UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

COPING WITH CONSTRAINTS: THE MANAGEMENT OF WORK COMMITMENTS AND DOMESTIC RESPONSIBILITIES AMONG LONE FATHERS

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ABSTRACT

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The aim of this thesis is to investigate how lone fathers manage to bring up their children on their own. Particular attention is paid to the emotional and practical difficulties these fathers face and how these difficulties are resolved. Substantive topics looked at include social isolation, stigma and the strategies used by some lone fathers to combine childcare with employment.

The survey method of data collection was chosen for this study. Information was obtained from a sample of 78 lone fathers by means of a semi-structured survey. Interviews were carried out with 32 subjects from the Southampton area. In addition 46 lone fathers from towns and cities throughout England completed a postal questionnaire. Roughly half of the sample were in employment at the time of the study.

The thesis shows that lone fathers need to be recognised as a distinct group of lone parents. They are faced with many of the common difficulties which lone mothers are known to face; however, lone fathers are disadvantaged in particular ways because of society's different expectations of a man's role. Like lone mothers, many lone fathers find that their situation leads to social isolation and stigmatisation, albeit by routes which are, in some cases, distinct from those followed by lone mothers. Lone fathers who want to combine childcare with employment face similar constraints to lone mothers but a higher proportion are able to develop strategies to enable them to combine the roles of employee and childcarer.

The thesis concludes that as more fathers take on sole responsibility for their children it is possible that lone fatherhood will become accepted by society. Stigma associated with their role might disappear and isolation become less of a problem. For this to happen, employers will need to alter the structure of their work in order to make it easier for lone fathers to continue in employment. Changes to the Welfare benefits system will also be necessary for this scenario to be realised in practice. However, it is also recognised that it will not be easy to change the traditional views that have been held in society for many years which regard lone-father headed families as a peculiar deviation from the nuclear family norm.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This is a study about fathers who are bringing up children on their own. Lone parent families comprise an increasing proportion of all families in Great Britain. In 1991 at least one in five families with dependent children was a lone parent family and approximately one in six of all dependent children lived in such a family. Most lone parent families are created by divorced and separated parents, though there is a growing trend for births outside of marriage. Fathers have no legal right to their children if a divorce occurs. Since 1925 courts have come to regard the child's welfare as the most important consideration, and in the majority of cases custody is given to the mother. This reflects the prevailing attitude of the 20th century; maternal care is important for the child's emotional and physical development. The past 20 years however, have seen an increase in the number of fathers who are obtaining custody of their children. Although such fathers are still something of a rarity (McCormack, 1990), statistics indicate that divorced lone fathers have represented a faster growing proportion of all lone fathers than divorced lone mothers of all lone mothers (Haskey, 1991a). One in 13 of all lone parent families are now headed by men (Haskey, 1994), and while this proportion has decreased during the last two decades, the actual number was estimated to have almost doubled from 70 thousand in 1971 (Haskey, 1991a) to 120 thousand in 1992 (Haskey, 1994).

The decision to focus this research on lone fathers is because, despite this recent increase in numbers, there is relatively little information available about the experience of being a lone father. A great deal has been written about lone parents but most relates to lone mothers (see e.g. Duncan and Edwards 1997; Bortolaia-Silva 1995; Dennis and Erdos 1992;). The most comprehensive study into lone fathers' problems and issues was carried out over 20 years ago by George and Wilding (1972). However, since this time a number of social, economic and policy changes have taken place and so their findings do not necessarily bear any relation to the situation of lone fathers in the 1990s. Emphasis in this study has been given to work and unemployment because researchers have, in particular, paid little attention to the effect

of children on lone (or other) fathers' employment. In contrast, numerous studies have concentrated on the emotional and practical difficulties all mothers face if they want or need to combine paid work with childcare responsibilities (see e.g. Brannen and Moss, 1991; Yeandle, 1984; Yudkin and Holme, 1963). These studies have also shown the strategies that working mothers adopt in order to resolve conflict between the roles of mother and employee. In general, lone fathers have to undertake the same childcare and domestic tasks as mothers and, in addition fathers are expected by society to be the breadwinner, working full time and continuously to provide for their children. However, very little is known about the emotional and practical difficulties lone fathers face if they want to combine these two roles, or why some fathers are able to resolve these difficulties while others remain at home full time with their children.

Grief (1985) believes that one consequence of this dearth of research into lone fathers is that a number of assumptions and myths have been made, based on information about them from books, newspaper articles, television and stereotyped views of how men should behave. For example lone fathers, because they are men, are thought to have well paid jobs and receive more help with their children than lone mothers (Abercrombie and Warde, 1988). Beechey (1986) believes it is easier for them to obtain childcare places in a nursery. Evidence is, however, contradictory (see e.g. O'Brien, 1987; Brown and Taite, 1993). Grief (1985) suggests that because of these assumptions lone fathers are regarded in a way that is restraining and demeaning to all lone parents. On the one hand it is assumed that a father raising children is an extraordinary man, dedicated to his children; on the other hand it is felt that he needs help to cope with domestic tasks.

1.1 Lone parents as a social problem and a sociological problem.

One of the first problems a lone father is likely to have to overcome is whether to continue working or spend a period of time at home dependent on welfare benefits. Those who continue to work face problems of combining work and domestic responsibilities; while McCormack(1990) suggests choosing benefits results in poverty,

like the average single mother but without her skills of budgeting and making do. Nearly all studies have focused on the financial effect of losing the traditional breadwinner, but George and Wilding (1972) showed that being motherless resulted in a large reduction of income for many families. Forty four per cent of the lone fathers in their study said that their income had gone down since they had become lone parents. About half of these fathers had given up work to care for their children, others mentioned the loss of their wife's earnings and loss of the married man's tax allowance. In addition 86% of fathers said they were spending more. Foods were often chosen because they were quick to prepare. Clothes had to be bought, rather than made by the mother and many fathers had little knowledge of what made a good buy. This study is, however, very dated and (as already mentioned) a number of social and economic changes have since taken place, including changes to the benefit system. In addition, with the increase of mothers employed outside the home, it is possible that many lone fathers are already used to taking a part in shopping, preparing meals etc; making it easier for them to manage on their own.

A recent study of lone fathers' income is provided by the General Household Survey 1992 (OPCS, 1994, Table 2.30). This showed that 23% of lone fathers had a weekly income of £100 or less compared to 4% of two parent families, but because this study provides only quantitative data, no information is given about the effect this low income has on family life, or any changes that have occured in expenditure and budgeting. Other studies into the standard of living of lone parents concentrate on both male and female headed families using indicators such as income, housing and household commodities. Comparison across studies is difficult because of the many different definitions of lone parents (see e.g. Crow and Hardey, 1992), however, all show that lone parents have relatively low incomes and living standards compared to other parents. The Government report Households Below Average Income showed that between 1979 and 1991 lone parents were over- represented in the lowest 10% income band. During 1990/1 lone parents made up 11% of this band although they represented only 5% of the total population (D.S.S. 1992). Estimates from The Family Budget Unit of York suggest a lone parent needs 89% of a couple's income. However, Monk (1993) has shown that calculation by the National Council for One

Parent Families, based on the Family Expenditure Survey (1991), provide evidence that the average income of a one parent family was only 31.3% of a comparable two parent family. After tax and national insurance was deducted the amount lone parents had to spend was 43.6% of that of a two parent family (Monk, 1993). The Family Expenditure Survey (1990) showed that the average weekly household income in 1990 was £335.67. In comparison 15.65% of families with one adult and one child received a weekly income of under £60 and 36.75% received between £60- £100. Among families with 1 adult and 2 or more children 2.54% received less than £60 a week and 41.42% between £60 - £100 (Cited by N.C.H. 1992, table 2.1).

Housing standards for lone parents are, in general, lower for one-parent families than other families. Relatively few lone parents have incomes high enough for owner occupation and the majority live in council accommodation (Marsh and Mckay, 1994). Much of their housing is unsatisfactory and substandard. The National Council for One Parent Families claims that there is evidence of discrimination in housing allocation policies: in certain London boroughs lone parent families were regarded as 'problem families' and housed accordingly (Macaskill, 1993). The General Household Survey (1991) showed that 58% of lone parents rented their home from local authority, New Town or housing associations compared with 19% of other families. The greatest percentage of lone parents (38%) lived in terraced accommodation compared to 29% of other families, while 19% lived in purpose built flats or maisonettes compared to 6% of other families. Lone parents were less likely than other families to have central heating in their accommodation (O.P.C.S. 1992, table 2.25).

The Family Policy Centre in 1987 used commodities such as cars, telephones etc. to judge living standards and found that only 30% of lone parent families had a car compared to 85% of 2 parent families, 66% had central heating compared to 82%, and 64% of lone parents had a telephone compared to 88% of 2 parent families (Roll, 1989). Millar (1989, p. 129) also found lone parents to be "worse off in terms of access to assets" than a standard group of two parent families. Because of the lower income of lone parents it can be assumed that such differences remain.

Mckay and Marsh (1994) suggest that the quality of health and freedom from medical problems may also provide an indication of living standards of lone parents as well as potentially affecting life chances. Popay and Jones (1988) using data from the General Household Survey claimed that lone parents were of poorer health than parents in couples and believed that this was due to their less secure social and economic circumstances. Subjects from low income families were asked if they had any long standing illness, whether limiting or not; recent illness which had restricted activity in the last 2 weeks and perceptions of health in general over the past 12 months; disability or infirmity ie good, fairly good or not good. Lone fathers had generally good states of health; better than that reported by other divorcees and widowers. However they were the most likely to report that they had a long standing illness. 35% of lone fathers had a long standing illness compared to 31% of lone mothers and 26% and 23% of men and women in couples. When a control was applied for age it was found that mothers and fathers over 35 are equally likely to have a long standing illness (35:37) but lone fathers are less likely to report a recent illness (13:20) and are more likely to report that their health is good (cited in Popay and Jones, 1991).

The major factor influencing the standard of living of lone parents is their reliance on social security benefits. For many lone parents these benefits are an alternative to earned income: statistics show that the proportion dependent on benefits has been increasing in recent years. In 1971 37% of lone parents were dependent on social security benefits for their main source of income, in 1987 this figure was 67% and in comparison only 12.5% of 2 parent families relied on social security benefits (Roll, 1992). By 1991 Social Security statistics showed that over 70% of lone parent families were dependent on income support; for many lone parents their dependence is long term. Social Security statistics show that in 1991 almost 40% of lone parents had been receiving Income Support/ Supplementary Benefit for 3 years or more (Monk, 1993). Studies of benefits show that Income Support rates are insufficient for the "necessities" of family life. For example figures from the Child Poverty Action Group (1990) together with the National Foster Care Association (1992) show that Income Support provides only 91% of the minimum cost of a two year old child

and 66% of the cost of an 8 year old child (cited in N.C.H.S 1992, table 2.6). The Family Budget Unit revived a method used by Seebohm Rowntree in 1899 and measured poverty by the use of 2 types of budget; a "Modest-but-adequate" budget consisting of items which half the population possess and a "Low-cost" budget in which food accounts for about a third of expenditure, prices are based on the cheaper brands and items that fewer than three quarters of the population possess are excluded. More than half of all lone parents receiving maximum benefits and housing benefit failed to reach the low cost standard of living and only 30% achieved the "Modest-but-adequate" standard of living (Auty, 1993). The introduction of the Child Support Agency has not significantly affected their situation (Garnham and Knights, 1994)

Fathers who choose to combine employment with childcare are likely to find that being a lone parent affects their employment. The effect of children on lone fathers' employment can be seen by comparing their employment patterns with those of married parents and lone mothers. Figures from the Winter 1993/94 Labour Force survey (Sly, 1994) show that lone mothers with children under 16 are less likely to be economically active than mothers in couples with children under 16. In Winter 1993/94 only 48% were economically active i.e. employed or actively seeking work (39% employed). In comparison 64% of married mothers were economically active (62% employed). Although employment rates for lone mothers are lower, those who do work, generally work longer hours than married mothers: 57% of lone mothers who were employed or self employed, worked part-time compared with 64% of married or cohabiting mothers.

