

2.6.5 Teenage pregnancies

According to Adams *et al.* (1984) and Mahabeer (1989) the reasons for fathers being absent in their families include teenage pregnancies. The factors that contribute to teenage pregnancies are discussed next:

2.6.5.1 Psychological factors

Young women with low ego-strength and a negative self-concept may use sexual activity as a means of acting out strong sexual impulses. Also, highly dependent girls with strong needs for affection, those who feel they have little control over what happens to them, and those who experience social or psychological stress, are more likely to become pregnant (Mckenry, in Lloyd, 1985).

2.6.5.2 Physiological factors

Early onset of menarche and better general health in affluent societies have increased the potential for pregnancy among young girls (Mckenry, in Lloyd, 1985).

2.6.5.3 Socio-economic factors

According to Richter-Strydom (cited in Psychological Association of South Africa, 1989), socio-economic factors influence the occurrence of teenage pregnancies and these factors include the effects of poverty, urbanisation, and the migrant labour system. Pregnant schoolgirls tend to come from families of lower socio-economic status and families which are less cohesive and organised. Poverty as such, however, is not a cause of pregnancy, but it is related to its frequency rates since those who are poor have fewer economic, social, and medical resource for preventing unwanted pregnancies. Teenagers who fall pregnant are also more likely to come from families with less frequent church attendance and from one-parent families with the mother as head. The peer group also plays a role in teenage pregnancies, in that friends may influence each other not to fall pregnant.

2.6.5.4 Cognitive factors

Ignorance about sexual activity and about the use of contraceptives, is a major cause of unwanted teenage pregnancies. Freeman and Rickels (1993) found that there is a disinclination among both black and white adolescents to use contraceptives, with the faulty reason that they don't think they will get pregnant. A related reason for teenage pregnancies could be that teenagers may lack the ability to plan ahead or anticipate the future. It has also been found that pregnant teenagers do not lack intelligence, but lack the ability to analyse abstract issues realistically (Kreipe, Roghmann, & McAnarney, in Freeman & Rickels, 1993). Freeman and Rickels (1993) conclude that teenagers may risk pregnancy not because of any form of pathology, moral or otherwise, but because of normal factors of adolescent development.

2.6.5.5 Single mothers

Single parenting encourages early childbearing by reducing social control and increasing an opportunity for engaging in irresponsible sexual activities. The single parent may also encourage sexual activity by acting as a role model. For instance, a single mother who is dating or cohabiting, sends a message to teenage daughters that sex outside marriage is acceptable and perhaps even preferable (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

2.7 THE IMPACT OF FATHER ABSENCE ON THE LIFE EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN

According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory, changes in roles or in a setting, or both, bring about an alteration in a person's position in the ecological environment. The adjustment of a child as a result of father absence may be called an ecological transition, since in such instances there will be a change in roles and the setting itself. The developing child needs the presence and participation of other parties such as parents, relatives, friends and neighbours to deal with the environment effectively (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the absence of the father, the child loses the participation of the father in his/her development.

Father absence may affect a child morally, emotionally, and psychologically. It is also likely to deprive children of some of the most important resources in life.

2.7.1 Loss of resources

2.7.1.1 Loss of economic resources

(a) Child support system

Mclanahan and Sandefur (1994) posit that the child support systems established in many countries do a poor job of collecting child support funds from uncooperative fathers. These authors argue that some fathers do not pay child support funds because they are unable to monitor and control how the money is spent, suspecting that the money is used to help other members of the household rather than the child itself.

(b) Standard of living

Mclanahan and Sandefur (1994), Lamb (in Ears, 1989) and Everett (1994) argue that economic loss in the family, as a result of parents living apart, lowers a child's standard of living, because the total family income is not distributed equally. A mother and her children usually receive less than half the total family income even though their household may consist of more people, whereas the father usually receives more than half of the total income alone.

However, Mahabeer (1989) contends that financial problems in instances of single parenting may be due to low socio-economic status and not necessarily due to father absence only. It is also stated that low-income mothers tend to make more demands on their children to care for themselves and to obey their mothers.

(c) Academic achievement

The loss of economic resources may impact on the child's academic achievement. It may lead to the child attending a school of lower quality. The single parent may also fail

to pay for lessons after school, or may not have money to enable children to go on camps or trips. These extracurricular activities do not only improve the children's skills, but also provide general intellectual stimulation which affects learning (Mclanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

Mahabeer (1989) states that adolescent girls who experienced father absence during the stage when the Oedipal complex had to be resolved, showed a higher rate of academic problems and exhibited aggressive behaviour towards their parents and peers.

2.7.1.2 The loss of parental resources

(a) Attachment between father and child

Mclanahan and Sandefur (1994) state that when the father lives in a separate household from that of his children, he sees the children less often and this may undermine commitment and trust between the children and the father.

2.7.1.3 Loss of economic resources

(a) Job/economic status

Mclanahan and Sandefur (1994) assert that changes in financial income of the absence of a father is related to loss of job/economic status. Families with low income can afford to live in communities with better facilities, and the loss of a breadwinner usually reduces income it may also reduce single parent families to live in areas where there are fewer resources.

