

Swedish National Report on Lone Parents

Martin Peterson & Birgitta Thorsell, Göteborgs Universitet, Sweden

Overview of general conditions concerning lone parents

The Category III cases concern single parenthood, a situation which touches the private sphere at its most vulnerable point. It is a risk category which cannot be controlled by positive regulation or structural means since it involves so many individual variables which have comparatively little to do with relations in society. In pre-modern times risk was minimised through the hegemony of the extended family. Even though this institution may have been suffocating to the individual it asserted the existence of a social framework. In modern times the individual has searched out a more ambitious and satisfying family institution still congruent with the nation state. The nuclear family satisfied the desire for passion as a basis for marital relations. But the element of passion introduced risk into the formation of the most basic of all institutions in society - the nuclear family. At the same time this institution was identified with the free citizen, rights and obligations, and mobility from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft*.

The nation state was built on every citizen's imagined or real sense of having the capacity to impact upon national life. This required an equal civil status among citizens irrespective of class. The nuclear family became the common form that demanded enhanced civil discipline and conformity for the benefit of the nation state. Thus a somewhat schizoid institution was created. Passion and desire drove couples into marriage and the formation of a nuclear family which, once established, was forced to conform to ever stricter norms which negated the original driving force.

The welfare state was meant to be the finishing touch to the nuclear family providing security while both parents could earn an income for the household. At the same time the ever restrictive nature of this apparently ultra-modern institution instigated a rebellion from the very roots of society during the 1960s. At this crucial point the contraceptive pill permitted promiscuity as a new norm. This discouraged the automatic formation of nuclear families. Entry into the status of single parenthood became as much a voluntary step as an enforced act. Marriages tended to last for a much shorter time period and children became accustomed to living with either, sometimes in complete ignorance of the existence of a father, or with several fathers (or mothers).

If the oxymoronic combination of passion and conformity distinguished the nuclear family, with evident risks of violent break-up and mental breakdown, single parenthood invited the risks of solitude and a loss of control of the situation. Single parenthood definitely required very strong networks. When these were at hand this institution could work without friction, combining the best of the *kibbutzim* spirit with libertarian excursions where desired. Without strong networks single parenthood could be heading for a downward spiral of exclusion and misery. Up to the mid 1990s social policy in Sweden was directed towards the maintenance of exposed groups, (including the ones investigated by SOSTRIS) at the edge of marginalisation, before the point of outright

exclusion. So a single parent with the worst prognosis – unskilled, unemployed worker with an ethnic minority background and no social networks - would never fall through the net but gradually in fact be cut off into marginalised oblivion. There is one fault in this prognosis however: ethnic minorities seldom are without some sort of social network unless they have become ostracised by their own peers, which is exceptional. The far more frequent case is that of Swedes suffering in silence from being socially excluded because of their shame over their situation. The shame factor is as effective in this case of exclusion as it is in the case of persistent unemployment.

Since 1995 an increasing number have been falling through the net, apparently with little chance of bouncing or even crawling back again. Self-perpetuating wretched groups may form subcultures of exclusion if not on an American scale so at least on an average European one. However, the growth of single parenthood has in post-Keynesian terms turned out to be exceedingly expensive for state and society. Hence as single parenthood has rooted itself as an endemic source of social malaise rather than as an indicator of progress, the state is searching for mechanisms to induce a return to the safe nuclear family, which is infinitely more cost-effective to the national economy.

Only eight per cent of single parents are men. This still represents a very low figure. Those men who are in a situation of single parenthood have not come to it easily, however crystal clear their cases may have been. They normally have a long legal struggle behind them, and often enough also a battle with the social services. If a father takes care of his children he has no obligations to the ex-spouse, but if the mother once again becomes entitled to have control over the children, which is always the first and almost only conceivable option in the minds of the public authorities, then the father will have to pay for his children according to the size of his salary, under a new law. Hence unemployment is not always such a bad thing for divorced fathers with no well-paid job in sight. One important conclusion from this experience is that male single parents hardly ever have time to think about the transformation of their lives, still less of their own self-realisation or liberation as single parents, which is more often pursued in the female cases.

