3
überhaupt nicht hilfsbereit	4

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG OFFENE INFORMATIONEN SEKTION H	V160
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I. Zusammenfassung

Schließlich würde ich Ihnen gern noch ein paar Fragen zu Ihrem allgemeinen Wohlbefinden und allgemeinen Aspekten informeller Unterstützung stellen.

Wie zufrieden sind Sie mit Ihrem Leben und Lebensumständen ganz allgemein?	V161
sehr zufrieden	5
ziemlich zufrieden	4
nicht sehr zufrieden	3
nicht zufrieden	2
überhaupt nicht zufrieden	1

Es gibt immer Menschen, die mehr Hilfe als andere erhalten. Denken Sie, daß Sie mehr Hilfe, ungefähr genauso viel oder weniger Unterstützung als andere bekommen?	V162
mehr Unterstützung als andere	1
genauso viel Unterstützung wie andere	2
weniger Unterstützung als andere	3

Ich möchte nun eine Vorstellung davon bekommen, ob Sie von bestimmten Hilfequellen mehr, genauso viel, weniger oder überhaupt keine Hilfe bekommen möchten. 1 – ich würde gern mehr Unterstützung bekommen 2 – genauso viel 3 – weniger Unterstützung 4 – überhaupt keine Unterstützung	V163
a) Familie (Ihre Eltern, Geschwister, Großeltern)	
b) Freunde, Bekannte	
c) Ex-Partner	
d) Nachbarn	
e) Alleinerziehendenverbände	
f) Sozialamt, Arbeitsamt (Staat)	
g) andere (bitte nennen):	

Glauben Sie, daß der Staat die Pflicht hat, für jedes Kind einen bezahlbaren Kindergartenplatz zur Verfügung zu stellen oder glauben Sie, daß der Staat keine solche Verpflichtung hat?	V164
Der Staat hat die Pflicht, für jedes Kind einen bezahlbaren Kindergartenplatz zur Verfügung zu stellen.	1
Der Staat ist nicht dazu verpflichtet, das zu tun.	0
weiß nicht	9

Glauben Sie, daß der Staat die Pflicht hat, jedem arbeitswilligen Bürger einen geeigneten Arbeitsplatz zu vermitteln oder glauben Sie, daß der Staat keine solche Verpflichtung hat?	V165
Der Staat hat die Pflicht, jedem Bürger einen geeigneten Arbeitsplatz zu vermitteln.	1
Der Staat ist nicht dazu verpflichtet, das zu tun.	0
weiß nicht	9

The London School of Economics and Political Science



Department of Social Policy and Administration

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London WC2A 2AE

Informal support networks of lone mothers

in the United Kingdom and Germany

Dear Gingerbread members;

May I first introduce myself to you? My name is Andreas Hoff. I am a sociologist from Germany. I am working at a cross-nationally comparative study concerning informal support networks of lone mothers in the UK and Germany. The project is based at the London School of Economics (LSE) that belongs to the University of London.

The main objective of this project is to collect information on what support sources lone mothers turn to when emergencies occur. Support provided by informal support networks i.e. by lone mothers' families, former partners, relatives, friends, colleagues, or neighbours will be compared with available support from other sources, such as self-help groups or state agencies. The effect of employment on the well being of lone mothers and their children will be investigated as well. These results will be compared at cross-national level to detect whether there are differences between Germany and the UK in the amount of help provided in each of the four sectors.

However, in order to realise this project I need your help. I am looking for lone mothers with children aged under 6 who would be willing to participate in an interview that will last slightly more than half an hour.

This research project is guided by the interest in your opinion and your experiences as lone parents only. There are no connections to any state agencies at all within this project. Personal details like your surname or your address will not be asked for. I guarantee you complete anonymity. Any information given by you during the interview will be treated confidentially. Furthermore, I promise and guarantee that you will not be forced to reveal any information that you do not want me to know. You are free not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and you are free to quit the interview whenever you want to.

If you are interested in the project or would like to know more about it, please do not hesitate to contact me. I will be happy to answer your questions on the phone or to attend a Gingerbread local group meeting to introduce the project to your group in more detail. My address is:

Andreas Hoff
16 Patina Walk
London SE16 1HT
Tel.: 0171 – 572 11 55
Email: A.Hoff@lse.ac.uk

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

6 May 1998

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Informelle Unterstützungsnetzwerke alleinerziehender Mütter in Großbritannien und Deutschland

Liebe Befragungsteilnehmerin,

Gestatten Sie, daß ich mich kurz vorstelle? Mein Name ist Andreas Hoff. Ich bin Diplom-Soziologe und arbeite zur Zeit an einem internationalen Forschungsprojekt, das informelle Unterstützungsnetzwerke alleinerziehender Frauen in Großbritannien und Deutschland untersucht. Das Projekt basiert an der London School of Economics (LSE), die zur University of London gehört und wird von der Europäischen Kommission in Brüssel gefördert.

Hauptziel dieses Projekts ist es, Informationen darüber zu sammeln, wie alleinerziehende Frauen in Notfällen Unterstützung durch ihre Familie, andere Verwandte, Ex-Partner, Freunde oder Nachbarn erfahren. Diese Ergebnisse werden verglichen mit anderen potentiellen Hilfequellen wie z.B. Selbsthilfegruppen oder staatliche Behörden. Schließlich wird die Wirkung von Erwerbstätigkeit auf das Wohlergehen alleinerziehender Mütter und ihrer Kinder untersucht. Diese Ergebnisse werden auf internationaler Ebene verglichen um festzustellen, ob es Unterschiede hinsichtlich der Verfügbarkeit von Unterstützung zwischen Großbritannien und Deutschland gibt.

Um dieses Projekt realisieren zu können, bin ich jedoch auf Ihre Hilfe angewiesen. Ich suche alleinerziehende Frauen mit wenigstens einem Kind, das jünger als 7 Jahre ist, die bereit sind, an einer Befragung teilzunehmen, die etwas länger als eine halbe Stunde dauern wird.

*Persönliche Details wie Ihr vollständiger Name oder Ihre Adresse werden **nicht erfaßt**. Dieses Forschungsprojekt wird allein von wissenschaftlichem Interesse an Ihrer Meinung und Ihren Erfahrungen als Alleinerziehende geleitet. Es bestehen keinerlei Verbindungen zu staatlichen Behörden. Ich verspreche und garantiere Ihnen volle Anonymität. Jede von Ihnen gegebene Information wird vertraulich behandelt, weder Ihr Name noch andere persönliche Details werden an Dritte weitergegeben.*

Außerdem verspreche und garantiere ich Ihnen, daß Sie nicht gezwungen werden, über Dinge Auskunft zu geben, die Sie lieber für sich behalten wollen. Es steht Ihnen frei, einzelne Fragen nicht zu beantworten. Sie können die Befragung auch zu jedem beliebigen Zeitpunkt abbrechen.

Ich würde mich sehr freuen, wenn Sie bereit wären, an der Befragung teilzunehmen.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

London, den 19. August 1998

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