(b) Care

According to McLanahan and Sandefur (1994), most single mothers are forced to fulfil paternal and maternal roles simultaneously, without receiving adequate support. Some experience high levels of stress and become anxious and depressed. This can lead to inconsistent parenting, which makes it difficult to provide the kind of discipline that is coupled with affection to their children.

(c) Gender role identification

Ears (1989) reports that father absence may have a detrimental impact on the development of masculinity in sons, since there is no role model for sons to identify with. However, it is also possible that these children may use other male figures within or outside the family as their role models.

Lamb and Sagi (1983) state that in the absence of a father, boys may act in a masculine way in some facets of their behaviour, while behaving in unmasculine or in feminine ways in other situations, which may indicate identity confusion. Girls who do not have the opportunity to observe their mothers interacting with their fathers, may not learn how a wife is supposed to relate to her husband; this could play a role in rejecting the role of being a wife or a mother, and they may feel insecure in their basic femininity. However, some girls may also learn from their mothers, that it is very difficult to live without a husband and try by all means to ensure a stable marriage for themselves.

2.7.1.3 Loss of community resources

(a) Socio-economic status

McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) assert that changes in financial income due to the absence of a father is related to loss of socio-economic status. Families with a higher income can afford to live in communities with better facilities, and since single-parenthood usually reduces income it may also restrict single parent families to places where there are fewer resources.

A lack of community resources is likely to weaken a child's connection with the labour force. Children who live in poor communities where many adults are jobless, and depend on welfare grants, have less information about how to find a job, and are less likely to find a job than children who live in prosperous communities.

(b) Residential instability

Children of divorced or separated parents more frequently change residence than children from intact families. In part this is due to changes in family size. When the father moves out of the house, the family needs less space, and the mother may choose to move to a less expensive dwelling. When the mother remarries or when a boyfriend or a relative such as a grandmother moves in, more space is needed and the family may move again (Mclanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

(c) Friends and relatives

Divorce or separation also reduces children's connection to their community. When a family lives in a community for a long time, it usually develops close ties with friends and relatives, who provide them with social support. When a family moves from town to town, these ties are undermined and often destroyed by losing old friends and neighbours (Mclanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

(d) Knowledge about community resources

If the family has to move after a separation or divorce, the children do not have knowledge about the resources such as libraries and youth clubs, in their new area of residence. They are thus unlikely to make use of these facilities and opportunities (Mclanahan & Sandefur, 1994). This in turn could affect their development negatively.

2.7.2 Interpersonal adjustment

2.7.2.1 Pro-social goal setting

The developing child has to establish goals which are not only self-centred, but which also take the interests of others into consideration, because a person is a social being and needs to be flexible in order to maintain good relationship with other people. Goal attainment does not exist in a vacuum, but occurs through the process of socialisation. Family, peer group, schools and religious institutions help to determine the type of goals an individual develops. If a child is neglected or abandoned by a parent, he or she may establish selfish goals which do not take the interests of others into account, and this may cause failure to maintain good relationships with others (Mruk, 1995).

2.7.2.2 Adjustment in terms of gender

In the research of Hetherington (in Lamb & Sagi, 1983), boys showed more depression and fewer indications of accepting divorce than girls did. However, this does not mean that girls are not affected. Hetherington (in Ears, 1989) states that adolescent girls who do not have fathers, display significant difficulty in their interaction with males and have more attention-seeking behaviour. This, of course, does not apply to all girls from divorced families. There are differences depending on the individual, and there are girls who form adequate relationships with males, and who later have happy marriages of their own.

Billar (1993) states that inadequately fathered children, particularly boys, tend to be less popular and have less satisfying peer relationships. They may also have difficulty in relating to other males. Hetherington (in Lamb & Sagi, 1983) found that boys became more isolated from their male peers, and preferred to play with young children and girls. The reason could be that they felt inadequate when associating with their own age group, and felt more at ease with younger children and girls. However, there are individual variations and some boys relate well with their peers and get a lot of support from their friends.

2.7.2.3 Social isolation

Lamb (in Ears, 1989) contends that divorced families experience social isolation, not only because of disapproval of divorce, but also because of social exclusion from a social system in which families and couples are often treated as the elementary unit.

2.7.3 Motivation and future expectations

The loss of resources due to father absence affects children's willingness to invest in themselves, by lowering their expectations and motivation. The youth who do not expect to continue with tertiary education due to a lack of funds, even though they may have the ability, are less motivated to work hard in high school than youngsters who expect to go to college (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

However, children who are under the care of both parents may also experience feelings of low self-esteem and a poor self-image, and have low motivation to continue with their education. Family environments characterised by tension, hostility and emotional abuse are not conducive to produce children who are stable and have a positive outlook on life.

Living in a single-parent family may also affect a young woman's assessment of the implications of early childbearing. A teenager who does not expect to go to college or to have an interesting job, is much less motivated to avoid a pregnancy than a young woman who has many opportunities and who expects to pursue a career (Adams, Milner & Schrepf, 1984).