Similarly, the Labour Force Survey (1993/94) showed lone fathers with a child under 16 are significantly less likely to be economically active than all men (68%:85%). However their economic activity rates are higher than those of lone mothers and similar to those of mothers in couples. An earlier study by Haskey (1993b), using data from the Labour Force Survey for 1986 to 1990 found that lone fathers are much less likely to be employed part time than lone mothers, but more likely than married fathers (only 1% of married fathers worked part time compared to 8% of lone fathers). Part time work is based on the respondents' own assessments - not the actual

number of hours worked in a week.

In addition, it was found that about half of married/cohabiting mothers with a child under five were employed, but only a quarter of lone mothers with a child under five worked. The proportion of employed mothers (lone and in couples) increased as the age of the youngest child increased. The proportion of lone fathers employed with a child under five was similar to that of mothers in couples, but in contrast to mothers, the proportion did not increase when the children were older. Having more than two children also limits mothers' employment. The 1991 DSS/PSI survey (Marsh and Mckay, 1993, p.363) found "only a handful of women" who had four or more children were employed full time. No mention is made of lone fathers, but as larger families are significantly more likely to have a young child (Marsh and Mckay, 1993), it is very likely the number of children is also a constraint on their employment. Haskey (1993b) showed that the age and number of children also are linked to lone fathers' occupation: the greater the number of dependent children the smaller the proportion working in managerial occupations and the larger the proportion in personal service occupations. The younger the youngest child is the smaller the proportions working in professional and managerial occupations will be and the larger the proportion of lone fathers working in materials, processing and related occupations as well as construction and transport.

These figures clearly show that lone fathers are less likely to be employed than fathers who have partners. However, because statistics only provide information at one point in time they reveal little about the true consequences of lone parenthood on these fathers' employment. A number of issues remain to be examined, for example, it is not known if the employed fathers have been in work continuously since becoming lone fathers, if they were able to have a "career break" and return to the same employment, if their career prospects have been affected or if their attitude towards work has changed. Neither is it known if the fathers have had to change their daily working routine or experienced a decline in their income. Generating data relating to these questions was an important part of the rationale of this study.

The unemployment rates (i.e. relating to people actually looking for work) for lone fathers and lone mothers are very similar (19% and 20% respectively in 1993/94), but these rates are a lot higher than the unemployment rates of mothers in couples and all men (7.2%:12%). A report by Harrop and Moss (1994) shows that in 1989 lone fathers were nearly three times more likely than fathers living with partners to be unemployed (16%:6%) and five times more likely to be economically inactive (26%:5%). National annual statistics, for example the General Household Survey, have repeatedly shown this trend. In addition rates are consistently higher among certain groups of fathers; fathers with children aged 0-4, fathers with more than two children, and fathers in manual and semi-skilled jobs. An earlier report from the National Child Development Study (now 20 years old) found that lone fathers are the most likely to be unemployed for a long time. The proportion without a job for six months was five times greater for lone fathers than those in two parent families (Ferri, 1976; cited in Moss and Fonda, 1980). George and Wilding (1972) found that a considerable number of lone fathers had to give up work which involved a lot of travelling or irregular hours and take whatever jobs they could find which were more convenient. Both these studies are now very dated and it is debatable whether findings would still be the same.

Whereas the employment and economic activity rates of mothers have been increasing during the last 10 years, the rates for lone mothers have declined or remained static and the employment rates of lone fathers have steadily fallen. This suggests to some observers that lone parents are content to remain on benefits rather than find employment and raise their standard of living. Politicians talk of a dependency culture and believe that "the benefit system contributed to the rising tide of family break ups" (Nigel Lawson, cited in Macaskill (1993). For example Gerry Malone, former Conservative M.P. for Winchester, described single parenthood as the key to the benefit's cornucopia, "...to get a home, have a child. When funds run low, have another" (The Guardian, May 1993). However, several social scientific studies have shown that lone parents want to work and do not want to remain on benefits. In 1972 George and Wilding found that the lone fathers in their study resented their sense of dependence on state benefits and many felt that they should be at work. This desire

to work continues to exist, at least among lone mothers. Millar (1989, p.103) asked lone mothers of school aged children "some mothers would like to go back to work if they could find some-one to look after their children, whilst others do not wish to take a job while the children are still young. Would you like to take a job now or not?" Half the mothers said "yes", 45% without qualification. Similarly the National Committee for One Parent Families reports that lone parents on their "Return to work courses" say they want and need to work for a number of reasons: the need to be financially independent and not rely on the benefit system; to mix with other people and have a life outside of caring for their children; to begin a career; and to prepare for the day when their children had their own lives (Slipman and Hadjipateras, 1988). Leeming et al. (1994 p. 82) found that women who had been financially independent in the past found it particularly difficult to tolerate the prospect of long term dependency on benefits. One such lone parent said "I'm not the kind of person who thinks the country owes me a living...I'm thinking long term...I don't want to live like this for the next 16 years." In view of such studies it would seem that the high rate of benefit dependency does not support the view that lone parents are content to remain on benefits, but instead, reflects the many barriers lone parents have to overcome in order to obtain suitable employment.

1.2 The benefit system.

Possibly the greatest difficulty lone parents have to overcome is the benefit system, which in the United Kingdom differs from the majority of European systems in that it does little to encourage lone parents to work. Instead it is based on the expectation that they will stay at home. Since 1979, lone fathers, like lone mothers, have been entitled to social security benefits without the conditions of having to be available to work and they are able to continue to claim benefit for as long as their children are dependent i.e. 16 years of age or 18 if they remain in full time education. This is in contrast to several European countries where income for lone parents is based on the idea that social security benefit should be a supplement, rather than a replacement for earnings. Countries which do have a similar scheme to the United Kingdom apply an exemption at the discretion of the municipalities (Roll, 1989). Furthermore, the

system in the U.K. actually appears to have always penalised lone parents who work.

The Supplementary Benefit System was introduced in 1966 and replaced the earlier National Assistance which had been the main source of income for divorced, separated and single mothers. (Widows were regarded as a more deserving group and were provided with a widow's allowance for 13 weeks after the partner's death, a widow's pension and a widowed mother's allowance.) Under National Assistance there was a tapered earnings disregard e.g. in 1963 a lone parent could earn up to 30s (£1.50) with no reductions, lose 10s (50p) off the next pound and then all his/her earnings (Weale et al.1984). This disregard acted as a strong deterrent to lone parents finding employment (see e.g. Marsden, 1969).

Lone parents who had been 'applicants' for National Assistance became 'claimants' of Supplementary Benefit (Macaskill, 1993 p.36), which was designed to be a safety net to ensure that no family had an income below a certain specified level independent of size and family type. Under the Supplementary Benefit system the tapered disregard was replaced with a flat rate disregard net of work related expenses such as childcare, travel etc. However Supplementary Benefit did not provide enough for a permanent source of income and many people became dependent on discretionary special payments (Macaskill, 1993). Studies during the 1960s showed that, as with the earlier National Assistance, families with a low wage and dependent children could sometimes be better off out of work than in it (Marsh and McKay, 1993). Marsh and McKay also claim that the disincentive effect of Supplementary Benefit was stressed in the Finer Report (1974) which stated that it provided little financial incentive and discouraged lone parents from working. The report also showed that lone parents faced a number of other difficulties in taking paid work including childcare, low pay and lack of employment opportunities. One year after the Finer Report the disregard was increased to £4 for lone parents. In 1976 the disregard was raised again to £6 as opposed to £2 for unemployed claimants and £4 for their partner, but these, and future increases were very stringent and did not keep up with inflation.

In an attempt to overcome the problems the Supplementary Benefit Scheme created, Family Income Supplement was introduced in 1971. This was a means-tested benefit paid to household heads who were in full time employment (30 hours or more). From 1979 this regulation was changed to enable more lone parents to claim the benefit, they were now required to work only 24 hours or more a week. In 1980 a flat rate disregard of earnings was introduced for all except lone parents who, once again had a tapered earnings disregard. Under this rule the first £4 of earnings were disregarded and 50% of the following £16, giving a possible additional income from earnings of £12 per week. However, like under the earlier scheme, many lone parents found that their total income (earnings plus Family Income Supplement) were less than they were entitled to on Supplementary Benefit. Consequently levels of take up of Family Income Supplement were very low, by 1982-1984 only 1 in 10 lone parents combined employment with Family Income Supplement (Joshi, 1990) and government concern continued about the lone parents who remained dependent on Supplementary Benefit.

The Social Security System was reviewed again in 1986 and new reforms were introduced in April 1988. Supplementary Benefit was replaced by Income Support and the earnings disregard, for lone parents, was increased to £15 a week. However, unlike the previous schemes, work expenses are not taken into account when calculating benefit entitlement. Therefore any work expenses in excess of £15 will reduce the income of the lone parent. A further change occurred for parents on a low income working more than 24 hours a week, (16 hours a week from 1992), Family Income Support was replaced by Family Credit. The purpose of Family Credit is to overcome the unemployment trap by providing top-up earnings so that the total income in full time work usually exceeds the total income claimants would receive if they were not in work. Family Credit extends further up the income scale than Family Income Supplement enabling more families to be eligible. However, many of the employment disincentives of previous schemes were maintained and in addition new losses were introduced. Families receiving Family Income Supplement were entitled to free school meals and milk tokens but under Family Credit this no longer applies. To compensate an extra amount is included in the benefit rate, but it is

unlikely this is sufficient to cover the cost (see e.g. Slipman and Hadjipateras, 1988, p.26). A steeper taper on rent and rates was introduced and in addition because Family Credit is counted as income many families lost their entitlement to housing benefit. Cuts in Housing Benefit were also made; lone parents were no longer treated as a couple and consequently received less in rebate than a comparable couple even though their housing costs are the same. Rules for owner occupiers were also tightened up and only half of the mortgage interest was paid for the first 16 weeks a claimant was on benefits.

On average, lone parents who work full time were found by Marsh and McKay (1993) to be £30 better off than they would have been if they were dependent on Income Support. As a result the researchers suggest that lone parents receiving Family Credit were more likely to avoid severe hardship than those who were out of work and receiving Income Support. However, Family Credit replaces one trap (the unemployment trap) with another. McKay and Marsh (1994, p.30) claim that families who receive Family Credit are in "the poverty trap, in the sense that they lose the lion's share of each extra pound they are earning." In addition, the gain from employment can be taken up by childcare costs, travel fares and, in some cases, by mortgage interest payments. For those receiving Family Credit, each extra pound of earnings reduces benefit by 70 pence. Thus Family Credit claimants have a marginal withdrawal rate of 70%, which is more than twice the rates of taxation of most better paid workers. For the majority the rate is higher; among the better paid Family Credit recipients, once account is taken of Income Tax and National Insurance payments, each extra pound of earned income results in a withdrawal rate of 80%, resulting in an increase of just 20p. Lower paid, or larger families who are also receiving Housing Benefit will also have 65% of their 20 or 30 pence retained from each extra pound earned withdrawn.

The disincentives of the benefit system, i.e. the "unemployment trap" and the "poverty trap" are generally associated with lone mothers because of the lower earning potential. Despite these disincentives McKay and Marsh (1994) showed that 37% of the lone parents in their study increased their income from full-time employment (16

hours or more a week) by claiming Family Credit. This method could be considered a valuable means for lone fathers, who are on a low income, to maintain their breadwinning role and have time to spend with their children, however, McKay and Marsh (1994) found only 2% of the claimants were lone fathers. It is unknown if all lone fathers are aware of (or why few choose) this option.

1.3 Childcare.

A further difficulty lone parents face when taking employment is the care of their children. Although changes are slowly occurring, the government does not give high priority to childcare facilities. This reflects their long held view that childcare is a private matter which should be left to parents. Public intervention is considered necessary only when the parent is unable to cope and the child is regarded as being at risk. This is in contrast to many European Countries where early childcare and education have been important in their government policies for a number of years.