The public handling of this category is almost exclusively concerned with single mothers. One prominent public investigation, the one by Folkhälsoinstitutet (1994:24), has taken it upon itself to explode the most well known myths about single mothers. The investigation is called "Lone Mothers and their Health and Life Conditions". It comes up with five main conclusions: 1) single mothers constitute a heterogeneous group in terms of life conditions - their level of education, work and social networks determine their vulnerability; 2) it is a myth that children of single mothers automatically become involved in criminality or have other behavioural problems; 3) the children of single mothers are significantly more successful in higher and further education than those of regular nuclear families, since it is not divorce as such but the unsolved conflicts from the divorce which cause children unhappiness and psychological problems; 4) it is a myth that all single mothers are entitled to and receive social allowances since from 1992 studies show that only 34% of single mothers get allowances and then only for a short period of time, for example around three months; 5) a very large proportion of uneducated, unqualified single mothers have health problems, such as constant back and shoulder pain as a result of poor working environments and lack of influence over their working conditions; and since the mid-1970s a markedly increased experience of stress at work among more skilled women workers, which among other things has led to a drastically increased sick leave: in 1989 the annual sick leave among married women with small children was eight days per child, among women with partners seventeen days per child and among single mothers forty seven days per child; 6) single mothers attract misfortune to a much greater extent than other women in the form of abuse and violence, a weak position in the labour market, bad working environments, poor economic resources, a weak position in the housing market and bad living conditions; 7) the support single mothers demanded was first and foremost of an economic kind since bad economic conditions affected and amplified all the other negative factors. The drastically worsened economic cycles of the 1990s have affected the

prospects of single mothers to, in many cases, levels of desperation, a level virtually unknown collectively during the golden years of the welfare state.

Two aspects of the need for qualitative support came to the fore in the investigation: one concerned the shortage of time for single mothers in full employment with children in nursery during the daytime. Time as a scarcity factor encroached severely on the relation between the single mother and her children. Reductions in working time without associated significant loss of income would be here a desirable goal. A second need emerged concerning that of someone to talk with, be it a friend or a professional. This factor of close supportive relationships has increasingly been emphasised by Swedish researchers, implying that the absence of more or less close networks leads to illness when a single mother is under great stress, and social support may significantly reduce the risks of ill health.

These findings may seem to state the obvious, but in the Swedish context until recently, social relationships were not recognised as a factor in ill health, only physical factors were. In recent years much Swedish research has gone into demonstrating the unsurprising fact that social networks constitute the most important element of the well being of the individual. Sweden, a leader in the field of social engineering, found itself involved in a debate initiated at a primitive level in ethological studies. For a long time literature had functioned as a counterpart to a culture of science and rationalism - a highly legitimated but entertaining expression of intuition, feeling and imagination with occasional excursions into a basically harmless experimental avant-gardism - but now it was ethology that highlighted social psychological problems with its simple popular images and metaphors. Thus it was when ethology implied that human beings were still more beasts than angels and thus to be subjected to mechanisms of control, even if with qualifications, that both the scholarly and political worlds began to reorient themselves.

When, at the height of the Swedish "golden years" of the 1960s (a remarkably insensitive technocratic and growth-directed transformation of society), and the Wilsonian "White Heat of Technology" era in Britain, ethologists began to see human and creative desire for order being perverted by a "technomorphic" culture of specialists accustomed to being concerned with control at the expense of imaginative empathy. The Welfare State could no longer be seen as the efflorescence of a rational, progressivist dream. It could not divert an explosion in the crime rate, football-hooliganism, industrial strife and unrest, monetary crises, race riots, political scandals and loss of purpose in nation after nation. Major strains and gaps were being detected in both constitutional and philosophical foundations. Counter cultures began to present a more pervasive and tougher challenge to the prevailing order than at any time since the Romantic period.