Goetting (in Ears, 1989) reports that daughters of divorced parents married younger and that a large number of them were pregnant at the time of marriage. It is also noted that husbands of daughters of divorced parents were less educated, had less stable employment, and were more frequently involved in problems with the law.

The deprivation of basic needs does not necessarily affect the child's long-term expectations negatively. According to Maslow (1970), needs are arranged hierarchically from lower level needs (e.g., physiological and safety needs) to higher level needs (e.g., the needs for affection and self-actualisation). Lower level needs must be satisfied before one can move to the next

and higher level of needs. However, it is possible for someone to postpone fulfilment of some of the lower level needs and satisfy higher needs first. For instance, a person may stay in a shack or a shabby rented room while getting tertiary education first, so that he could be able to buy a better house once he has finished his studies and has a job. Such a person is actually fulfilling the need for self-actualisation, before satisfying the lower level need for adequate shelter.

2.7.4 Morality

According to Freud (Louw, 1991), moral development is based on superego strength. The superego refers to the rules, values and norms governing behaviour, which are imposed by society, friends, parents and other people. The superego forms the basis of the capacity to feel guilty. If one fails to develop this capacity adequately, one is inclined not to readily feel guilty and as a result a person may behave in ways that are detrimental to others. In an extreme form this could give rise to an antisocial personality (Louw, 1991). In some cultures the father is the one who maintains rules in the family, so in his absence, the development of a conscience may be impaired.

The occurrence of delinquent behaviour is related to the moral development of adolescents. Ears (1989) states that divorce could contribute to children becoming delinquent, psychologically disturbed, and low achievers. However, not all children from single parents are delinquent, some become important figures in the community.

Biller (1993) mentions the following anti-social behaviour in father absent children, both boys and girls: lashing out at others because of frustration at not being able to keep up with classmates at school, boys' physical aggression, and girls' sexual promiscuity. These are symptoms of a poor self-image and psychological problems.

In the community where the research was conducted, it is morally disapproved if girls do not form stable heterosexual relationships, and frequently change partners. Biller (1993) argues that father absence can greatly interfere with a daughter's interpersonal and sexual adjustment, some girls become obsessed with heterosexual relationships as they desperately seek some form of male affection to substitute for what they lack in a relationship with their

father. Mahabeer (1989) also found that adolescent daughters of divorced families show greater receptiveness to males and reported earlier and more frequent dating and sexual intercourse. Others may idealise absent fathers and spend their lives in a futile search for a male who fits their unrealistic fantasy (Biller, 1993).

Moral development is influenced by discipline in the family. Lamb and Sagi (1983) contend that, due to multiple responsibilities of the mother after the father has left the family, the mother could fail to supervise her children properly. Bedtime and mealtimes were reported to be erratic, the children arrived late at home, and household tasks were often left undone. The sons of divorced mothers were more aggressive, resistant, and negative than daughters, and mothers directed more negative sanctions and fewer positive behaviour towards sons than toward their daughters.

2.7.5 Self-concept

Mruk (1995) states that various factors, including unsupportive parents and socio-economic deprivation, can affect the early development of worthfulness and competence in children. Hetherington (in Ears, 1989) found that adolescent girls who lost their fathers through divorce and death have a negative self-concept and are more insecure. Related to this, Adams, Milner and Schrepf (in Potgieter, 1986) also found that children with an absent father lack positive self-esteem. According to Biller (1993) derogatory comments about father absence can contribute to the development of a poor self-concept and maladaptive behaviour in a child. This may be due to feelings of shame. Wallerstein (in Ears, 1989) found that children report acute shame about divorce or disruption in the family, and the behaviour of their parents.

Dominian (in Gunard, 1982) claims that a child from a divorced family may believe that he is no longer acceptable to others. If the child's mother doubts her own ability to attract or to hold a man, a little girl who believes she is like her mother might feel unattractive and rejected by men.

The effect of father absence on self-esteem can partly be explained with reference to Maslow's (1970) theory. A child who hungers for affectionate relationships, and for recognition by his group or family, is likely to strive with great intensity to satisfy this goal. A child without a father

may not experience a sense of belonging and may not develop beyond this level of needs to attain positive self-esteem and self-actualisation. In accordance with Adler's theory these children feel inferior and to achieve a sense of superiority, they need support and encouragement, including support from their fathers (Mruk, 1995). According to Carl Rogers' (Louw, 1991) theory, healthy personality development could only occur when the child receives love and affirmation from significant others, so that he is able to attain self-actualisation. Without positive regard from other people, the child may not develop his full potential as a human being and this may negatively affect his psychological well-being (Louw, 1991). Wallerstein (in Ears, 1989) also states that children who feel rejection because of divorce or disruption in the family, may depict themselves as unlovable.

2.7.6 Emotional experiences

2.7.6.1 Abandonment

Wallerstein (in Ears, 1989) states that children experience divorce or disruption in the family as implied rejection of themselves by their fathers. Westman (in Gunard, 1982) found that infants are affected by their mother's reaction to divorce. If a mother is preoccupied with her troubled divorce and becomes depressed, she is unlikely to be able to meet the child's emotional needs, and as a consequence the child may feel he has lost both parents and his adjustment may become more difficult.