Only 20.6% of the pre-school children in George and Wilding's (1972) study went to a day nursery (6.9%) or a nursery school or class (13.7%). Daycare facilities for children under school-age, at the time of their study, were described as being in very short supply in some areas and non-existent in others. Although this study was carried out over 20 years ago and prior to the increase of mothers with young children in the work force, very little has changed. Local authority day care provision is still very scarce and varies greatly around the country, and so parents' chance of obtaining a place is partly determined by where they live. The variations reflect the commitment of different local authorities towards childcare. Their duty is only to promote the welfare of children under 5 and prevent their reception into care, they are under no obligation to provide care and the government does not set any target for provision. The result is that the provision varies greatly between authorities. Statistics from the Department of Health 1990 (cited by Moss and Melhuish, 1991, p.92) show that there were no local authority day nurseries in 12 counties including Cornwall, the Isle of Wight, East and West Sussex, Norfolk and Berkshire, 4 metropolitan areas and the outer London authority Bromley. Childcare places ranged from for example, 17

places per 1000 children in Lewisham, 126 per 1000 in Brent. Hampshire had places for 67 per 1000 children. Local authority nurseries are run by the Social Services Department, and parents who want to obtain a place for their child have to apply through either the Social Services or their health visitor. Care is often provided free of charge depending on the family circumstances. Waiting lists are very long and children are admitted only if it is considered that they are in great need (Cohen, 1988). It is very difficult for a working parent to obtain a place even if there is another factor, such as lone parenthood, to be taken into account (see e.g. Hardey and Glover, 1991, p.95).

Local authorities also provide nursery classes and schools. However, like day nurseries provision is very sparse. For example statistics in 1990 showed that Hampshire had places for just 10 per 1000 children (Moss and Melhuish, 1991, p.91). The majority are part time and enable the child to attend for only two or three hours a day. This, together with the long school holidays, mean that nursery school education is not very suitable as a means of childcare. Another obstacle is that whereas the number of lone parents is increasing, the number of nursery schools is declining (see e.g. Social Trends, 1994).

The importance of publicly funded childcare in enabling parents to work can be seen from European studies. For example Joshi and Davies (1991) showed that countries ranking lowest in the proportion of mothers in employment with children under 3 also rank lowest on provision of subsidised day care. Roll (1992) showed that in Denmark 84% of lone mothers, 87% of mothers with a partner and over 89% of lone fathers were economically active in 1989. The Danish government provided places in publicly funded childcare services for 48% of children in 1989. In contrast the United Kingdom provides childcare for only 2% of children under three; 63% of mothers with a partner are economically active, 50% of lone mothers and 76% of lone fathers. It also appears from research carried out by Joshi and Davies (1991) that provision of low cost chi ldcare would save the government a considerable amount of money. Benefits would not have to be paid and the government would gain from Income Tax and National Insurance contributions. Joshi and Davies give an example

of a married woman earning £10,000 a year at age 24 who has a child when she is aged 25 and another at 28. If she was provided with 100% subsidised low cost childcare (including after school and holiday play groups), the government would see a nett saving of a few hundred pounds. By the time the woman is 33 the "revenue flowback" would amount to about £10,000 a year. "Lone parents would nett the Treasury even more" (The Times, September, 1993).

Because of the scarcity of publicly funded childcare a large number of private facilities have become available in recent years. The most popular are nurseries and childminders; both provide full time care enabling parents to work full time; but at a high cost for each child. The DSS/PSI survey (McKay and Marsh, 1994) found that lone parents who worked more than 24 hours a week and relied on professional care as their sole method of looking after the children, paid an average of £42.40 a week and, unlike in the majority of European countries, childcare costs are not eligible for tax relief. (Lone fathers, however, are an exception as they are able to claim tax relief on the cost of employing a house keeper.) Childcare Vouchers (1992) suggest that finding and retaining the right childcare is the most stressful activity facing working parents in the 1990s. Parents in their study claimed they found it too expensive to pay for full time care during school holidays and over half of the women were very worried about problems relating to the care of their children.

An alternative source of support for many working parents is their relatives. George and Wilding (1972) found that 44% of lone fathers in their study arranged for relatives to care for their pre-school children. 38.4% and 34% of fathers respectively arranged for relatives to care for their school aged children during school holidays and when the children were sick. McKay and Marsh (1994) found that this situation continues; for lone fathers and lone mothers the most common forms of childcare were still help from parents, parents in law, grandparents and other relations. A report commissioned by Childcare Vouchers (1992 p.3) found that this is because relatives, in particular grandmothers, are likely to be more flexible, reliable, more caring and trustworthy than a non related childcarer, and they are sometimes cheaper. Two typical quotes from parents they interviewed are: "I wouldn't trust any-body else

with my child", "Grandparents have the child's best interests in mind at all times and can relate to the child with genuine love and affection". There are, however, likely to be constraints on using relatives as a substantial source of childcare. Brannen and Moss (1991) suggest that many grandparents do not want to be overburdened by long hours. Many parents pay very little or no fee and therefore become considerably indebted to their relatives and have to find ways to reciprocate their services. Hill, (1987) (cited by Brannen and Moss, 1991) found that tension can occur for a number of reasons including rivalry for the child's affection and that grandmothers often consider it their right to spoil their grandchildren, which may undermine parental authority.

Very few lone mothers appear to be able to rely on their child's father for support. The OPCS Survey of Daycare (1974) showed that only 2% of lone mothers left their children with their father (Bone, 1977, cited in Moss and Fonda, 1980, p.63). A more recent survey by Childcare Vouchers Ltd. (1992 p.4) also found "ex-husbands scarcely get a look in"; only 1% of former wives handed over the daily care of their children to them. It could be assumed that this is due to the long hours that most men work. Lone fathers were not included in the survey so it is not known if they were able to rely on ex-wives to care for their children. The DSS/PSI study (Marsh and McKay 1993) did include a few lone fathers and it was found that 5% of all the lone parents had help from partners; but it was not known if this was from new partners not regularly sharing their accommodation or ex-wives or ex-husbands who retain contact.

There are suggestions in the literature that it is easier for lone fathers, than lone mothers, to obtain informal or formal childcare (see e.g. Beechey, 1986; Abercrombie and Warde, 1988). However there is little evidence to support these views. Studies show that because of childcare difficulties many lone fathers and lone mothers are forced to make very inadequate arrangements for their children. George and Wilding (1972) found that a number of fathers, some with children as young as six, had to leave for work before their child was out of bed. They had to set the alarm and hope the child would get himself/herself to school. During holidays some fathers reduced

their hours of work or came home at lunch time; others took their child to work or else left older children at home in charge. Tait and Brown's study (1992) described how lone parents still have to make similar arrangements: one mother gave her daughter a key to let herself in after school, and said that sometimes her daughter had to stay for an hour by herself if she (the mother) was delayed. Hardey and Glover (1991) described how lone parents sometimes have to organise a package of holiday care, combining help from their parents, friends and the children's friends as well as involving outside agencies (e.g. sports centres) where the children are able to play for several hours.

1.4 Training

It seems that the only way to increase their income and improve their standard of living is for lone parents to obtain a full time job which pays a high enough salary to compensate for losses incurred through childcare and to enable them to overcome the benefit traps. A major factor which prevents lone parents from obtaining higher paid jobs is their lack of confidence. The National Council for One Parent Families found that loss of confidence and depression led some women to believe they were no longer able to work (or study). One woman said that "lack of confidence lay at the root of her inability to look for anything other than menial work." (Hyatt and Parry-Crooke, 1990, p.22). Others lack skills; many have been away from employment for a number of years and find that technological changes mean that they can no longer use their existing skills. Lone fathers, because they are generally older than lone mothers, are likely to enter lone parenthood and give up work at a different stage in their employment than lone mothers. However, there is no evidence to suggest how difficult it is for lone fathers to return to work, whether they return to their original type of work or whether they need to retrain or gain new qualifications.

Several studies show the advantages of education and skills for obtaining employment. The DSS/PSI study (McKay and Marsh, 1994) found that working lone parents were better educated than lone parents not in employment. On average they had about 1 year extra schooling, they were twice as likely to have stayed on past the minimum

school leaving age and one and a half times more likely to have some qualification. Overall the majority in paid work had a qualification; less than half of those without a job had a qualification. A third of working lone parents had "A" levels or higher compared to a tenth of those without jobs. The PSI (Payne, 1991) evaluated the effectiveness of the government Job Training Scheme between 1986 and 1989 and found that for lone fathers the odds of finding employment were 1.85 times greater and they were 63 times more likely to be earning more than that earned by a control sample who had not been on the course. Lone fathers who completed the course were significantly more likely than others who had not been on the course to be very satisfied with their job. In addition to benefits to their careers, trainees were able to describe personal gains they had experienced from the course; increased confidence, motivation, the ability to act decisively and the satisfaction of having achieved something worthwhile. Payne (1991) states that women, particularly those returning to work after a career break, were likely to emphasise such gains but such remarks were by no means confined to women.

Little is known about lone fathers' views towards training but Hyatt and Parry-Crooke (1990) and Leeming et al. (1994) found that lone mothers widely recognised the importance of training and further education. Some regretted not taking more interest in gaining qualifications when they were younger. This was expressed by one subject who realised her prospects would be limited by her low level of qualifications "...if you've got no real qualifications or anything, you don't stand a chance really. You should have listened at school really, but you don't, do you?" (Leeming et al. 1994, p.95) Lack of childcare, the cost of training and time if the parent was already employed severely restricted opportunities for training. Studying at home would have solved the childcare problem for some, but the costs of correspondence courses were generally more than they could afford. One mother on Income Support had to defer her Open University course application for a year because of the lack of resources for financial aid. The Employment Act 1998, recognising the difficulties parents face, gave parents £50 financial support for childcare expenses on the government Employment Training Course. More recent changes have undermined this financial initiative. In November 1992 the Employment Training Course was superseded by

a new programme known as Training for Work. Under Training for Work lone parents have become part of the principal client group of training policy and they are now included in the same eligibility group as those who have been unemployed for six months or more, provided they have been claiming benefits for 26 weeks or longer. However, one disadvantage is that not all Training and Enterprise councils pay any allowance for childcare costs.

1.5 The combination of financial provider and carer roles and the implcations this dual role has for the wider life of lone fathers.

Despite the financial advantages of having a full time job, studies suggest that (like lone and other mothers) lone fathers who manage to obtain such employment may then experience home/work conflict. In contrast, those who remain at home are likely to miss being employed and face problems of social isolation.

In their research into mothers at work Brannen and Moss (1991, p.78) found that some mothers claimed employment gave them a sense of fulfilment they could not find in mothering. This was expressed by a doctor who said "I thought it would be nice to stay at home, then I realised I needed something more." For others, employment offered a means of getting out of the house, escaping from loneliness and boredom. Having a job also raised self esteem, self confidence and self respect which gives mothers a sense of security in their lives, as well as protecting their mental health. It appears likely that lone fathers who stay at home with their children face similar problems of isolation and loss of confidence. Russell's (1983) study of fathers who had changed roles with their wives showed that they experienced reduced self esteem, the fathers had become close to their children but missed adult contact and became bored with housework. Many experienced lack of sympathy from male friends. The fathers in Russell's (1983) study were, however, living with a partner. There are relatively few studies showing how lone fathers feel about lone fatherhood, having to stay at home or the implications that this has for their wider life. Hipgrave (1982), however, has suggested that they are likely to become isolated and that this

isolation is greater for lone fathers than lone mothers because they do not have the support network lone mothers generally manage to build up. Without a network of men in similar circumstances one father, in a different study, claimed he missed out on "folk lore going up and down the street between women as to how to bring up kids and that, and little technical things that you get to hear about....other women are thinking 'who's the man with the babe, he's a bit odd isn't he?'" (Revolutionary Socialism; cited in Segal, 1990,p.40). Hipgrave (1982) also described the periods of lethargy and extreme aggressive frustration - usually displaced privately - at the feeling of being trapped at home, experienced by lone fathers. Fathers at home were also likely to feel guilty about not having a job. George and Wilding (1972) reported that most of the lone fathers in their study believed that they ought to work and said that without work they felt less than complete men.

Although a number of lone parents do manage to overcome the barriers to employment, studies suggest that working mothers who have young children would prefer to be full time mothers if adequate financial support was available. Many experience feelings of guilt and anxiety at having to leave their child with a minder. This is expressed by one mother studied by Brannen and Moss (1991, p.103) "On sunny days when I see lots of mothers and their babies - there's a play school nearby - I think 'I really should be with him' I feel guilty". A more recent study carried out by Gallup revealed that three out of four working mothers would prefer to be with their children if finance had not been a problem. Combining childcare with a career often left them exhausted and feeling guilty that they were not performing well in the workplace and that they were not being good mothers (Daily Mail,1992). Little is known about the feelings of lone fathers who go out to work but it appears likely that they experience similar feelings as mothers. Brannen and Moss (1987), for example, suggest that although men's work is justified by the ideological context many experience the same work/home conflict as mothers. They cite evidence from a study carried out at the Thomas Coram Research Unit which found that over two thirds of the fathers interviewed said they did not have enough time with their 12 month old children. It was also found that some fathers went for days without seeing their child awake. This was particularly true of fathers in sole charge of their children, at 12

months of age children had been left on average 1.5 times in their father's care in the preceding two weeks and half these times were evenings when children were often asleep. A study carried out by The Policy Studies Institute among families living in the British Aerospace local labour market (cited by McRae, 1989) also found that men with both small and older children said they would like to be able to spend more time with their children.