The moral and spiritual vacuum of the planned society was the cause of, a fragmentation of both religion and enlightenment into relativist orders of competing and contradictory values. On the other hand, the older forms of community - based on deference, social custom, obligations and rights, so much part of the flesh-and-bone foundation of the Swedish national state - were becoming once and for all to be made obsolete with the advent of globalism. Instead enlightened reason was narrowed into a technocratic instrumentalism both in science and politics which turned out to be the very cause of the human malaise it was intended to alleviate. This was the broad general background to the growing lack of reliance on established social institutions, manifested in the dissolution of the ideals of the nuclear family, and in some circles rather the elevation of single parenthood to a model form. The risks were reduced by 1) the prevalence of affluence and 2) the ideological legitimacy in many circles, which facilitated access to social networks. However, during the backlash years of the 1980s the state became increasingly anxious to address the civil order, since, for one thing, single parent-hood was much more expensive for society than the nuclear family, which had turned out to be a genuinely cost-effective institution in tune with the prerogatives of the modern nation-state. A compromise view came to the fore in the promulgation of a public ideology.

The current vision of the *Folkhälsoinstitutet* (a public authority monitoring the state of health of the Swedish population) implies that policies must be broadly focussed and be directed towards health promotion rather than illness-prevention measures. Conditions of life must encompass needs beyond the basics of food, sleep, work etc., elements which can be adduced to a "surplus of resources". One precondition for using a surplus meaningfully is an understandable, controllable and sensible existence. The means through which this can be reached is through the acquisition of autonomy and an ability to act, which will entail empowerment in everyday life. Concretely this implies a support by the authorities for higher education and educational qualifications for single mothers. Limitations of outlook and circumstance are likely to lead to a vicious circle of downward spiral. In contrast a good social network (*primary factor*), a high level of self respect and self esteem (*secondary factor*), a good job, reasonably well-paid (*tertiary factor*) will in that order reduce the risk of ill health. The timing of support is also considered important. Often enough it is a chain of measures which is needed, and then concentration on that link in the chain that is most critical.

Folkhälsoinstitutet is supporting a wide array of development projects. Several are based on the concept of empowerment or power mobilisation. The aim is to strengthen the self esteem of the single mother in order that she may find her way into the labour market in a planned and successful way. In a middle sized industrial town in central Sweden, one project builds on the co-operation between the municipality, the Amanda-group (a collective of young exposed girls), and researchers attached to the Centre of Welfare Research and Gothenburg University. Another project in a local mother care district in Gothenburg is called the "*Enastående mamman*" (a pun meaning the single and outstanding mother in one word), and is focussed upon pregnant single mothers without any male support.

A third project is of a medical kind, where *Folkhälsoinstitutet* and Umeå University are collaborating in the field of research on cardiovascular diseases and single motherhood. In a recent dissertation (K. Linden, *Kvinna, hälsa, arbete* (Woman, Health, Work) Dept. of Social Work, Göteborg 1991), the concept of empowerment is frequently used. Their starting point is that of establishing how the kind of power relations that influence the conditions of women may be changed or transformed into action. Power mobilisation or **empowerment** is a process and a method for the woman acquiring an ability to act and gain power over herself and her own situation. This occurs through an understanding of how the structurally conditioned powerlessness develops and therefore it blocks precisely the capacity to act. Powerlessness is rendered visible through discussions around the conditions of single mothers. The analysis of power deals in this context with an understanding of the symptoms of powerlessness. When the symptoms assume a meaning in a whole context they may also be taken as a point of departure for action. Powerlessness has its basis in everyday structures where the symptoms arise and where the experience of the symptoms is reflected in a clear sense of incapacity to remove them. With empowerment it is even possible to visualise the structural frame in which the actions of the individual become ineffective. In short the power analysis is transformed into a mounting ability to act.

