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# Who helps single mothers in Nairobi? The role of kin support /
*Qui aide les mères célibataires à Nairobi ? Le rôle du soutien familial*

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Certaines situations familiales sont-elles défavorables aux enfants ?
*Questioning the detrimental impact of specific family contexts on children*

# Who Helps Single Mothers in Nairobi?

## The Role of Kin Support

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# Motivation

- In SSA, kin play an important role in child care, in general, and in care for foster children and orphans, in particular

- To date, there are few studies on kin support of single mothers in SSA

- This is surprising because single motherhood is common in SSA
  - In Kenya 60% of women will become single mothers

# Research Questions

1) How large and strong are the kinship networks of single mothers?

2) What predicts transfers of financial resources and child care from extended kin to single mothers?

# 1) How large and strong are the kinship networks of single mothers?

- Large and Strong
  - High expectations of assistance and reciprocity
  - Strong patrilineal/matrilineal kin ties and identities
  - Emphasis on extended kin rather than nuclear families

- Small and Weak
  - Less involvement of extended kin in spousal selection
  - Greater reliance on “less preferred” kin to care for orphans
    - More maternal than paternal kin
    - More grandparents than aunts or uncles

# 2) What predicts transfers of financial resources and child care from extended kin to single mothers?

## Structural

- Need among mother's = more support
- Greater kin's ability = more support

## Cultural

- Ethnicity
- Type of kin
  - Generational (grandparents, aunts/ uncles, siblings)
  - Gender
  - Paternal vs. Maternal

# Study Site

- ***Korogocho*** is a Swahili term meaning crowded shoulder to shoulder.

- The slum is home to ~31,000 residents and is characterized by abject poverty and lack of adequate access to necessary amenities.

- APHRC has been running a Demographic Surveillance System in this community since 2002.

# Sample

- 462 single (i.e. not currently married or cohabiting) women with at least one child under age 7
- 5,344 kin members, including the child's siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and the child's biological father
- 3,453 *potential* kin, which excludes those age <=7, deceased, or with unknown survival status

# Measures - Dependent Variables

- Financial Support: *"In the last month, has [kin member's name] provided any financial or in-kind support for you?"*
  - Contributions to household expenses
  - Monetary or in-kind support for focal child

- Child Care Support: *"In the last month, has [kin member's name] assisted you with child care in any way?"*
  - feeding, bathing, playing with or reading to the child, providing instruction or discipline

# Measures of Size and Strength

- Size
  - Average # of kin who provide support
  - “Lone mothers” or “many helping hands”
- Strength
  - Proportion of supportive kin
  - Dependence on preferred kin

# Measures—Structural and Cultural Factors

## Structural Factors

- Mother's Needs
  - Age
  - Relationship with child's father
  - Education
  - Employment status
  - HH income
  - Wealth quintile
  - Number of children < 7
- Kin's Ability
  - Age
  - Proximity to child
  - Employment status
  - Education

## Cultural Factors

- Mother's Ethnicity
- Relationship to child
  - Bio. Father
  - Brothers and Sisters
  - Mat. Uncles and Aunts
  - Mat. Grandmother and Grandfather
  - Pat. Uncles and Aunts
  - Pat. Grandmother and Grandfather

# Models - Logistic Random-Effects

$$log\left(\frac{P_{ij}}{1-P_{ij}}\right) = MC_j\beta_1' + KC_{ij}\beta_2' + Kin_{ij}\beta_3' + Size_j\beta_4' + \alpha_j + u_{ij}$$

$MC$ = Mother (i) characteristics (Level 1)