2.7.6.2 Anger and resentment

Many children are angry when their parents separate, feeling betrayed and abandoned by their fathers. Mothers usually retain custody of the children, and the fathers are thus often perceived as leaving the family and often anger is directed to the fathers (Holman, 1977; Kelly, in Gunard, 1982).

Ears (1989) found that some teenagers direct their anger towards their mothers for not being able to stop the father from leaving the family. Some adolescents get sullen and irritable and easily react with physical attack to whoever teases them. Rubin and Prince (in Gunard, 1982) found that some children become angry with their mothers for either causing the divorce or

driving the father away, and some children are afraid of antagonising or challenging their mothers.

Mahabeer (1989) emphasises the negative outcome of divorce on children's relationship with their parents. The custodial mother may displace the anger she feels towards her ex-husband onto her children. For instance the mother may respond to a child who is asking for money by saying, "where do you expect me to get money while you know your father left home".

According to Westman (in Gunard, 1982) a child, especially a boy, could be the recipient of the mother's resentment towards the father and this may result in child abuse or a weakening of the bond between the mother and the infant. The child's presence may remind the mother of the bad and irresponsible father who left them, and she might end up directing her frustration onto the child. This can interfere with the child's later development.

2.7.6.3 Fear of marriage failure

Ears (1989) found that children raised by their mothers after divorce are outspoken about not getting married for fear of repeating the mistakes of their parents; they seem to have a pervasive fear of marriage failure which may serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

2.7.6.4 Guilt feelings

Wilkson (in Ears, 1989) states that some children perceive desertion by a parent as a departure from them personally, and they may blame themselves for the failure of their parent's marriage. Glardner (in Gunard, 1982) reports that children may not understand why their fathers left the family and may then believe that their fathers left them as punishment for some bad deed they had committed.

2.7.7 Positive experiences in the context of father absence

Even though many researches describe negative life experiences of children in the absence of the father, one cannot underestimate the inherent human capability of handling a difficult environment in a productive manner. This is what Victor Frankl calls the power of the human

spirit and its capability to survive under the difficult conditions. Human beings can search for purpose in life and reasons to live in the midst of negative experiences (Ivey, Ivey & Morgan, 1997).

Not all children are affected negatively by father absence. Some may continue to show positive self-esteem and self-motivation, they may feel challenged by their environment, and continue to do well and progress well in life, like children having both parents. Magrab (in Price & Mckenry, 1988) states that even though divorce creates a sense of loss to children, these children do not differ radically from the children who have both parents, because the majority of them are healthy and normal. In some children, divorce accelerates the maturation process because the children become more realistic, futuristic and independent than their peers. Thus, some children seem to be empowered by divorce, and they do well in life regardless of what happened to them.

Manosevits (in Ears, 1989) contends that not all children whose fathers are in the family experience physical and psychological well-being. Men who have hostile and rejecting relationships towards members of their families do not facilitate the psychological maturation of their children and emotional damage to children may occur. In such instances, the dissolution of the families by divorce would more likely benefit than harm the children. Divorce might be beneficial in the long run since it would permit a woman to remarry, if she so wishes, thereby possibly providing the children with a more accessible and suitable father figure.

Mclanahan and Sandefur (1994) state that the presence of two parents in a family promotes responsible parenting, and protects the children from possible parental neglect and sometimes also from abuse. But not all nuclear families promote responsible parenting. Some parents are unable to co-operate in raising their children, and sometimes they just do not care whether or not they are doing a good job. In such cases parenting is likely to be poor and authority is likely to be weak.

Jauch (in Mahabeer, 1989) points out that extended families play an important role by providing emotional support and practical assistance to the whole family and this may compensate for the absence of a father. The support by the extended family may also mitigate the negative social stigma which may be associated with single parenting.

2.8 CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF THE SELECTED POPULATION

The researcher conducted interviews with members of the community to gather the information reported in the following paragraphs. She also grew up and still lives in the same community and this provided many opportunities to gather information through participant observation. The information which is given here, includes views about marriage, traditional ways of birth control, unwed and single mothers, views about the roles of men and women, views about children, the discipline of children, education and communalism.

2.8.1 Marriage

2.8.1.1 The process of marriage

The traditional African marriage is a process whereby a male person sends senior members of his family to pay lobola (in the form of money or cattle) to the parents of the woman he intends marrying. After that a traditional celebration is held, which includes slaughtering a cow, making traditional beer and inviting friends and relatives to share in the celebration. The celebration is meant to please the ancestors, so that the couple will stay together in peace. Those who fail to make such a celebration, for example because of financial problems, are still regarded as married couples, but they must make sure they arrange a celebration at a later stage since they still owe it to the ancestors. If divorce or separation occurs before the marriage celebrations could be arranged, it is believed to be punishment from the ancestors. If a woman dies before the marriage celebrations, her husband's family slaughters a goat or cow before her burial, believing that it establishes a path to the land of her in-laws' ancestors. If this is not done, her own family takes her home to be buried there.

In some communities the family of the groom pays lobola and buys food, clothes, etc. for the celebration. But in other communities, the groom's parents just pay lobola and each family arranges its own celebration.