In one variation of this in a local project in a small town to the north of Gothenburg, an experimental discussion and focus group was developed during the 1990s with single mothers. The group leader was a professional and a single mother. Some of the participating mothers gave expression to an anxiety that there would be too much talk about personal problems which would require their "revealing their inner feelings". There existed a sense of insecurity as to what was expected of them. However the value of the group has increased markedly during the year. The within-group dynamics opened up the participants to talking about their thoughts and feelings around the upbringing of children and the situation as a single parent.

The group worked as a forum where one's problems could be aired at length in order

that the participating mothers should feel that they were not alone with these particular problems. The group worked better than had been expected, according to one account. The impact on the children of their mothers meeting to talk was also of great importance. Many of the mothers were of necessity quite unlike each other and distrusted the setting. After a while they began to feel responsibility for each others' children in a new and, for them, qualitatively different manner. There are several similar focus groups, not only in Gothenburg but spread across the nation. Another one, highly thought of, is Harmonia, which is situated in a suburb of Gothenburg. This one will be focussed on in our closer look at flagship agencies.

In the official report of the Swedish Labour Confederation (LO) to the LO Congress in the autumn of 1995, there was a major document included called the "Justice Report". It was an investigation into the state of affairs of the individual members of the LO. It demonstrated an exponentially growing number of redundant workers who had experienced divorce during the 1990s, due to the extreme pressures on nuclear families under the new and very unexpected period of austerity for Swedish house-holds. In many cases a time period of three to four years of redundancies and social hardships, where not only single mothers but their children found themselves in trouble, was enough to completely demoralise previously self-reliant and confident individuals. These cases are so widespread within the LO collective that talk of social erosion is warranted. The LO report, which included and was signed by some of the top figures in the Confederation, represents an authentic expression of their members' perceived reality.

The occurrence of single parenthood in Sweden is evenly distributed across social classes. Although abuse and violence do provide a frequent enough cause for single motherhood, it does not in fact figure among the cases we have recorded, documented and analysed. On the contrary the profile that is emerging as a type in the Swedish Category III is one of relative control of the situation and in no case is a victimised single parent. Where women are single parents they are invariably in a superior position to that of their ex-husbands or male partners and in no case dependent upon them. Where the men are single parents their ex-wives are in serious trouble, and have often met with violent and abusing new husbands after the separation from our protagonist.

The strategy of the single mother, having arrived at this civil status, is one of finding herself, since she has the feeling that she has previously been too concerned with others. She is aware that one safe road to further autonomy and self-realisation is education in general and specialised education in particular. She usually has fairly good social networks and an emerging idea of what she wants to devote herself to in terms of study and professional qualification. Irrespective of social background however she has scarce and meagre finances. Hence she is normally in need of assistance from the public authorities for the pursuit of further study. Where a social network is lacking that becomes the chief priority before embarking on study.

Karin

Biographical background:

Maternal grandmother, born in 1921, stayed home as a housewife
maternal grandfather, born in 1919 died in 1992, worked as a carpenter at the shipyard Eriksberg in Göteborg. They both came from Norrland.

Paternal grandmother, born in 1916 in Göteborg, worked as a general worker, politically active in the communist party now the leftist party and still is so paternal grandfather, born

in 1915 in Göteborg, died in 1985 worked as a garbage-worker, suffered from alcoholic problems

Mother born in 1946 as the second of three sisters, took a BA in economics and social science, works at the city council as a chartered accountant.

Father born in 1942, technical education as an adult student, works as a carpenter and as a carpet mender with his own firm.