It appears evident that the long hours and rigidity of men's jobs makes it difficult for them to spend time with their children. Lewis and Cooper, (1989, cited by Phoenix et al, 1991) claim that while mothers who ask for concessions for childcare are viewed as normal mothers, fathers who ask for similar concessions are likely to be regarded as deviating from the male work role, and their work commitment is questioned. Consequently fathers are usually reluctant to ask for time off, and in turn are less likely to be given leave. Even for an event as exceptional as childbirth, the majority of men who take time off for the birth or afterwards, rely on using annual leave, unpaid leave, or making up the time at a later date (Bell et al. 1983, cited by Brannen and Moss, 1987). Brannen and Moss (1987) suggest one way to overcome the problem that working fathers face is to introduce legislation, such as "parental leave" or "leave for family reasons", which would enable fathers to spend time with their children. At the present time the U.K. and Ireland lag behind other European countries where "parental leave" and "leave for family reasons" allow either parent to take time off work; in some cases with pay. Sweden, for example, has the longest established and most extensive scheme which includes enabling either parent to work a six hour day until the youngest child is eight, two days leave to visit a child's school and up to 90 days per year per child to care for a sick child (Rapoport and Moss, 1990). A further means of potential benefit suggested by McRae (1989) is for employers to develop work/family policies for take up by male employees. In recent years work place innovations such as work place nurseries, flexible hours, job share and home working have enabled a large number of mothers to combine employment and family life and provide a number of benefits for the employer as well as employees. However, few are aimed at men and so far these schemes have merely enabled the traditional pattern of gendered family life to be retained. Jowell et al.

(1992) provide evidence which shows that many men would welcome the introduction of legislation such as paternity leave and flexible working arrangements. Nearly a quarter of the men in the study said they would make use of childcare arrangements such as school holiday care and term-time care. 29% said they would use work place nurseries if available. It can be assumed that such legislation would be particularly beneficial for lone fathers but little is known about their feelings towards such arrangements.

Bringing about such changes is, however, is likely to be very difficult process as it will be necessary to alter the traditional culture of the country as well as the company or organisation. The present government continues to pursue policies which reinforce the idea of fathers being the economic provider. This is evident, for example, in the Child Support Agency set up to pursue absent fathers for maintenance. In addition employers appear to be unaware of changes which have taken place in society; a survey of managers asked what proportion of the population they considered to comprise the "average family" i.e, father working, wife at home and two children. Estimates ranged from 25%-40%. The real figure is 5% (Beck and Steele, 1989).

1.6 Conclusion

Statistics indicate that the number of lone parent families has rapidly increased during the last two decades and in 1991 at least one in five families with dependent children was a one parent family. Most lone parent families are created by divorced and separated parents. Fathers have no legal right to their children if divorce occurs, however, the past 20 years has seen an increase in the number of fathers obtaining custody of their children. One in 13 of all lone parent households are now headed by a man and in 1992 their estimated number was 120 thousand (Haskey, 1994).

In line with the increase in lone parents much attention has been given to their marginal position in society. The housing of lone parents is likely to be of a lower standard than those of two parent families, they are also less likely to have central heating and commodities such as telephones and cars. The General Household Survey

(OPCS), 1992, Table 2.2) showed that 22% of lone fathers had a weekly of a £100 or less. The major factor influencing the living standard of lone parents is their reliance on social security benefits. At the beginning of the 1990s 70% of lone parents were dependent on Income Support and nearly one half had been receiving benefit for more than three years (Monk, 1993). Several studies (e.g. Auty, 1993) show that the amount of state benefit is inadequate for the "necessities" of family life. The general view shared by many observers is that lone parents are content to remain on an inadequate income, rather than find employment to improve their standard of living.

An alternative school of thought, shown in the literature, is that dependency on state benefit is caused by constraints which interact and make it difficult for lone parents to go out to work. Emphasis in this debate is given to lone mothers; lone fathers have remained relatively invisible. This is despite the fact that these fathers take on the conventional caring role of "mother" and presumably face similar difficulties. Their invisibility in social research is likely to be because men are not usually associated with the care of children. The traditional expectations in this country are that a man will work full time regardless of his domestic position. Mothers are expected to be primarily concerned with the care of their children.

This chapter has also shown that these traditional beliefs about the role of mothers and fathers have led to social policies and a welfare state system which do nothing to help lone parents go out to work. This is in contrast to many European countries where the employment of lone parents is encouraged. The benefit system was primarily based on the assumption that mothers would remain at home until their children left school. More recent changes have been introduced in an attempt to provide an incentive for employment but, in reality, lone parents can find they are financially worse off if they go out to work. This "employment trap" is generally associated with the lower wage earnings of women. Men are expected to have a higher earning potential.

With no partner to share the responsibility of the children, childcare is essential for

many lone parents who want to work or gain new skills and qualifications. However, the traditional attitude towards mothers has a direct consequence on the provision of childcare facilities. The government has given low priority to nursery care and care for older children during out of school hours, with the result that in many areas of the country places are scarce or non existent. Private provision has increased but this is frequently beyond the financial means of lone parents. Consequently many lone parents have to rely on relatives, particularly their parents. Problems can arise if the grandparents object to long hours or undermine parental authority. It is also likely that with the increase of women in the work force fewer grandparents will be available for childcare.

A further difficulty is that no legislation exists in this country for employed fathers who want to spend time at home with their children. Lewis and Cooper 1989, (cited by Phoenix et al.1991) suggest fathers who ask for time off are regarded as deviating from the male work role and considered to be uncommitted to work. Consequently fathers are less likely than mothers to ask for time off, and in turn are less likely to be given leave. In addition work/family policies introduced by employers are influenced by traditional values and continue to reinforce the traditional stereotype of family life. Innovations such as flexible hours, term-time working and job share have enabled mothers to cope more easily with the dual pressures of home and work, but few such jobs are available for men.

Despite these constraints a greater proportion of lone fathers are employed than lone mothers. It is evident that very little is known about how these fathers manage to combine childcare with employment. It is also unknown if some fathers choose to remain at home with their children, or if they are unable to combine the two roles. Information on how these fathers manage on a reduced income and cope with what is traditionally considered a mother's job is also missing from the literature. It was to investigate these matters that this study was undertaken, and all these issues, and others, will be examined in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES IN THE STUDY OF LONE FATHERS.

2.1 Difficulties researching lone fathers.

Systematic research into lone fathers began in the 1960s in the United States, Canada, the UK and Australia. This coincided with a general interest in fatherhood among social scientists (e.g Benson, 1968; Rapoport et al. 1977), brought about by social and structural changes which affected the character of family life (Mckee and O'Brien, 1982). This interest was accentuated by the ideology of the 'new father... the man who is both highly nurturent towards his children and increasingly involved in their care and the housework' (Lewis and O'Brien, 1987 p.1). Early British studies into lone fathers included George and Wilding (1972) and Ferri (1973). These were based on large samples of 588 and 237 lone fathers respectively and both had been commissioned because motherless families were considered to be a social problem. Unfortunately, more recent research is scarce and frequently consists of case studies (e.g.Taylor, 1985; McCormack,1990), or surveys based on homogeneous factors which may affect role performance (Risman, 1986). For example O'Brien's (1982) lone father project consisted of in depth interviews with 59 fathers who were all based in London. Barker's (1994) study provided extensive information about lone fathers living in the north of England; however, his sample consisted of just 35 subjects and the interviews were carried out before the changes in welfare benefits were introduced in 1988. Other data about lone fathers' experiences are frequently derived from research into specific factors such as divorce or welfare benefits, and such fathers form a minority of the sample e.g. Ambrose et al(1982); Hart (1976); Dean and Taylor-Gooby (1992). Consequently any findings can not claim to be representative of the whole population of lone fathers and caution is required when comparing data between studies (Hipgrave, 1982).

Locating and recruiting a representative sample of lone fathers involves overcoming a number of problems, many of which are shared with research into lone mothers and other groups for whom there is no sampling frame. Studying lone fathers also

presents further difficulties; fathers appear to have a reputation for being difficult (Lewis, 1986) and in addition, before lone fathers can be located it is necessary to identify which fathers can be included in this category. This is very problematic because, as Crow and Hardey (1992) have shown, the boundary around the category of lone parent household is very blurred. The definition of lone fathers used for this research is the one adopted in the Finer Report and used by the D.S.S. Although this definition appears "relatively straightforward" (Millar, 1989, p.7) it is not easy to identify such families in practice. Graham (1994) argues that not all lone parent families are households in this sense while Redfern (1982) believes the definition covers only half of all lone families.

The EC final report (Roll, 1989) suggests the definition raises a number of major issues, one of which is the definition of a dependent child. The Finer definition of a dependent child is "aged under 16, or from 16 to (under) 19 and undertaking full time education" (Haskey 1991a, p.21). Underlying the definition of a lone parent is the existence of the (now) Income Support scheme, under which lone parents (and others without adequate incomes) are entitled to receive regular payments for themselves and their dependent children. Until 1988 the age at which the child was no longer considered to be dependent was the same age at which the child could claim Income Support for him/her self. The EC report suggests there is now a possible gap of two years between the point that income support stops and the child claims in his/her own right. Consequently lone parent families with dependent children over 16 are left out. It also appears wrong to assume that the position of lone parents improves once the child reaches 18. The EC report notes that the child might be on a very low income. Crow and Hardey (1992) suggest that if the parent has remained in the marital home this can result in downward mobility in the housing market, if the house has to be sold.

The definition implies that lone parenthood is created by four clear cut occurrences; death of a partner, separation of a married or cohabiting couple and birth to a non cohabiting solitary woman (Haskey, 1991a), or in the case of a lone father, being left with a child though unmarried (Hipgrave 1982). However, Crow and Hardey (1992)

suggest that studies by Illsley and Thompson (1961) show that the ending of a marriage or cohabitation is not a clear cut process. People's behaviour can be very irregular as they move towards divorce, making definition even more difficult. Some partners continue to live together until the break becomes formalized, in other cases a partner may leave the home several times. Hardey (in Crow and Hardey,1992) found that one single mother had experienced the disadvantages of lone parenthood even before her child was born. In addition the illness of one wife had resulted in her husband having, in practice, to take on the role of a single parent before her death. There is also some debate about whether other occurrences which result in the father having to bring up his children alone for a period of time should be included in the definition. George and Wilding (1972) for example, collected data on five types of motherless families by interviewing widowed, divorced and separated fathers and also included families where the wife was hospitalized for six months or in prison for at least nine months. It can be argued that these fathers face the same problems as any other father bringing up his children on his own, the only difference being that their situation will change when their partner is able to return home. A similar ambiguity exists about the end of lone parenthood. Haskey (1991a) lists the five ways lone parenthood is ended; marriage, remarriage or reconciliation of separated lone parents, start or restart of cohabitation, children being no longer dependent or in the family and death of a lone parent. Trost (cited by Roll, 1989) suggests lone parents who remarry or cohabit with someone who is not the child(ren)'s parent should continue to be defined as a lone parent. Although the parent is no longer "lone" studies show that a mother's cohabitation may not necessarily mean she is being supported by the partner (Popay et al.,1983). Similarly it could be wrongly assumed that a cohabiting lone father no longer has child care and other problems associated with lone parenthood.

A third issue is the housing situation of lone parents and concerns the other people the lone parent may be living with. There appears to be a school of thought that lone parents who live with relations or who share their home, are not genuine (Roll, 1989). This idea is shared by Graham (1993) who claims that some of the mothers recorded as lone parents are living in lesbian relationships or with female friends and relations.