However, in contemporary society, not all people strictly adhere to the above cultural practices, and they do whatever they regard as suitable for themselves.

There is no specific age for young people to get married. Girls are considered to be ready for marriage when they reach physical maturation, and it is expected that boys should be employed before they marry. If a boy does not work, his parents may still organise money to pay lobola for him, if they feel it is the right time for him to get a wife.

Traditionally, both a boy or a girl must have been from the initiation school before they could even think of marriage, but since no culture is static and due to the influence of the Christian religion, that is no longer a precondition.

2.8.1.2 Types of marriages

There are different types of marriages in traditional African society. These are described next:

(a) Arranged marriages

Traditionally marriages were arranged between relatives. For instance, a man would marry a *malome's* (mother's brother) or a *rakgadi's* (father's older sister) daughter. The parents made this decision, and the person concerned was not allowed to reject his/her parents' choice. However, nowadays the parents seldom choose marriage partners for their children, but they do advise them about a good or bad partner.

(b) Polygamy

Polygamy is accepted in the community where this study was done. Men are allowed to marry more than one wife, irrespective of whether they are able to maintain their families or not. Sometimes a man marries another wife to punish his first wife for the mistakes she has committed. It is called *mosadi wa go hloka maitshwaro o a nyatšwa*, which means to degrade or devalue the first wife who did something wrong. Instead of returning her to her home, she is required to remain a member of the family, but sharing her husband with a new wife. Parents usually do not want their sons to divorce, but instead they encourage them to marry for the second time so that all children should have a father. In some cases, the children of the first wife lack emotional and financial support from the side of their father, because by making them happy would imply that

their mother is also happy. This, however, does not apply to all instances of polygamy. Some men marry many wives because they have money and are capable to look after them. In such cases, the father usually gives all his children what they need for survival, even though it is not a good experience for the first wife when her husband marries another woman.

(c) *Go nyalwa ke lapa*

Go nyalwa ke lapa is another kind of marriage which exists in the community. This is the process whereby a woman whose chances of getting married to a male person are over, gets married to an old couple or a single granny who either does not have children, or whose children have moved out of the family. The woman must already have children and she is supposed to stay together with her children with the old couple or the granny, thus providing a sense of security and belonging to the children and their mother. In turn, the woman and her children do all the home chores for the family, such as washing their clothes, cooking for them and cleaning the house. The practice of *go nyalwa ke lapa* also enables the old couple to maintain and continue the existence of their surname (*go godiša sefane/leina*).

The old couple or granny may appoint a male relative to have children with the woman and to represent a father figure within the family. She may also be allowed to find somebody for herself, but the in-laws must not see him, because it shows a lack of respect. The children from the family of this nature are fatherless, but they are usually respected in the community like those whose fathers have passed away. They get respect, because their mother is married.

Conflicts may arise if the old couple do not give the woman money, or if they complain that she does not do her chores properly. If she has more children, they may also complain about the expenses they have to bear, for providing food and other matters to an additional family member.

2.8.1.3 Life after marriage

After marriage the bride leaves her family and stays with the in-laws. Staying with the in-laws is often an unpleasant experience. It is believed that a daughter-in-law must be treated badly by her in-laws to test her dedication and commitment to build a family. This is called *makoti o a kgothišwa* (the bride must be ill-treated). She has to cook and wash clothes for the whole family, collect firewood, draw water and weed the garden, whilst her sisters-in-law could help if they so wish. The young bride is expected to tolerate this, the main reason being to maintain the unity of the family and to provide the children with a sense of belonging and family stability.

A daughter-in-law who is obedient, submissive, and hard working is supported by her in-laws. For instance, they will take care of her together with her children when her husband does not carry out his responsibilities towards his family, such as when he stays in an urban area for a long time.

It is said *lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi*, which means the daughter-in-law must stay with her in-laws until she dies, no matter how unbearable the environment is. Her plight could include tolerating her husband having extramarital affairs, waiting for her husband if he has left the family without reason, and accepting that he supports her unmarried sisters-in-law financially. It is unacceptable for a woman to return to her home from the in-laws. The people in the community do not respect a woman who does not maintain her marriage, no matter how difficult her situation is.

If the man is the last born son, he and his wife and children are supposed to stay in his parents' home permanently. He is called *mojalefa*, and will inherit all his parents' possessions. After a period of time, other sons are allowed to establish their own home. A nuclear family consisting of only the couple and their children is thus encouraged, because it provides the children with enough space and privacy. It is said that it is easier to manage a small family than a big one. However, a nuclear family is still required to share whatever they have with the in-laws and the wife's parents. There are also instances where parents want a son and his wife to remain with them. This is not only to keep the family together, but also so that the son can continue to support his parents who may fear that if he were move out of his parents' home, he would not be able give them money like before.

2.8.1 Joint inheritance by sons and single mothers

If a husband dies, his younger brother takes over to look after his family and to provide them with a father figure. He becomes a surrogate father, and takes over the responsibilities left by his brother. However, if the younger brother is already married, this may cause hardship for his own family, in the sense that he may no longer be able to provide for his own family as he used to, or he may even leave his own family altogether.