- 1969 parents got married just before Karin was born
- 1969 Karin born
- 1972 sister born
- 1974 parents get divorced, Karin lives with father for half a year
- 1975 moves to mother and sister, they all live with maternal grandparents in their house with a garden, Karin visits her dad every other weekend
- 1976 starts school
- 1979 moves together with mother and sister to an apartment of their own
- 1980-1983 intermediate level, well-adjusted at school, with friends and a gang of girls
- 1983-1986 senior level, dysfunctional times at school as in life
- 1984 starts to work during weekends in the municipal home care service
- 1985 has an abortion
- 1988 finishes school with a higher school certificate, rejects father for the first time, moves together with Roger
- 1990 daughter born, starts to work after half a year part time at a nursing home
- 1991 daughter ill, diagnosed as neuroblastoma, a tumour illness
- 1992 marries Roger
- 1993 second daughter born
- 1994 gets divorced, the children with their father every other weekend, shared custody

- 1995 attends adult education, plans to get into university step by step
- 1996 her daughter declared well at five year control in the hospital, meets a new man
- 1997 continues to study and works part time to get hold of the household economy

RESULTS OF BIOGRAPHICAL DATA ANALYSIS: KARIN

Karin comes from a family, which on both sides stems from the working-class, where the maternal side is more obviously oriented towards upward mobility, while the paternal side is reproducing a working-class life pattern. This is clearly manifested in the profiles of her grandparents. Her maternal grandparents constitute a classical patriarchal family where the grandfather is a proud skilled worker and the grandmother has no work but stays at home with female household occupations. Her paternal grandparents on the other hand form a dysfunction in the sense that her grandfather has the profile of a weak and unstable man and her grandmother is strongminded and politically active.

On the parents' level the upward mobility is very evident in the case of her mother, who quickly acquires an academic exam (one of 1% working class girls who took an academic exam in the 1960s) and becomes a respected civil servant within the municipal authority. Her father is presumably drawn to the notion of upward mobility through his alliance with her mother, but is incapable of realizing it for himself and is instead reproducing the image of a weak working class product indulging in confrontations and bitterness. Later in life her father becomes his own entrepreneur as a semi-skilled worker, a possibility that was increasingly offered during the course of the 1980s.

The circumstances around her birth and infant years unfolded on three levels: on the national level there occurred the crowning of the infrastructural transformation of Swedish society with the eruption of a radical rebellion where the striking miners in the north came to strongly symbolize a manifestation for a Kantian new emancipatory dignity and a break with the authoritarian, hierarchical relations within both industry and the social democratic movement; on the local/regional level new and very modern working class suburbs that were presumed to be classless in character were built during a span of fifteen years, which the new hospital, where Karin was symptomatically born, catered to; on the micro, nuclear family level, endless dissensions and quarrels materialized, and were hence easily visually remembered, through the throwing of books by the father on the mother where this instrument of intrafamily violence has the dual connotation of either being an object of contempt, hence thrown, or an object of reverence and/or envy, hence also thrown, which may have profoundly affected Karin's relations to books and learning during the rest of her formative years.

Three dimensions shape her life: family, school and work. Of these three family relations are by far the most absorbing. The dramatic divorce of her parents is a traumatic event which will pursue and palpably influence her life up to the present. She is allotted the role

of go-between as she stays with her father during the first half year after the divorce and then, after having moved with her mother and sister, is the only one to maintain a regular, every second week contact with her father. While shouldering this role she is forced to live with her father's attempts to form her according to his aspirations and style, including violent threats against her mother and sister, while worrying about her mother's exhaustion as a single mother-provider.

The stay at her maternal grandparents' house-and-garden with her mother and sister and an aunt, i.e. under the resource strong shelter of the extended family, constitutes a harmonious and stabilizing period during the formative years of five to ten. While she comes to the intermediate years at school she moves with her mother and sister to an apartment of their own. These are liberating years when she is well-adjusted at school, with her friends and a group of girls, which are followed by dysfunctional years at school in the form of social/female confirmation through gang life, an abortion and regular leisure-time work to increasingly provide for herself.