As with cohabitation, this idea assumes that any other female occupant in the household is sharing responsibility of the child/ren. In reality they may only be providing accommodation. One further problem concerns the absent parent and is raised by Bradman (1985, p.235) who suggests that "all those fathers .... on their access visits with their children, are lone parents too".

Partly because of the difficulties involved in defining lone parents, locating a sample is also difficult. Researchers have basically two types of sampling procedures to choose from; random or non random. Random (or probability) sampling is "currently the most respected and useful method" (Babbie, 1990, p.68) as this method provides the greatest likelihood that the population sample will accurately represent the population from which they are selected. The most widely used frame for sampling in the United Kingdom is the Electoral Register (Hoinville and Jowell, 1978), which provides a fairly efficient frame of addresses and individuals aged 17 and over. Random samples can however be drawn from a variety of other sources; McRae (1991) for example, drew a random sample from DSS child benefit records.

For some groups it is impossible to find an accurate and complete list from which a random sample can be drawn. Lone fathers are one such group. They are likely to be "hidden" in official lists such as the Electoral Role (see Haskey, 1991b). The Social Security department could be expected to have lists of recipients of benefits such as Income Support and Family Credit, but this would only provide a sample of fathers who were low wage earners or who stayed at home with their children. Also, it is possible that such a list would not be available to the researcher (see e.g. Glastonbury and Mackean, 1991). George and Wilding (1972) found that there is frequently a long time lag before allowance books are altered to the father's name after the mother has died or left, consequently a sample is unlikely to include many families who have recently become motherless. Additionally, not all books are altered when a lone father remarries so there is no guarantee that a father's name on the book means that he is a lone father. Several studies have also shown that many parents who are eligible to receive benefits fail to claim them. Leeming et.al.(1994) found that a number of lone mothers were either unaware of the existence of One Parent

Benefit or confused it with the Lone Parent Premium and assumed it was included in their Income Support claim.

The difficulties that rare populations present for researchers is well documented and show that scientific methods of obtaining a sample are frequently abandoned and many radically different techniques are adopted. Sharpe (1994), for example, advertised in newspapers for fathers and daughters to take part in her study, Russell (1983) recruited "traditional families" by placing notices on university and community notice boards or approaching them at pre-school or play groups. Lone fathers have been located in a variety of ways; Grief (1985) placed copies of his questionnaire for lone fathers inside issues of a single parent magazine. O'Brien (1982a) drew her sample from support groups, social workers, personal contacts and replies from advertising. Ambert (1982) used the snowball technique and asked interviewees for names and addresses of people they knew about.

Such "unscientific" methods frequently result in the researchers having great difficulty recruiting respondents. Russell's original aim was to recruit shared care-giving families from shopping centres, but only 10 such families were found in almost 600 approaches. Academic literature suggests that research into fathers is particulary problematic. Woollet et al. (1982) claim fathers are more likely than mothers to change their mind after agreeing to take part in a study. Support for this view is shown by Fry and Thiessen (1981) who planned to study a mixed pairs study of 75 single mothers and 75 single fathers, but due to attrition and changes in their plans to remain single, the final data consisted of 70 mothers and 54 fathers. Mckee and O'Brien (1983) claim that fathers are more difficult to locate than mothers, and suggest this is because they are less likely to be found in places where mothers meet such as antenatal and child health clinics, nurseries and toddler groups. A further problem is that the majority of fathers are at work during the time that most researchers want to carry out interviews or observation studies (Richards et al., 1977). Once located it appears that interviews with fathers are likely to be brief and more formal than interviews with mothers. Sharpe suggests this is because men have little interest and motivation to share their experiences with others. Mckee and O'Brien

(1983, p.152) found that an average structured interview with mothers took between two to two-and-a-half hours, similiar interviews with fathers were, on average, one hour shorter. Several of the men they interviewed explained they were "unaccustomed to talking about family matters or personal matters to an outsider." In addition the fathers were unused to talking to non family members about the topics which were being discussed: babies and pregnancy.

2.2 Research Design

From the early planning stage of this study it was decided that the most appropriate method of obtaining information about lone fathers was to ask the subjects questions about themselves. This could be approached in a qualitative manner, for example, by carrying out exploratory interviews or by using quantitative data derived from standardised interviews. The advantages and disadvantages of each approach were taken into account and finally the survey method of data collection was chosen. This choice was partly determined by the researcher's interests and academic background, and also because it was felt the research objectives could best be met in a "positivist" manner with the emphasis on descriptive data and statistical explanations of patterns of behaviour. That is, it was decided to gather information by means of a structured survey in which the questions and answers are closely controlled by the interviewer, coded and later scientifically measured. The method is described by McKee (1982, p.122) as "being valuable for identifying patterns and variations for large populations and aggregates of individuals." It was, however, recognised that only a small data set would be obtained and this would limit the statistical value of the results. In addition it was realised that such a method had further limitations; incomplete information would be given at the interview and little, if any, insight would be gained into the feelings of the lone fathers. Consequently it was decided to add some open ended questions to the survey, to encourage the fathers to talk freely, and to complement and verify the qualities of the quantitative method (e.g. questions 53a, 85a in appendix V1).

The next issue was the choice of design. In survey research the design choices

include whether to carry out a longitudinal study, in which two or more studies are carried out over a period of time or a "snap shot" survey which involves asking subjects questions at one point in time. While it was realised that a longitudinal study would provide interesting information about how the situation of lone fathers can change over time, for example, as they became used to their new role, meet new partners or change their employment status, it was felt that such information was not strictly necessary to meet the objectives of the research. In addition, the duration of the research project and potential cost to the researcher also had to be considered as well as the potential willingness of the fathers to participate in two studies. Ultimately the "snap shot" method was used. Although this approach is less useful to find out about change, as Adams and Schvaneveldt (1991) suggest a number of inferences about change can be assessed, within the constraints of this approach. For example the self rated satisfaction of lone fathers who have been on their own for several years can be compared with the satisfaction experienced by those who have been on their own for a shorter period. In many cases the subject's employment history since becoming a lone father can be traced i.e. a lone father on his own for three years, unemployed for two, can be assumed to have combined child care with employment during the first year, and such assumptions can be checked during the course of the interview. Further questions reveal whether the father gave up work for reasons related to his position as a lone father.

Initially the survey was administered by personal interviews with subjects who lived in close proximity to the researcher i.e. in the Southampton area. However, it was soon realised that finding a sufficient number of subjects was going to be very time consuming, if it was going to be possible at all. To overcome this unexpected difficulty it was decided to introduce the additional method of mail distribution. survey was administered by a combination of methods; postal and personal interviews. These methods were used by Grief (1985) for his study of American lone fathers. It was felt that this combination would enable data to be collected relatively quickly and easily, as well as involve the advantages of both methods. Mail distribution was chosen primarily because it is relatively cheaper than other methods. As Salltiz et al. (1959) claim "questionnaires can be sent through the post, interviewers can not."

(cited in Moser and Kalton, 1986, p. 257). It was also realised that it would be possible to obtain respondents who lived many miles apart and only postal charges would have to be paid for, not travelling expenses, and the postal charges remained the same wherever the respondents lived. Relative advantages of this method, suggested by Hoinville and Jowell (1978) were that isolated areas could be easily reached. It would also be unnecessary for the researcher to visit working fathers during the evening or make return visits to houses where the father was not in. In addition, it is frequently suggested that respondents are more willing to answer sensitive questions when they are not in the presence of an interviewer (see e.g. Ambrose, 1983; Breakwell, 1990). Interviewing, in contrast, is very time consuming, time had to be allowed for travelling, the interview and also for transcribing the interview afterwards. However, because the interviewer is face to face with the respondent, there are a number of advantages to interviewing which are obviously not found in mail administration. The interviewer was able to explain about the research and also, on a few occasions, clarify any questions that were not understood. Detailed information could also be obtained by probing.

Two data collecting devices were designed for this study; a questionnaire for the mail sample and an interview schedule for the face to face encounters. (Throughout this chapter the term questionnaire will be used to refer to both.) The interview questionnaire was designed first and later was worked into a suitable form for the postal survey. As Newson and Newson (1963, p.265) found "the construction of a questionnaire (thus) involves a great deal more than thinking up a few likely questions." A good questionnaire has to be coherent and take into account the respondents' characteristics, the type and amount of data required, the way the questionnaire will be administered, as well as plans for analysis (Glastonbury and Mackean, 1991). The completed interviewing questionnaire consisted of 95 questions, although not all of these questions were relevant to each respondent. In order to meet the objectives of the study the questionnaire was divided into 6 sections according to the main topics which were to be explored; general information about each lone father, unemployment, employment and childcare, income and expenditure, domestic responsibilities and sociability and social support. The choice of questions included

in each of these sections was strongly influenced by studies about working mothers e.g. Yudkin and Holme (1963), Yeandle (1984) and Brannen and Moss (1991). Although these studies concern mothers and not fathers it was assumed, as a working hypothesis, that those who went out to work would have similar difficulties to overcome e.g. child care. Other sources of influence were George and Wilding (1972) and Hardey's (1989) lone parent project. A few of the questions Hardey used were copied for this work as it was realised that they had already been tried and tested on lone mothers and fathers. Further inspiration was gained from the literature on unemployment and also divorce and separation (e.g. Ambrose et al. 1983).

Care was taken with the wording of each question to ensure it would be easily understood by all respondents. It was also ensured that no questions were in any way leading, hypothetical or ambiguous. The order of both the question and the topic areas were also considered very important and all were arranged in as natural an order as possible to enable the interview to proceed smoothly. Easy to answer classification questions such as "are you divorced, separated or widowed?" and "how many children do you have living with you?" were placed at the beginning to gain the respondents' co-operation and interest. Such personal questions are frequently recommended to be left until the end (see e.g. Oppenheim, 1992), however, in this case it was felt the lone fathers would expect, and accept, opening questions about their present personal situation. A deliberate attempt was made to avoid asking questions about income and expenditure until the interviewee was well into the interview and likely to be at ease. The topic about sociability and social support was considered to be the most sensitive and was left until the final stage. The logic behind this sequence is that if respondents abandon the interview when a sensitive question is reached, the interviewer will at least have the answers to earlier questions (Bell,1991). It also enables the researcher time to strike up a rapport with the interviewee, making a refusal less likely.

The completed questionnaire was fairly structured to enable the data to be easily quantified and several different types of questions were used. Many of the closed questions simply required a "yes" or "no" answer, or in a few cases a number. Others allowed the respondent to choose one or more responses from a list of answers which were read out to the respondent, or in some cases shown on a card. One

example of a forced choice question is, " Since being on your own would you say your household income has; fallen slightly, fallen substantially, remained the same, increased?" Each closed question was coded by giving every possible response a code number in order that the relevant number could be ticked during the interview and later entered into the computer. The reply "other" was included in most lists; these replies remained uncoded until the analysis stage. Frequently a closed question would be followed up by a probe which enabled the respondent to answer a question in which ever way he chose. A few open ended questions were added, these raised an issue but no choice of answer was provided, these also allowed the respondent to answer freely. Filter questions were included to ensure fathers were not asked the wrong questions. One such filter was "are you employed or unemployed?", this ensured that a potentially embarrassing question was not asked at the outset of the interview. After the questions about domestic issues, and at the end of the questionnaire attitude questions were added. Respondents were asked to give themselves a mark on a scale of 1-10 according to how they considered they were coping with domestic skills and as a lone parent.

A small pilot study was carried out prior to the main study. This was to check all the questions were clear to the interviewees and to remove any questions that did not work. Because the researcher knew very few lone fathers the questionnaire was first tried out on 7 male friends and colleagues (three employed and four unemployed), who were asked to answer the questions and also to be critical about the questionnaire. As a result two additional questions (Qs.90,91) relating to the father's social life, were added to the questionnaire. Four lone fathers were used for the second stage of the pilot study and at the end of each interview each father was asked if there were any areas that they felt had not been covered. No further questions appeared to be necessary. None of the interviewees had any trouble understanding any part of the interview and all questions produced good qualitative data. Only very minor changes appeared to be necessary e.g. the definition of "neighbourhood" had to be clearly defined as being within one mile of where the lone father lived. Consequently it was decided to include the data from these pilot interviews with those from the main survey to help increase the number of respondents.