A similar practice relates to women. If a married woman dies, her younger sister, who must be unmarried, replaces her. This is called *se ya ntlo*, which literally means that the sister goes to where there is already a house or a home, i.e., she does not have to establish a new home.

2.8.2 Indigenous ways of birth control

There are two traditional methods of birth control, but these are not reliable and girls who have fallen pregnant frequently claim that they have been using it. The methods are as follows: a girl must wet a cloth with her menstrual blood and give it to her granny. She then hides it in a place only known to her (usually underground). From there the girl is free to involve in sexual intercourse without falling pregnant. When she is ready to bear children, the granny then goes and takes the cloth, gives it to the girl and she must then throw it from the back to any place, after which she can now bear children. It is believed that if the granny forgets where she hid the cloth or if she dies, that girl will never bear children. Another method is that of a traditional healer giving a rope covered with muti to a girl to tie around her waist. When she wants to bear children, she unties the rope. The ineffectiveness of these practices may contribute to teenage pregnancies and multiple pregnancies.

The indigenous ways of birth control is also linked to religion. There are various religious denominations in the community, such as the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), the Apostolic Church, and other churches. The people in the community have the opportunity to follow the religion of their choice. Some churches like the ZCC do not allow women to use contraceptives. It is not acceptable to prevent the birth of a child, and this is not supposed to be argued, but simply accepted. If one were to disobey the law, God will punish you.

2.8.3 Unmarried women and single mothers

There is a belief that a woman must get married and belong to another clan. If she is not married, she carries the responsibility of whatever mistakes are committed by her children. If a child of a never-married or of a divorced parent commits mistakes, people say "it is not surprising, his mother is not married, where do we expect him to learn a good life".

Marriage is thus regarded as of great importance, and a woman must belong somewhere rather than in her parents' family. Although there are many difficulties within any marriage, a family is supposed to provide happiness, understanding, support, caring, and loyalty.

It is rare to find a woman having her own home (house) before or without marriage. If young, unmarried girls fall pregnant, they mostly stay with their parents and brothers (the uncles of their children). The parents play an important role in maintaining their unmarried daughters and grandchildren. If the brothers of the unmarried sisters are working, they help to raise their sisters' children, but problems may arise when a brother gets married. The wife of the brother will need money for her own family, while her sisters-in-law also need help. If the wife were to stop helping her sisters-in-law, they are likely to treat her badly, report her bad manners to her husband, and encourage their brother to leave that woman or marry a second wife.

The community where this study was done, have negative attitudes towards an unmarried mother and her children. For example, a man's parents may oppose their son marrying the daughter of a single mother, because she does not have a father. This in turn could create a cycle of single mothers born from single parent families. However, this is less likely to happen to boys, because they are the ones who propose marriage and are perceived as superior to girls.

Single mothers are a threat to married women in the community. If men fail to come home at the specified time, the wives may fear that their husbands could have been with a single woman. Married women thus often confront unmarried mothers, and this could affect the children of single mothers negatively, since they may observe their mothers being belittled, but without fully understanding why this happens.

2.8.4 Views about men and women

2.8.4.1 Men

Men are supposed to be assertive, decision makers, independent, financially responsible for the family and responsible for discipline in the family. Traditionally, men take control of everything in the family, such as the number of children, dressing style of his wife, the kind of furniture that is bought and the kind of house the family stays in. The community believes that a husband is bewitched, or is a coward, if he involves his wife in decision making.

Men are not allowed to punish their wives physically, but some men do so to solve family problems. It has been observed that physical punishment is often used by men who are unemployed and who are unable to satisfy the needs of their families and when they have to face their failures, they become aggressive. The researcher attended the traditional court several times, and observed the chief fining husbands who physically punish their wives. They pay with money, and the amount depends on the severity of the assault and the circumstances.

There are exceptions to the descriptions given above. Many men involve their wives in decision making. Some do not allow their wives to do difficult manual work. There are many women who are educated and working, and there are husbands who allow their wives, who are not educated, to find jobs around the village.

Many of the men in the area where the study was done, work in urban areas while their children and wives remain in the rural areas. Some husbands come home at the end of every month, others fortnightly or weekly. This seems not to be a problem to the women. What is important, is to see their husbands coming home at the specified time, even though they may suspect that the men may have other women in the cities. It is accepted that men will have extramarital relationships and this is regarded as indicating good manhood.

In contemporary times, living far from their families while working in the cities is not because the men are not allowed to bring their wives and children along, but because it has become

part of a life-style. A rural home is believed to be secure, because urban areas are seen as a place for work and not home.

In the area where the researcher comes from, men who are considerate buy clothes for their families at the places where they work. Normally, the family members have no choice with regard to the type and size of clothes, the father would just buy it and they are expected to appreciate it. Some of the clothes may be too big for the children, but they are supposed to wear it like that, as they will 'grow up with them'. A reason for this is that blacks often earn meagre salaries and in addition, clothing stores are often not available in rural villages and it is not easy for a father to come home and take his children to town to buy them clothes which they could try on first. Thus, the parent buys the clothes in the town or city where he works.