As she ends school she makes an attempt at a radical break with her life trauma by establishing her own life by rejecting her father, moving in with a boy-friend and this time pursuing pregnancy at 19 to having her first child. After half a year she starts working part time again in order to establish a nuclear family based on equality ideals. Her ambitions are quickly broken by her first daughter's cancer disease. While making the hospital into her spatial reality during the half year when her daughter goes through severe treatments-cum-operations she experiences the members of her family as insufficient in various degrees. She tries to compensate and strengthen her ideals by having another child and getting married to the father of her children. The demanding situation ends in a quick divorce and she arrives at arguing for the same model as her mother, i.e. to pursue her ideals of a family life and the improvement of her own situation through possible university studies under her own controlled framework of being a single mother.

THEMATIC FIELD ANALYSIS: KARIN

Karin's way of narrating comes through talking of relationships rather than about her economy and work. Very early she concentrates on telling about the divorce between her father and mother. Pretty soon it is obvious to her that her difficulties then are leaving deep strains in her childhood: she is the one who lived with her father alone and that she is the only one in the family who continues to keep in contact with her father.

Her position in between her father and mother, as a go between, makes her both strong and vulnerable. Strong as the only one who keeps in contact with the father, she knows more than the others, she is important, she has to be strong, on the other hand vulnerable as it means that she has to listen to her father's anger towards her mother and threats to take all the custody of her and her sister. It is not until later on that she finds out that this is impossible and that her mother since long has got the custody of the two of them. She is reluctant about her own femininity. When she has her first child she feels like a woman for the first time. She can see that she is worth something and is very happy about the child.

Her father didn't want her to be a girl but a boy and even taught her to box, because girls should at least be strong and be able to defend themselves.

While her mother always was the strong and struggling part in her life she does not feel safe with her all the time. Her mother is mostly tired and filled with worries about the economy and the survival of the family in a very heavy-minded way. She worries a lot about her mother and has nightmares about her wellbeing. Her father on the other hand is not to be trusted, but he could teach her different things and he could be thrilling and exiting some times.

At school she was rather bored in junior level from the beginning and had difficulties in reading, but at intermediate level she had a creative and engaged teacher and thanks to her she learned a lot. Through strategic ways and tactics she made her way into a gang of girls she wanted to be a part of. Although she knew that this means a decline in studies she choose the gang rather than the school. At senior level, which coincided with the beginning of her teenage years, she had quite hard times at school and in life. She had an abortion at 16, which she spoke about without much ado but school was now bygone for her and she was working during the weekends in the municipal home care service which turned out to be important for her later as she had to find a job as a single mother.

While finishing school with higher certificate she rejected her father for the first time. He did not speak to her for half a year. She has always felt a hard pressure from both her mother and her father to be something great, to be educated, to have a career, yet she moved in with Roger and was pregnant at 19. When the child was born, a girl, she felt a woman for the first time in her life. She has now started on her own way, to build her dream; a nuclear family. She lives in the countryside, with a man and a child, even if not in a yellow house with white corners as in part of her dream about adult life.

Now her child turns very ill and she gets angry, she feels she didn't need this to grow up, to be mature. Again her father betrays her by not coming to the hospital more than once during that half year she has to stay there, which her mother does, by saying the wrong things, which shows he doesn't understand and he is too egotistical to come up with the right things to say. She rejects him again and has not been speaking to him since then.

In the agony and pain out of the illness and treatments of her child she needs to be safe and gets married although she feels their relationship is beginning to fall apart. They have a second child, a girl.

Soon after the second child was born she divorced her husband, and got settled as a single mother with two children. This is her own most well known model of a family although she has always had her dreams about the nuclear family. As she is striving and fighting to get on with her own family life she is constantly preoccupied with thoughts about her mother and father and comes back to different memories about them and her relationship to them. She sees her mother as a strong, reliable person even if she is constantly worried about how to manage everything. Her father as a contrast is the unreliable one, filled with bitterness and cynicisms about the working class and about society as a whole.

Through her own experience of living with her children, she finds out that she can manage very well by herself. At the same time as her mother is her role model as a single mother, she learns that she is different in enjoying her children more. This is a discovery for her. It is something she could give her children, something quite her own, something to be happy and proud about. And out of this finding of her own way she can even see a realistic possibility for herself in the nuclear family at last.