2.3 Obtaining a sample of lone fathers.

The aim of the research was to obtain data from a sample of up to one hundred lone fathers living with at least one child under 16 years of age. From the start, because of the difficulties already mentioned, it was decided to abandon any idea of finding a sample that represented all lone fathers. Instead it was hoped the sample would include a typical distribution of ages, income, family size and social class. It was also decided that care would be taken, if necessary, to ensure a fairly equal number of employed and economically inactive lone fathers were included to enable comparisons to be made between the two groups.

A study published after the sample for this study had been collected (Barker 1994) revealed that the names and addresses of lone fathers for the study had been obtained from child benefit records and were supplied by the D.S.S. with the condition that they contacted the fathers first. If the fathers were willing to take part in the research their names were then forwarded to Barker. A sampling frame of 179 fathers was obtained, a random sample of 38 fathers was chosen and 35 were interviewed. This method of obtaining names had been considered for this study but it was considered unlikely that this information would be made available to a student researcher.

2.3.1 Finding lone fathers to interview. According to the Census (1991) information available at the start of the study, Southampton had the highest number of lone parent families anywhere in Hampshire. 4.2% of households in Southampton were headed by a lone parent compared to 3% in the rest of the county. Although lone fathers represent less than 10% of all lone parents nationally (Haskey, 1993a), little difficulty was anticipated in locating these fathers. In the early stages of planning the research it was thought that the referral or "snowball" technique would fairly quickly establish a sample of fathers to be interviewed. It was assumed that each father contacted would in turn enable contact to be made with others, either by supplying names and addresses or by forwarding a standard letter (see appendix 1V) giving details of the study. This method is said to "produce diversity and be unbiased by friendship networks" (Vaughan 1987, p.198). However, the failure of this

technique for locating a sample of lone fathers was noted very early in the study. The first three fathers recruited for the pilot study were all asked if they knew other men in their position, two referrals were gained, but neither of these knew other lone fathers. At this stage friends of the researcher had to be relied on to supply the next interviews. Altogether only five lone fathers in this study were recruited by "snowballing" even though each father interviewed was asked about others he knew. Several of the men had never met another man in their position and some were very surprised to learn that there is likely to be a substantial number of fathers in Southampton bringing up children on their own. Others admitted they knew lone fathers, but did not feel they knew them well enough to mention the research, some confided that the fathers were not coping well and would probably be reluctant to have a researcher come into their home. In a few cases the fathers they knew had children over the age of 16, others were living with a new partner, thought to be too reticent to take part, or in another case, had moved from the area. Some lone fathers interviewed did agree to pass on a letter because they were keen to help with the study, but all emphasised that they didn't know if the other person would be willing to take part. The lack of success with this method was disappointing, but other researchers have also experienced difficulty obtaining a sample of lone fathers by "snowballing", e.g. Ambert (1982) found it impossible to obtain more than seven custodial fathers to interview.

Given the small number of respondents obtained by the first method, it was decided to turn to some of the voluntary organisations set up in Southampton to support families experiencing difficulties with accommodation, isolation, children etc. Although not all are specifically for lone parents it was known that a few lone fathers did belong to these organisations and frequently attended group meetings. Leaders and co-ordinators were contacted, first by telephone and then by a letter giving them more precise details of the reason for the research and what it would entail for the fathers. Only one group agreed to take part and this resulted in just one respondent, who explained that all the other fathers in the group were shy and worried about taking part. No replies were received from any of the other organisations. Follow up 'phone calls revealed that the group organisers were "not interested" in taking part.

The only explanation offered was from one leader who said that the lone fathers she knew were all experiencing difficulty adjusting to their new role and were likely to regard a female researcher as "another pushy woman wanting to boss them around". It was also felt that the organization's rules of confidentiality would be broken if the fathers were to be put in touch with a researcher. However, not all of the voluntary family groups in Southampton were approached and so the lack of help received cannot be regarded as typical. Possibly there are others who would have been willing to participate had they known about the research.

As locating lone fathers became increasingly difficult it was decided to use schools as a way of finding subjects. It was anticipated that this approach would be more successful as all types of lone fathers would be included, whereas those who join certain voluntary organisations could be described as activists. In addition most lone fathers were expected to have at least one child of school age. However, as McKee and O'Brien (1983, p.148) found, the disadvantage of using this method is that "schools had to be convinced of the validity of the research and Heads had to give their permission for study to proceed." A letter was sent to the head teachers of nursery, primary, junior and senior schools throughout Southampton and the surrounding area, to explain about the research and request their help. This could be either by forwarding names and addresses of lone fathers known to them, or by distributing letters inviting the fathers to take part in the study. Twenty six head teachers replied, some by letter, others telephoning during their own time ie evenings or weekends. Several were interested in the study, expressed messages of good luck and were pleased that they could help by forwarding letters or, in some cases, 'phoning the fathers to ask if they would be willing to take part in an interview. One head teacher offered to mention the research in the next copy of his school's newsletter. Others felt that the issue was too "socially sensitive" and were not prepared to help, while many wrote to say they were too busy to help. Two replied saying that they did not know any lone fathers, but the majority did not reply to the letter, nor to a follow up. It is not possible to calculate accurately the response rate of lone fathers contacted by this method, but it is known that 27 letters were sent to the head teachers to be forwarded to fathers and 18 became part of the sample. If a

father had children at different schools he might have received two or more letters. Also, it can not be known for sure that the head teachers did forward the letters or, if the letters were delivered by the children that they actually reached home. However it is known that one father declined to take part as he lived with his parents and did not feel he shared the same difficulties as fathers on their own (see Roll, 1989 for related material). Another father told the head teacher that he now had a new partner.

Stage four involved contacting lone fathers through nurseries, playgroups and parent and toddler groups. Because statistics show that lone fathers are generally left with older children than lone mothers, it was felt only a few would be located by this method but they would be very valuable to include in the sample as it could be expected that the care of very young children would present experiences and maybe difficulties not mentioned by fathers with school aged children. A list of parent and toddler groups was obtained from local libraries and those with telephone numbers were contacted. None had lone fathers attending their groups although several said there had been in the past. The research was mentioned in a copy of the quarterly newsletter distributed to all groups, but this also proved to be an unsuccessful way of contacting lone fathers. Next it was decided to visit as many playgroups as possible in order to speak to any lone fathers who might be there, or the group leader. This approach proved to be fairly successful as seven lone fathers were located and four of them agreed to take part. In comparison six lone fathers were contacted by 'phoning play groups and nurseries and only one became part of the sample. A further, unexpected advantage of visiting the playgroups was hearing reactions towards a study about lone fathers. A number were very pessimistic about the likelihood of finding enough subjects, reinforcing the view that lone fathers are "invisible" in society. Others appeared to regard such fathers as an "abnormality". Comments varied from "I would think you've got your work cut out looking for families like that, there can't be many of them", "lone fathers? you hear about that type of thing but you never actually get to meet any do you?", to "we've nothing like that here, the children are all from normal families", "doesn't seem right, does it?" However, leaders who did know of a lone father often took a more sympathetic approach.

Questions were asked about the research and they were frequently very enthusiastic to pass information on to the fathers. This was both to help with the study and in the belief that it would "help him" or "do him good" to discuss his experiences.

2.3.2 Obtaining lone fathers for the postal survey

Alongside the stages discussed so far, lone fathers were also being located to take part in a national postal survey. It was decided that the easiest means of contact would be through lone parent groups which were thought likely to be present in every large town and city. Groups were telephoned, given details about the research and asked how many, if any, lone fathers attended the group meetings. A follow up letter was then forwarded, together with a letter for each lone father inviting him to take part in the survey. Because it was initially anticipated that these letters would be distributed at group meetings one self addressed envelope was included for the return of the reply slips at the bottom of the letters (see appendix V). At a later stage self addressed envelopes were enclosed with every letter sent to fathers, in the hope of encouraging a greater response.

This method introduced a difficulty not encountered so far; that of finding groups to contact. The Gingerbread National Office was unwilling to give out the names and addresses or telephone numbers of any group leader and so the first address and telephone number was provided by a friend of the researcher, who obtained the details from a library in Leicester. The contact was a lone father who agreed willingly to take part and also forwarded a list of other lone parent groups in the area. This resulted in four more subjects. Further groups were found by looking through telephone directories. This was a very time consuming task as lone parent groups were listed under a variety of headings e.g. One parent families, Single parent groups as well as Gingerbread. A fairly long list of groups was compiled but, unfortunately, not all the telephone directories were up to date and so attempts to contact these groups were often unsuccessful; telephone numbers would frequently be unobtainable, sometimes the number would no longer be that of a lone parent group or the call would be answered by an answering machine. The third and most successful method was to obtain group addresses by visiting or 'phoning libraries and Citizens Advice Bureaux

in other parts of the country, and asking for their help. The library staff and C.A.B. volunteers were all extremely helpful, but like the telephone directories, some times their records had not been updated and consequently several of the contacts were no longer involved with lone parent groups when the researcher telephoned.

The interest expressed by the groups varied enormously. Often the contacts were women who felt strongly that a study just about men was very unfair, and argued that lone mothers had just as many problems as lone fathers. Others were worried about the confidentiality of the fathers and stressed that many would be unwilling to disclose their address or any information about themselves. There was also concern expressed that information would be passed on to the Department of Social Security or the Child Support Agency and despite reassurances from the researcher about the use of the data, confidentiality etc., it was obvious in many cases that suspicion remained. Only a few of these groups refused to take part; instead they suggested that the researcher sent in letters "just in case the fathers are interested", but replies were seldom received. In contrast others were sympathetic towards the position of lone fathers and were willing to pass letters on as they believed that too little attention was paid to problems that lone fathers might face. When the contact was a lone father this helped a great deal, as they were always willing to be sent a questionnaire.
The response rate also varied greatly between groups. For example a group in the Isle of Wight offered to forward letters to two fathers and one reply was received requesting a questionnaire. However, four letters sent to Liverpool resulted in the same number of replies. A group in Swindon had six lone fathers and the leader also offered to forward four letters to fathers in another group but this resulted in only two replies. There are a number of possible reasons for the lower response rate from some groups; some lone fathers do not attend group meetings regularly, by the time they did attend the letter may have been forgotten. Non-custodial fathers also attend lone parent groups and, in some cases, could have been included in the total of lone fathers; conversation with group leaders revealed that non-custodial fathers frequently consider themselves "lone fathers" but on receiving a letter would realise they did not meet the research criteria. (One questionnaire was returned from a non-custodial father, but omitted from the final sample.) Sometimes group leaders would be unsure

of the number of lone fathers and suggest, for example three or more letters are sent. In addition there would inevitably be fathers who did not want to take part.

Altogether 35 of the groups contacted agreed to help by forwarding letters, but replies were only received from lone fathers attending 16 of the groups. The overall response rate from both the postal and personal contacts was considered by the researcher to be low. However, from the literature it is evident that other researchers have also experienced difficulty obtaining a sample of lone fathers.

There are a number of limitations to the type of sampling used for this study. First many members of the sample have been drawn from a support group for lone parents and it is possible these fathers differ in some way from others who do not join groups. For example, they may not have support from a network of kin or friends. Second, the sample was self selected ie fathers who received letters volunteered to take part. There is no way of knowing if those who chose to participate differed in some way from those that declined, although as Lawson (1988) points out, in all samples (except covert observational studies) at the point of cooperation every one is self selected. Finally the sample of fathers interviewed was mainly drawn from local authority schools, meaning that fathers in Southampton with children attending private day or boarding schools are not adequately represented. Such short comings are inevitable in a study carried out without a sampling frame. One consequence is that any conclusions drawn must apply only to the sample and not the whole population of lone fathers.