2.8.4.2 Women

In the rural area where this study was conducted, women are supposed to be loyal, tolerant, submissive, and dependent childbearing housewives.

A woman is supposed to remain loyal to her husband. Even if he may be absent for twenty years or more, the wife must wait for him. Some men only come back to be buried at home after they had died in the cities. Others come back with not a cent in their pockets, having been chased away by their urban wives because they are no longer useful to them, and their rural wives are then responsible to provide them with a livelihood.

The rural women often feel that urban women are more attractive. This may be related to the conditions in which rural women live, such as a lack of running water, poverty, lack of health facilities, and unemployment. They feel that their husbands are vulnerable to have extramarital affairs, which is highly possible, since many men leave their families for urban women.

Women are not allowed to visit their husbands in urban areas without notice. They must ask permission to come and the husband may refuse or allow her to come. If he refuses, a woman is not supposed to challenge the decision. The women also believe that it is not healthy to find out that your husband is having a love affair, because that does not solve any problem.

Instead, it creates conflict, and confronting the husband, whom they know is in a superior position, can lead him to leave the family or to marry a second wife.

Women generally regard rural areas as a true or permanent home where people settle. Life in rural areas is peaceful, cheap and people do not pay for any services, since most of the areas have no services. However, life in rural areas is also difficult. The women walk for long distances to fetch firewood or unhealthy water. They often cultivate their fields by themselves from which they harvest some bags of maize. They sometimes grind the maize themselves, using traditional grinding stones. A good wife is expected to use cow dung to plaster the floors of her house. These chores make life in rural areas difficult.

Traditionally, women used clay to build houses, cutting grass for roofing the house. Nowadays husbands often provide them with money to buy bricks, cement, corrugated iron, door frames, window frames, and window panes. Some women are known to have saved money by eating unhealthy food, such as porridge and dried vegetables, as long as they could have a house. People actually make fun of a wife who has enough food, but who does not have a big house and she will not be regarded as a good wife. Having a good house seems to be the pride of every woman or family. However, single mothers have no one to provide them with the above mentioned goods, and some still cut grass and use clay to build a house.

Although there are developments in some parts of the area where the study was done, such as the installation of electricity, telephones and tap water along the streets, one still finds some women going to the mountain to fetch firewood. Some people are very poor, without any income and it is very difficult for them to pay for electricity. Some only 'need a bag of mealie-meal', i.e., they just need to get porridge for survival and nothing more.

Some women are conservative, and still collect wood from the mountain even though they can afford electricity. They just want to save money or use it for something they cannot produce with their own hands, like buying cement and corrugated iron.

Women are supposed to bear many children, regardless of whether the husband is capable of maintaining the family or not. Husbands determine the number of children in the family, and families often have large numbers of children. Having many children is not only due to

pressure from husbands, but is also part of the values of the community, and the women want to satisfy their parents-in-law and the community.

A woman is also not supposed to refuse when her husband wants to marry another wife. If she complains, the man may confront her with alternatives, such as that she has to leave if she does not want him to have a second wife, or he may simply marry again without her consent. Since most rural wives depend on their husbands for their financial needs, and the community also supports polygamy, it is rare to find a woman leaving the family when her husband marries a second wife. It is better for a woman to secure her children's financial security, and to provide them with a father figure and a stable family environment, than to put her own emotional, physical and social needs first. Women depend on their husbands, they are proud of their working husbands while they take care of the children.

The new wife often already has children by other men. It is said *ngwana ke wa kgomo*, meaning a child belongs to the man who married his mother, and the biological father is not considered if he did not marry the mother of the children. He may even be taken to the traditional court if he insists on seeing his children while their mother is married to somebody else. The children of the new wife usually gets more love, attention and financial help from the father than the children of the first wife.

2.8.5 Views about children

2.8.5.1 Girls

Traditionally girls were not supposed to be educated. Parents believed it was a waste of money, because they were going to get married to other families and use their education to benefit other people. Today, this has changed and many girls attend school and tertiary educational institutions, even though a large number of them still see their future only in marriage. They attend school just because others do so, or just because they are still too young to get married. In such instances, they tend not to work hard on their academic work, and may fall pregnant before the age of twenty. This is reinforced by the values of the community, which regard being a good wife as more important than working hard at school. Lack of motivation to achieve academically can also be the result of poverty, where the children

are aware that they cannot afford to attend tertiary educational institutions and perceive marriage as a shortcut to a better life. Some parents also see marriage as a relief from maintaining a big family. Not only will there be one less dependant in the family, but the child will probably also give her parents some financial support after she got married.

2.8.5.2 Boys

A boy is regarded as an important asset in a family. A family without a boy may become unstable, because a father may want a boy, even to the extent that he may marry another wife to bear him a son, or he may leave his wife because she could not have a son. The reason for the importance of having a son is to maintain the continuation of the man's surname (*go tsoša leina*).