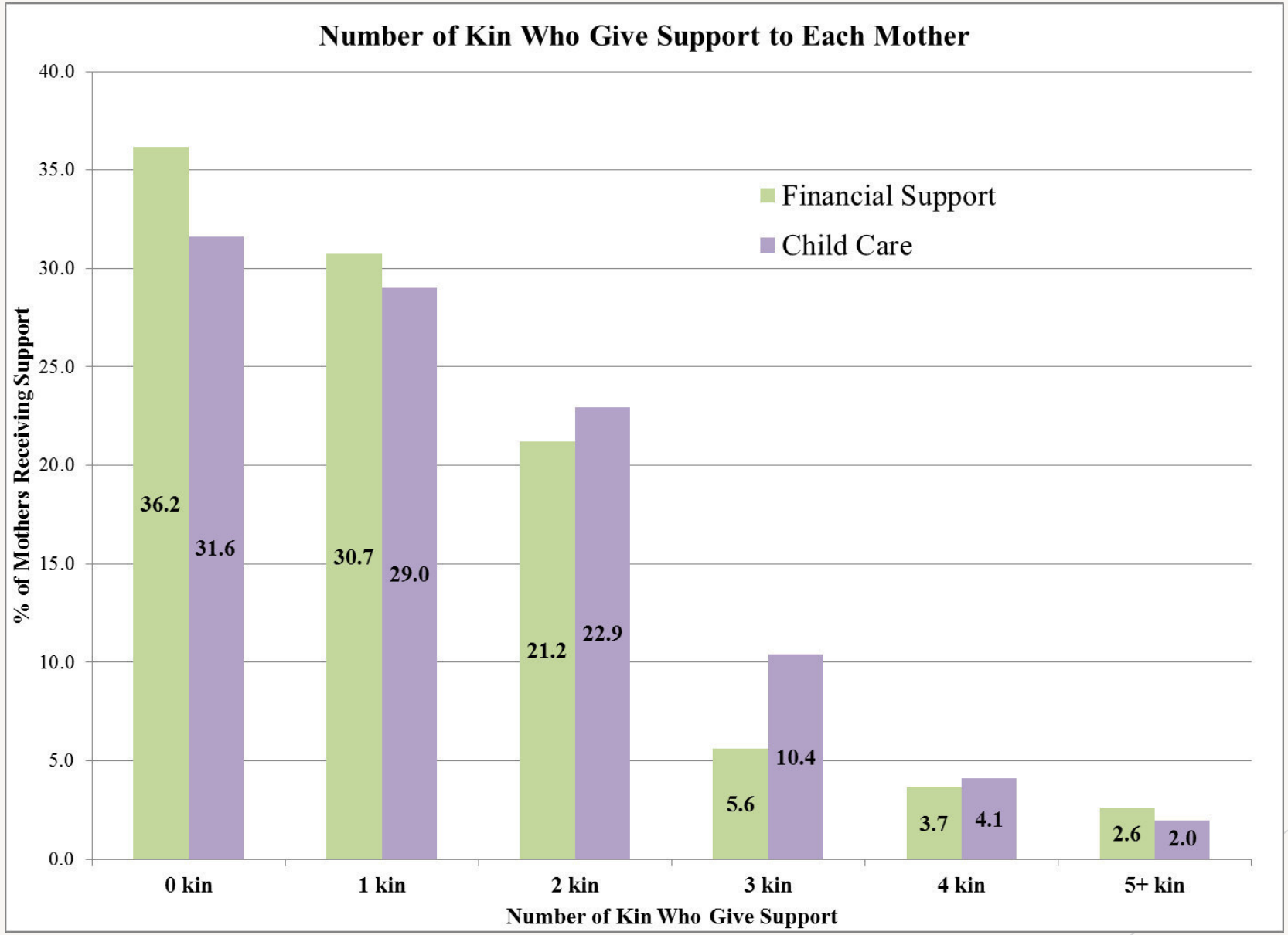
$KC$ = Kin (j) characteristics (Level 2)