2.4 The interview process.

According to Russell's (1983, p. 20) account of his study "one of the most difficult parts of the study was finding people to interview....The interview itself in contrast was considerably easier." Very much the same applies to this study. All of the interviews were carried out in the interviewee's own home at a pre-arranged time that was mutually convenient to the researcher and the respondent. In line with Richard's (1987) claim that the majority of fathers are working at the time most interviewers

want to carry out interviews, it was frequently found that the lone fathers who were employed chose an evening or weekend appointment. However, as the researcher had a fairly flexible schedule this caused little difficulty. Unlike the fathers in Fry and Thiessen's (1981) study none of the men who agreed to an interview changed their mind about taking part, even though in some cases three or more weeks passed between arranging the interview and meeting the fathers. Three fathers did however forget about the interview; one had spent the day fishing and forgot the time, another "went out" and the third had an appointment to keep with his solicitor. In each case a note was left saying that the interviewer had called, and the interviews were successfully carried out at the same time the following week. Apart from the three who forgot, the fathers appeared to be fully prepared for the interviewer's arrival. Many had the kettle on ready to make a cup of tea, some had laid out biscuits on a plate. This preliminary stage served to break the ice and gave the researcher the opportunity to repeat briefly some of the points made in the initial letter, stressing confidentiality; that no names would be used, and that the researcher had no connection with any organisation apart from the university. Permission was also gained to record the interviews. The men were also able to ask any questions they needed answering before the interview commenced. All the men knew the researcher was a student and many were particulary interested in asking about the research course, its duration and content. All were interested in why lone fathers were being studied, many were very appreciative. This was expressed by one man who said "You get the impression single fathers don't exist. It's single mothers this and single mothers that. It needs some one like you to put the record straight about single fathers, it's about time some-one took notice about fathers."

It is a well known fact that the gender of the interviewer can affect the research process (see e.g. Mckee and O'Brien, 1981). However, although several fathers expressed surprise that this study was being carried out by a female it is impossible to know whether this affected the interviewees' responses in any way. The impression gained was that the men regarded the interviewer primarily as a "mother" who would be aware of the difficulties and problems that this role can entail. If this is correct it is likely that the fathers disclosed more about their feelings and concerns about

issues such as childcare than they would have done to a male reseacher. Fathers were frequently reluctant to allow the interview to end and used tactics such as offering more tea, or moving the conversation on to topics such as their hobbies and interests. But it is likely that this had as much to do with the need for company and the fact that the interviewer had shown an interest in their experiences, than because they were being interviewed by a female.

A structured interview should "take on a ritual like conformity" (Lewis 1986, p.24). To achieve this aim each respondent was asked the same questions (dependent on his employment position) in a consistent manner; and to a certain extent the interviews did all proceed in a similar way. From the beginning all the fathers appeared to be interested, and were prepared to help by giving, what appeared to be, well thought out, honest answers. All the fathers agreed to the interview being tape-recorded and there was no indication that recording lowered the accuracy of reporting (see e.g Moser and Kalton 1986), most men said they forgot the recorder was switched on. Only one respondent refused to answer some of the questions. This was a self employed father who was unwilling to disclose his income and would not talk about any changes that might, or might not, have occurred in his spending pattern. In contrast several of the employed men insisted on giving very precise figures and would produce wage slips etc. to show the researcher. Similarly, fathers on benefits often produced detailed accounts of their income, and where the money went. One had written out a list of his expenditure just prior to the researcher's arrival, "in case it would help with your work". When the questioning turned to domestic issues all the fathers inevitably laughed; nevertheless, they continued to answer the questions seriously, and often at length. Much was revealed about what the fathers did (or did not do) when they had been living as part of a couple, and the difficulties some faced when first on their own. This topic, while being of value in itself, also provided "light relief" between the two sensitive issues of income and sociability and social support. The latter issue appeared to be the area the respondents were waiting for; giving them an opportunity to sit back and talk about their experience of lone parenthood. The attitude scales (see questions 80, 95, appendix V1) also caused an amusing few moments, and as Glastonbury and Mackean (1991) suggested, the

respondents enjoyed placing themselves on the scale. The format was frequently copied by the fathers when answering other questions. For example when asked about the support they received the answer would be "on your scale of 1-10" before continuing to give a more serious answer. This pattern was however finally broken by the last father to be interviewed who found the question impossible to answer "How can you access yourself?" he asked, "I love them (the children) I have to cope, but I don't know where to put myself on a scale" (Jon).

Despite these similarities, each interview had an unique quality to it. This can be seen in the length of the interviews which varied from 30 minutes to over two hours and reflected the different ways the fathers went about the interview procedure. The shorter interviews proceeded in the manner anticipated by the researcher when the questionnaire was constructed i.e. the closed end questions were answered in a concise manner, while probing of some of the general statements led to more revealing answers. Despite the brevity of the interviews, good quality quantitative data were obtained. In the longer interviews the fathers talked in great depth about all the topics; showing none of the reluctance to talk about personal experiences mentioned by other researchers at the beginning of this chapter. For some fathers it seemed the interview presented an opportunity to voice their grievances about issues such as their ex wives, women in general and the difficulties of being a male lone parent. As one father said "I've been waiting to tell you that", another admitted "you're the first person I've told that to, phew it's a relief to get it off my chest". Similar experiences while interviewing lone parents have been reported by George and Wilding (1972) and more recently McKee and O'Brien (1983, p.149) who claimed fathers "frequently actively 'used' and manipulated or 'controlled' the interviews in diverse ways and for diverse ends", which included meeting problems of loneliness and to express grievances. These longer interviews would often cease to be structured and took on the qualities of a more flexible interviewing style. Some fathers began recalling their experiences immediately the tape recorder was switched on and the interviewer had to draw their attention to the fact that their were specific questions to be answered in a systematic way. Others co-operated with the interview format until a point of particular personal interest was reached, they would then interrupt the interview,

preferring to talk about their particular grievances rather than continue with further questions. Often the father would spontaneously bring up another topic and the researcher had to listen carefully and "fit in" questions when the opportunity arose, then return to the schedule when the occasion seemed appropriate. Sometimes questions which the researcher had assumed could only be answered by a positive or a negative response produced very unexpected replies. For example the closed end question "which of the following do you have in your home?" prompted one father to recall that while he was separated his ex-wife and her boyfriend had gone into his home and stripped it, leaving him with virtually nothing. Another interrupted the question to give a very emotional account of how he had smashed up his items of furniture in anger when his wife had died. On the whole the shorter interviews were carried out with employed fathers and the longer interviews with fathers who had no outside work, and consequently (in some cases) less opportunity for social contact. Some of these fathers admitted to being very lonely, others were still upset at the loss of their wife. Another father had just won custody of his children after a long legal battle; it is likely that these factors contributed to their desire to talk more freely.

One of the hardest tasks during the interview was to determine if the father was employed or at home full-time with his children. The question "are you employed or unemployed?" was received very unfavourably by some of the respondents who made it clear they did not like being described as "unemployed". As one man explained rather bluntly "lone fathers cannot work, they are not unemployed". At this point apologies were made and it was explained that a general word was being used to cover various circumstances. After a few interviews the wording of this question was altered and fathers were simply asked if they were employed. Problems, however, still existed; fathers seemed to consider themselves to be out of work if they were working part time and receiving Income Support. While this was more apparent among the postal sample, the confusion can be seen from the following reply during an interview. "When we split up I had to give up work, so what I do now is go in one or two days a week. Basically my job is still there, but I can't work, there's no point in earning more than what I get for a day's work and so I don't work." (Phillip) Another father spoke initially about "being on benefits", but later questions revealed

that he had a part time job in an office. In contrast some fathers appeared reluctant to admit they did not have a job. One father, who had objected to the term "unemployed" spoke about a business he ran from home, but as the interview progressed he admitted he had not been able to do any work for two years, since being left with a pre school age child. Similarly one father opened the interview by saying he worked as a sculptor, later admitting he was a student and sculpturing was something he did occasionally "on the side". These and other incidents presented difficulties to the researcher who had to ensure each father's situation was clearly understood. They do however show the importance of work to these men. These issues relating to the problematic nature of the categories "employed" and "unemployed", and the importance of work will be discussed when the data generated by the questions are analysed in chapter three.

2.5 Administering the Postal Questionnaire.

Postal distribution is the most frequently used method for self completed questionnaires. A questionnaire is sent together with a letter explaining about the study and a reply paid envelope. The respondent completes the questionnaire and returns it to the researcher by mail using the return envelope supplied (Babbie, 1990). For this study the method differed slightly in two important ways. Two questionnaires were used; one was designed for lone fathers who were employed and the other for those who had no paid work and were dependent on benefits. It was felt that the usual method of using one questionnaire with filter questions would not only be difficult for respondents to understand, but would also be very long. "A visibly fat questionnaire", according to Glastonbury and Mackean (1991, p.237) might deter respondents from taking part. In addition the majority of questionnaires were only sent to lone fathers who already knew about the study and had expressed an interest in taking part. This was because contact had to be made with the father prior to forwarding the questionnaire in order to determine their employment status.

Details of how lone fathers were contacted for the mail survey have already been

reported above. By way of a general overview lone fathers were nearly all contacted by writing to national lone parent groups and asking for copies of a standard letter (apx.**) to be distributed to the fathers. Those interested in taking part completed a form at the bottom of the letter giving their name and address and indicating whether or not they were employed, and these were returned to the researcher either by the father or the group leader. On receipt the forms were dated and marked with the address of the participating group; the appropriate questionnaire was then forwarded to the father. On the front of all questionnaires were brief instructions for the completion and also assurance that all replies would be confidential, consequently no names were written on the questionnaire in case this annoyed the recipient (Erdos, 1970). However, it was necessary to know who replied to the questionnaires and who didn't in order to send out follow up letters and so on return the questionnaires were opened by the researcher and marked with a fictitious name. These were matched with the form the father had returned previously by noting the father's location, occupational status and the number of children living with him, then the date of receipt was marked on the form. This method proved suitable because only a small number of questionnaires were used in this study, however it is recognised that for a larger sample it would be easier, and more accurate, to use a key number to correspond with every name on the mailing list.

Robinson (1952, cited in Erdos, 1970) claims that 90% of all returns that are going to come in response to a survey mailing will come in within two weeks after the mailing; in this study the percentage was 84%. The majority of questionnaires were received back within a week, while a few respondents completed and forwarded them by return post. Follow up mailing is generally recommended to take place after two to three weeks (Babbie, 1990) but it was recognised that lone fathers, particularly those with outside employment, were likely to be very busy and so a period of four to five weeks elapsed before contact was made with fathers who did not return their questionnaire. After this time a second copy of the questionnaire was forwarded together with another stamped addressed envelope and a letter thanking the father for agreeing to take part in the study and stressing the importance of the return of his completed form. Overall 17 follow up letters were sent, resulting in eight further

questionnaires being returned. Most were accompanied with a message of apology for the delay. Two fathers had misplaced the first questionnaire, another had given up work since first contacting the researcher, and so consequently completed the wrong questionnaire. The overall response rate was 81%, this figure includes 5 fathers who were ineligible for the study. Three completed and returned questionnaires, but on reading their answers it was found they did not meet the necessary criteria. Two others did not have any children under the age of 16 living with them, however it was decided it was politer to forward questionnaires rather than ignore their request to take part. Neither of these fathers returned their questionnaire and they were not sent a follow up. According to the methodological literature this response rate is fairly high, Erdos (1970) suggests that a typical response rate from a mailed questionnaire is between 10-50%, but 70% can be achieved through follow up mailing and Babbie (1990) claims that a response rate of 50% is regarded as adequate for analysis and reporting, 60% is good and 70% is very good. Risman (1986) studying lone fathers in America, distributed 281 questionnaires and obtained a 54% response. There are however several explanations why a large majority of questionnaires were returned; the questionnaires were only sent to lone fathers who had expressed willingness to take part; interest in the subject was likely to have been high; some fathers might have found the experience of writing about their experiences therapeutic.

The questionnaire was an adapted form of the interview schedule and consisted of 75 questions for employed fathers and 59 for those who were at home full-time with their children. As with the interview schedule some of the questions offered a range of answers from which one was to be chosen, while others enabled the fathers to give answers in their own words. An extra page was provided for fathers to write additional information about their experiences if they wished to do so. As Ambrose (1983 p.176) found answers varied enormously in length, depending partly upon the respondents' use of words and not only were there "some extremely expressive one liners", some fathers succeeded in adequately expressing their feelings by the use of just one word: "loneliness" was frequently used to describe the worst thing about lone parenthood. One father sent a letter after returning the questionnaire, in order to give

additional details about his circumstances and a few provided their name and address, or telephone number in case the researcher needed any comments clarified. (None of these needed to be followed up.) A father of six children failed to answer the questions in any great length, but wrote two pages in verse describing his feelings of lone parenthood. A few respondents failed to answer all the questions, despite the fact that the methodological literature (e.g. Moser and Kalton, 1986) suggests that respondents may be more willing to disclose information for a self-completion questionnaire than to an interviewer. Questions left unanswered were mainly about income and expenditure but other generally less sensitive issues were also left by a few respondents. In contrast, as was noted above, only one respondent among the interviewees had refused to answer certain questions.