Parents expect from their sons to help them where they have failed, such as building them a house or providing for other things they cannot afford, such as paying for younger children's schooling. This is accepted as normal by the children, because they say "I want to get a job to help my parents, because they have been suffering with me". They do not speak about their own interests first. Parents may accordingly feel threatened when their working sons want to get married, because the son will then no longer be able to maintain them like before, even though boys are meant to marry and have more children to make the family big. Conflict might arise between parents and their daughter-in-law because she is seen as responsible for decreasing or stopping her husband's financial support of his family. In instances where this leads to conflicts between a man and his wife, his parents may not help him to resolve the problems in his relationship with his wife. They would rather place the blame on the woman and this might even culminate in the parents encouraging their son to marry a second wife.

Not all parents expect their children to support them. Some save money for the education of their children, invest money for their children to start a family, and help their children to deal with family life, but this does not occur commonly.

2.8.6 Discipline

Since many fathers work far from their families, their relationship with their children is not as close as is the relationship between mothers and children. In most cases, the children send their mothers to speak with the fathers when they need something. The mother is thus used as an intermediary between the children and their father.

Discipline of the children by the father is usually not direct, but goes through the mother. However, ultimately the father is responsible for maintaining the good reputation of his family members. Most of the discipline is carried out by the mother because she is closer to the children. Only in very difficult matters, such as when a girl is pregnant, the mother refers it to the father. At times the mothers hide some bad behaviour of the children from their fathers, fearing that the punishment may negatively affect the whole family, for example the man may decide not to come home at the end of the month, or not to support them financially. At times the father blames a mother for deviant behaviour of the children.

Despite the distant relationship between the children and their fathers, the father plays an important role in the lives of the children. It is regarded as a great blessing to have a father. The father provides a sense of belonging for both the mother and the children. He is also responsible for providing financial security and contributes to the psychological well-being of the family.

2.8.7 Education

There are children in rural areas who do not attend school because of financial constraints or because children are kept out of school to herd the cattle. However, many children do attend school and the community seems to be aware of the importance of education, because people encourage their children to go to school, but the spirit and culture of learning is not well developed. There is a high failure rate at schools, girls often fall pregnant, boys tease their teachers, and learning facilities are scarce. Children are often not sure whether they should invest their future in education or not, and this could also be the result of poverty. Education helps people to realise their potential, and a lack of education in rural areas might inhibit self-actualisation.

Religious beliefs may also have an impact on children's academic performance, since parents or priests and traditional healers ask the children to bring their books to the church or to traditional healers to perform some rituals, so that they will be able to pass their examinations. It is possible that the child may not study at all, hoping that the rituals will make miracles on her/his performance. The parents and the church members (ZCC, and other independent black churches) regard the rituals as more important for guaranteeing success, than studying hard, so this may be a contributory factor to the high failure rate at schools.

2.8.8 Communalism

Relatives and next-door neighbours play an important role in the life of a family. Rural black communities are usually poor, and people are not supposed to be selfish. They try to be kind to their neighbours so that they will be able to ask something that they need, such as salt, sugar and other things. Neighbours are often the first people to know when you are not feeling well, and they need to be treated with respect. It is believed that one cannot be on your own without other people. This is expressed in the proverb *motho ke motho ka batho*, which means that a person is a person in relation to other people.

2.8.9 Witchcraft

The belief in witchcraft, called *boloi* in Northern Sotho, is common in the area where the study was conducted. *Boloi* can be regarded as mysterious acts of people that cause death, illness or misfortune to others. The misfortune may include failure at school, causing conflicts in a family or causing a parent to leave the family, losing one's job, etc. The witches (*baloi*) may also use one to work for them, usually at night, which causes people to wake up tired the next morning.

Events or problems which are difficult to explain and to solve, or where the origin is mysterious, are often ascribed to witchcraft. The complexity of modern life and the stresses associated with it, could contribute towards interpreting events which are difficult to understand and deal with, to witchcraft. However, in some instances a person may know the cause of an event, for example why he has lost his job, but ascribe it to witchcraft to avoid the truth.

Boloi usually occurs in close relationships, such as between close relatives and co-workers, and often arises in situations of interpersonal conflict. When there is harmony, people tend not to interpret problems in terms of witchcraft; however, when relationships are disturbed, attributions of witchcraft are more likely to occur. *Boloi* could thus be seen as an expression of disharmony among people close to each other.

The identification and healing of *boloi* can be done by both spiritual healers and traditional healers. However, a person may also counteract *boloi* on his own through *thapelo* (prayer).

2.8.10 Religion

The independent black churches, such as the ZCC, play an important role in the lives of the members of the community where this study was conducted. These churches fulfil a role that goes further than only preaching the Christian religion. They also treat illness, but their work does not only involve curative interventions. They also intervene to prevent illness or misfortune from occurring. These preventative interventions can take different forms, including strengthening individuals and their families and possessions against misfortune, which provides people with a sense of security. Similarly, interpreting the causes of existing problems and predicting the future through prophesying, provides people with a sense of security and promotes their well-being.

One of the reasons why these churches play an important role, is that they integrate Christianity with the traditional world view and way of life. The office bearers of these churches, such as the spiritual healers, participate in the world view of their congregation, and have an intuitive understanding of the conflicts which are common in the community. This enables them to interpret illness and misfortune in terms of thought patterns which are familiar to the congregation and to intervene in ways in which the people have confidence.