$Kin$ = Relationship to child

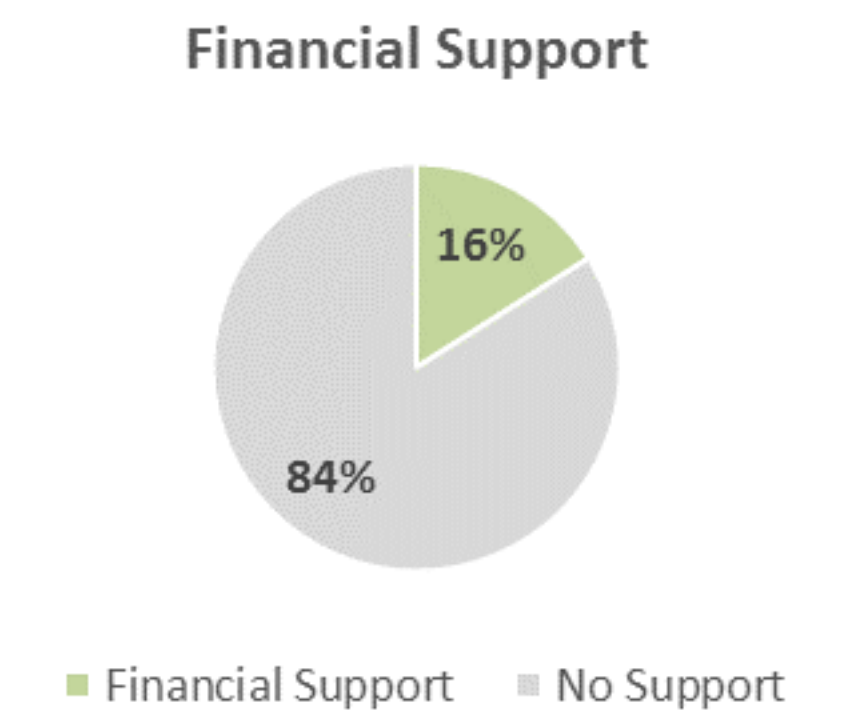
$Size$ = Size of potential kin network

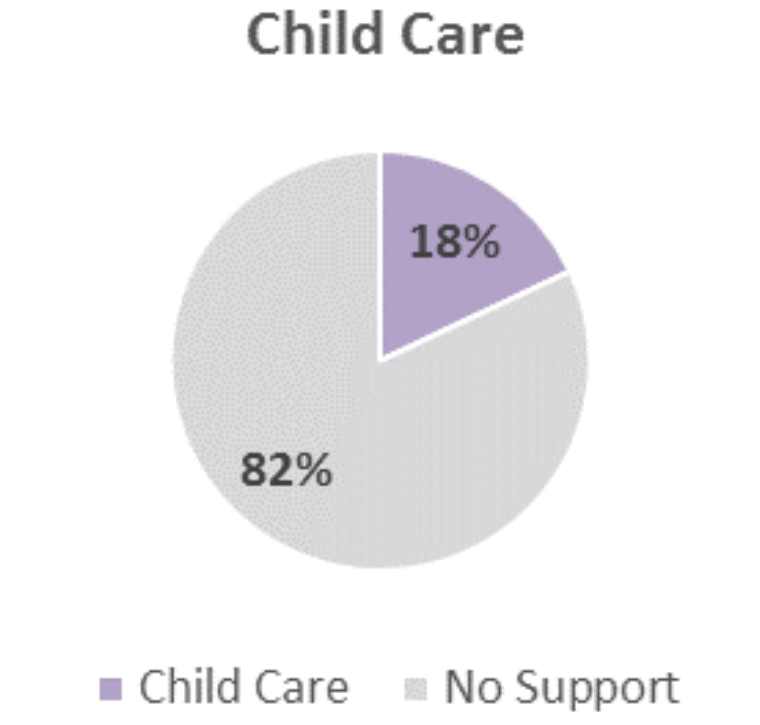
1) How large and strong are the kinship networks of single mothers?