CASE STRUCTURE

In the narration Karin focuses on relations within the family but in answering the questions about work and the economy she gives exhaustive views on her own strategies. Her overarching strategy concerns the family, the one she grew up in and later the one she decides to form herself. She has to get family life straight. Both studies and work and how to acquire income in the form of whatever allowances are subordinate to the overall family strategy.

The strategic factors in her favour are not prominent in her narration but are still there to be read. She has learnt to handle work and allowances since an early age. Her pulling through almost single-handedly with her daughter's illness at the age of 20-1 gives her additional strength and hope. The rather remote periphery where she is residing in the small town to the north of Göteborg has a tremendously well functioning neighbourhood network for young families with fairly infant children.

She discovers that when she directs her attention to higher studies she is entitled to get not only a special study allowance but also added child-allowance. The start of her ambition to reach higher studies lands her with a better economy than she has ever had before. However, only half a year into this process the dismantling of the welfare state set in and all those favours which she attached to the joys of higher studies were suddenly removed. She had to work part time again even to pursue her studies. She sees through the mechanisms of the 1990s society and becomes eloquent on politics.

She is encouraged to go into politics because of her experience in family matters - the go-between bridge builder and the single parent ruler of a young family with small children - and in social matters taken both from personal experience and at work, but also because of her verbosity and distinct opinions rather than her being simply opinionated. There are several political people in her extended family network. Her maternal grandfather as well as her paternal grandmother were communists. Her mother has dealt with political matters from a more socialdemocratic angle for the past decades at the city council. Her paternal uncle is a local Leftist Party big time hack in one of the industrialized municipalities in metropolitan Göteborg and so is a brother-in-law from her first marriage in a different municipality and on a slightly higher level. She feels herself more inclined to opt for the Social Democratic party in spite of her views being more in line with the Leftist Party.

For her own part and improvement she is fascinated by the social sciences and the humanities - literature, history and the like - and she has a vision of herself becoming a journalist where she will have space to articulate her acquired perspectives. In other words

there is a goal with her higher studies and not simply the dream that everybody should be able to take an academic exam. However, this appears to be rather a long term project. Her current boyfriend with whom she cannot form a family has similar ambitions.

Her decision to repeat her mother's single parent model but still make it more happy and successful and not so dour as her own experience of her mother matured with her open relations with men where equality was a big ideal to realize. This decision is facilitated since she at the same time feels effectively very abandoned by the men in her surrounding and extended family: her father, whom she has felt forced to reject several times, because of his human and paternal insufficiency; her husband, who was not up to all the accumulated pressures they faced in the wake of the sick first child and the new baby; her maternal grandfather, whom she looked up to as a patriarchal idol but who did not like her much because he rather did not like anybody; her current boyfriend, who cannot match her intentions; her mother's new husband since half a dozen years who explicitly prefers her younger sister.

On paper her prognosis is objectively not a very hopeful one. However, her acquisition of hard learnt experiences and her own growing self-esteem and social competence, which can be favourably compared with her childhood years, indicate her innate capacity to attain goals much beyond her present situation. The upward mobility fixation of her parents' generation is dated in the minds of her own generation. Swedish social upward mobility and class emancipation can be seen in a three stage development: the social democratic pioneers from the time before the First World War mostly emanated from the upper classes or the upper bourgeois layers; during the inter-war period the first large scale pioneer generation from the working-class entered centre stage in both politics and the learned cultural life thanks to special education facilities provided by the labour movement to their own new up and coming generation; the postwar generation was on the whole much less pioneering and idealistic and could capitalize on the respect and gains achieved by the first generation by making the so called class journey from a working class home to top academic, political and business positions without putting in any particular effort. Karin's generation, on the other hand, does not reason in class terms in the same sense. For them the concept upward mobility means very little, since they do not perceive any class barriers any more. To move upwards via education is no big deal and hardly a goal implying the joining of a more worthy world as it was only a generation ago.

(Other cases and refs missing)