# How Large are the Kinship Networks of Single Mothers?

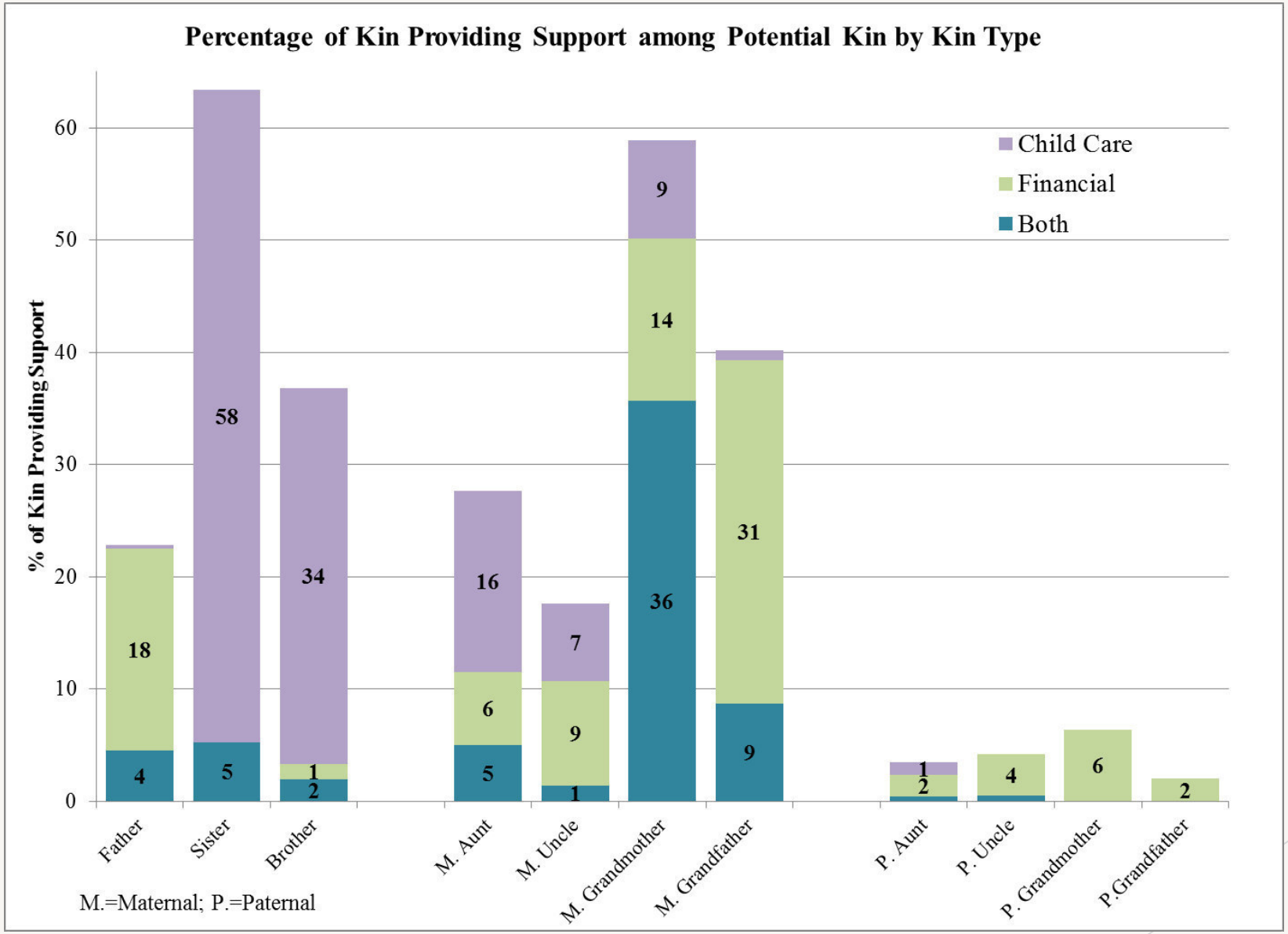


# How Strong are Kin Networks?



# Which Kin are Most Likely to Support Single Mothers?



2) What predicts transfers of financial resources and child care from extended kin to single mothers?

# Financial Support- Significant Predictors

## Structural Factors

- Mother's Needs
  - Younger mothers (<25)
  - Never married or living with child's father
  - Not working
  - Living in poor hh (income <5,000 KSH)
- Kin's Ability
  - Age (30-39)
  - Living in HH
  - Employed
  - Completed secondary school

## Cultural Factors

- Ethnicity (no sig. differences)
- Relationship to child
  - Mat. grandmothers provide most financial support
- Gender
  - Mat. grandmothers twice as likely as mat. grandfathers
  - No sig. differences
    - brothers vs. sisters
    - uncles vs. aunts
- Lineage
  - No sig. differences
    - mat. and pat. grandmothers or grandfathers
    - mat. and pat. uncles or aunts

# Child Care – Significant Predictors

## Structural Factors

- Mother's Needs
  - Younger mothers (<25)
  - Not working (unexpected)
- Kin's Ability
  - Living in HH (huge effects)
  - Employed
  - Some primary school

## Cultural Factors

- Ethnicity (no sig. differences)
- Relationship to child
  - Grandmothers and sisters provide the most child care
- Gender (Big differences)
  - Grandmothers > grandfathers
  - Sisters > brothers
  - Aunts > uncles
- Lineage
  - No paternal kin included

# Conclusions - Size and Strength of Networks

- Size
  - Small active kin networks (1.2 financial & 1.4 child care)
  - 18% of single mothers receive neither financial or child care support
- Strength
  - Less than 18% of kin provide child care and less than 16% provide financial support
  - Single mothers rely heavily on less preferred kin

# Conclusions - Structural vs. Cultural Factors

- Structural Factors
  - More significant for financial support
  - Yet, matters less for child care
- Cultural Factors
  - Gender is more important for child care, but less for financial transfers
  - Family Lineage does not matter for financial support

# What Else Can Support Single Mother?

- Create employment opportunities and vocational training programs
- Encourage unmarried adolescent mothers to stay in school
- Increase maternal and child services for single mothers
- Provide high quality and affordable day care

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