The interview schedule had been easily understood by the respondents and so there was little reason to think the postal questionnaire would have presented any difficulties. The questions were similarly worded, and so any major differences in the replies from the two groups of fathers would be likely to be due to the use of two different data collecting methods. The first three or four questionnaires were checked with the replies from the fathers who had been interviewed and, as was expected, the answers were found to be very similar and it was decided to continue with this combination of methods. Appendix 11 provides a brief comparison of a few of the answers received by both methods and shows, for example, the employed fathers in both groups were most likely to have stated that the main reasons they worked were for self esteem and/or because they would be bored if they remained at home. In addition fathers from both groups who did not go out to work were most likely to say that they did not feel benefits did not pay enough money to live on and that they did not like receiving benefits. This similarity continued throughout and suggests that this method of survey administration had little affect on the validity of the data.

As might be expected, less information was obtained from the questionnaires than from the interviews. However, as already mentioned, several questionnaires did contain long replies. With just a few exceptions, the comments related directly to specific questions. In contrast interviewees often raised issues on their own accord,

sometimes digressing completely from the main focus of the research. Although interesting, none of these issues were used in the final analaysis

2.6 The subjects.

Although it was hoped that it would be possible to obtain a sample of 100 lone fathers living with at least one child aged 16 years or younger, ultimately because of the time limit set, financial constraints and the difficulties already discussed, it was possible to obtain data from only 82 lone fathers. Of these 82, four were not, strictly speaking, lone fathers as defined by the D.S.S. and so it was decided not to include these in the final analysis. One of these fathers (Colin) had been on his own for two years, but had remarried a few weeks before being interviewed. Grant had been on his own with the children for a period of time while his wife was abroad, but at the time of contact he was living with his wife while waiting for a divorce. The third of these fathers (Jeremy) was also still married. He had been on his own for six months while his wife was serving a custodial sentence. The final father to be omitted from the analysis was Gavin. Gavin was separated from his wife, but as he had been on his own for just three weeks at the time of contact it was decided his experience of life as a lone father was too brief to be included in this study. All these fathers had however experienced similar emotional and practical difficulties as described by "genuine" lone fathers, and all (apart from Colin) obviously considered themselves to be lone parents and so their comments about being alone with their children were retained for inclusion in this study. Where quotations from these respondents have been used, this is indicated by the use of an asterisk after their name (e.g. Grant*).

The sample used for the analysis of this study consisted of 78 lone fathers. Of these 37 (47%) were employed and 41 (53%) were economically inactive. This percentage of employed lone fathers is slightly below the national average for winter 1993/94 (when much of the data collection took place) when 54% of lone fathers living with children aged 0-15 were employed (Sly, 1994). The ages of these fathers ranged from 27-55 years. Seven were in their 20s, 35 in their 30s, 36 were in their 40s or over. The average age was 39 which is slightly younger than the national average of 43 years (Haskey, 1993a). Table 2.1 below shows that the age profile of employed and economically inactive fathers tends to be very similar. The main difference is in

the youngest age group (25-29), 28% of these fathers are employed and 71% economically inactive (although the number of respondents in this age band is very small).

Table 2.1

Age of lone fathers at time of study

Age	Employed	Economically inactive
25 - 29	2	5
30 - 39	17	18
40+	18	18
Total	37	41

Table 2.2 below shows the highest educational qualification obtained by the lone fathers. Previous studies, for example the D.S.S./S.S.P.S. survey (1991) (Mckay and Marsh, 1994) have shown that employed lone parents are likely to be better educated than those who are not in employment. As might be expected, this study, found that three of the employed fathers had a degree or higher degree. Of the unemployed fathers none had a qualification above "A"level. However, it was surprising to note that a greater percentage of the employed fathers did not have any qualifications (34%:28%). The employed fathers also had a smaller percentage of "O" level (or similar) and "A" level qualificatiions.

Table 2.2

Educational Qualifications of lone fathers

	Employed	Economically inactive
None	13	11.
"O" level	15	19
"A" level	6	10
Degree	2	0
Higher degree	1	0
Total	37	40

No. missing: 1

Table 2.3 (below) shows the social class distributions of 76 of the employed and economically inactive fathers; two economically inactive fathers did not state their previous employment. For simplicity and ease of analysis it was decided to adopt a three fold classification based on the Registrar General's Classification of Occupations (1981). Social groups 1 and 2 (professional and managerial) were combined and together consisted of 19 (25%) fathers. Classes 3n and 3m (routine non manual and skilled manual workers) comprised 33 (44%) and 13 (17%) fathers respectively. Social classes 4 and 5 (unskilled and semi skilled fathers) were also combined, making a total of 10 (13%) fathers in this category. The economically inactive fathers were allocated to the category they had occupied before they stopped working. These figures can be compared with national figures from the Labour Force Survey (Haskey, 1993b), which show that between 1986-1990 30% of lone fathers with dependent children were in social classes 1 & 2, 48% in social class 3n & 3m and 19% in social classes 4 & 5.

The figures also show that fathers in social classes 1 & 2 were the most likely to be currently employed (73%:27%). Of the fathers in social classes 3m & 3n 39% were employed compared to 61% economically inactive. Half of the semi and unskilled workers were employed.

Table 2.3

Social class (as defined by occupation) of the lone fathers

	Employed	Economically inactive	Total
1 & 2	14	5	19
3m & 3n	18	28	46
4 & 5	5	5	10
Armed forces	0	1	1
Total	37	39	76

No. missing: 2

Table 2.4

Marital status of lone fathers by employment status

	Employed	Economically inactive	Total
Divorced	26	27	53
Separated	6	7	13
Widowed	4	6	10
Never married	1	1	2
Total	37	41	78

Table 2.4 above shows that the sample comprised 53 divorced fathers, 13 separated, 10 widowed fathers and two fathers who had never married. Two of the fathers had been a lone parent more than once. In all categories a similar proportion were employed and economically inactive.

The fathers appeared to have a slightly higher number of children than lone fathers and lone parents in general. Haskey (1993a) showed lone fathers to have on average 1.6 children and lone mothers 1.7. Here fathers had 1.9 children. The most usual number of children was two (50%). There were also 26 (33%) only children and the largest family consisted of six children. Just 14 (18%) of the fathers had at least one pre-school aged child. This is in line with national studies which show the majority of fathers have children aged five years or older, but it is interesting to note that at the point of becoming a lone parent 42 (54%) of the fathers were caring for at least one pre-school child.

There is no reason to assume that the 34 fathers from Southampton who took part in interviews differed in any way from the 48 fathers contacted by post from other parts of England. The data appendix 11 show that these fathers were well matched on variables such as employment status, income, length of lone parenthood and the age of their youngest child. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there was some evidence that the method of data collection did affect the replies. Fathers who completed a postal questionnaire were a little more likely to avoid answering certain

questions. On the other hand it is also possible that they were more honest with answers they gave. Overall, however, there appears to be no great difference between the responses of the two groups. It also needs to be remembered that, because of the relatively small sample size (78), questions asked of specific sub-sets of fathers (e.g. employed), resulted in a very small number of replies, making an accurate comparison between the groups difficult to obtain.

This chapter has established how the sample of lone fathers was located and the methods used to obtain qualitative and quantitative data have been described. The demographic characteristics of the sample have also been outlined. Attention will now be given to the experiences of these fathers. In turn three areas will be examined: the following chapter will look at the effect of lone parenthood on employment and income. In chapter four the economically inactive fathers will then discuss the difficulties they face re-entering the labour market and employed fathers will explain how they manage to overcome difficulties such as childcare. Finally chapter five will focus on the emotional and practical support the fathers have received since being on their own.

CHAPTER 3. THE ECONOMIC SITUATION OF LONE FATHERS

Even though official statistics have repeatedly shown that lone fathers are more likely to be employed than lone mothers and that they are more likely to be employed full-time, very little is known about the full effect of lone fatherhood on lone fathers' employment. Statistics provide information only about one point in time and consequently a number of issues remain unexplained. For example it is not known if the employed fathers have remained employed continuously since becoming lone parents, if their career prospects have been affected or if their attitude towards work has changed. Neither is it known if employed fathers experience a decline in their income. In addition, little is known about fathers who remain at home full-time. These fathers not only have to manage on state benefits, which apparently are inadequate to live on (see e.g. Auty, 1993) but according to McCormack (1990) they lack the budgeting skills and ability to make do which lone mothers possess. The literature reveals limited information about how lone fathers manage to bring up their children on a low income, cope with buying children's clothes or feel about having to receive benefits.

In this chapter empirical data are used to provide insight into all these situations. The focus will be on changes that have occurred to the lone fathers' employment and income and the emotional consequences of these changes will also be explored. Initial concentration will be on the changes that have occurred to the lone fathers' employment status and will begin by examining the experiences of lone fathers who were economically inactive at the time of the study because it can be assumed that it is this group of fathers who experience the greatest change in their economic situation.

3.1 The labour market position: lone fathers not in paid employment.

In this study, an almost equal number of fathes who were employed and others who were not in paid work were included, resulting in a greater percentage of unemployed lone fathers (53%) than would be expected by national figures. However, six (15%) of these fathers included the phrase "unable to find employment" when asked to

describe their current position. Therefore, strictly speaking, these fathers should be described as economically active although not in paid work. The distribution is given in table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Employment status at the time of the study.

	Employed	Not in paid work	Total
All	37	41	78

As discussed previously in chapter two, the two groups did not significantly differ in characteristics such as education, age or marital status However, the fathers in employment were significantly more likely to be home owners ($p < 0.00357$). Of the fathers who were employed at the time of the study 64% were owner occupiers which is very close to the proportion of all households which are owner-occupied. In comparison only 31% of the fathers who were not employed were owner occupiers. This appears to support the view that lone fathers who are in work generally have secure, better paid jobs and occupy a "favourable position" in their housing situation compared to lone mothers (Crow and Hardey, 1991, p.48).

The National Child Development Study found that lone fathers who are unemployed are likely to remain out of the labour market for a number of years. The following table confirms that several fathers in this study had also experienced a long period out of work.

Table 3.2

Number of years away from employment

Years	0-1	2-4	5-8	9+ years	Total
Fathers	8	21	9	3	41

The number of years out of work can partly be attributed to the age of the youngest child at the point of lone parenthood. The findings showed that 33% of the fathers left with a preschool child had been out of work for longer than five years. In comparison only 22% of fathers whose youngest child was at primary school were still

out of work after five years. George and Wilding (1972, p.80) reported similar findings and suggest that "as children grow up it becomes possible for fathers to return to work".

Closer examination of the fathers' employment histories reveals that the above table does not accurately represent the consequence of lone parenthood for lone fathers' employment status. The majority (54%) of the fathers who were out of work at the time of this study had been in employment up to the point of lone parenthood and so it can be said that their current situation, and its duration, was a direct result of becoming a lone father. However 17% were already at home for a variety of reasons. One such father had been out of work for six years, after giving up his employment as an electrician to care for his wife before her death. He had been a lone parent for four of those years.

> "My wife was ill with cancer and I stayed at home to look after her. Then she became worse so I gave up work altogether and took redundancy and continued to stay at home. When she died I continued to stay at home to look after the children." (Philip)

Other fathers at home prior to lone parenthood included Simon, an unskilled manual worker who had been out of work for six years before his marriage broke up, Carl who had been made redundant from his job as a sales director two years before his wife left and Andrew who had been in prison for nine months and was unable to return to his previous employment. Another father was at home because a disability prevented him from working.

A further group of fathers (29% of those who were not in paid work at the time of this research) had combined work with their new responsibilities until circumstances forced them to leave their employment. One of these fathers was Kenneth who continued to work for two years after becoming a lone parent, but had to take early retirement from his employment as a radar engineer at 55 because of stress triggered off by the loss of his wife. Ben's firm went into voluntary liquidation six months

after he became a lone parent. Others experienced childcare difficulties; one such father explained the problems he faced.

> "I was in full time employment, then I had about four months off and I managed to get back to work because one of my daughters agreed to baby sit for me full time. It worked for a while but .... things got very difficult for her and she quite understandably turned round one day and said 'look dad, I've got to have a break.' So of course we had to part company which meant I had to leave work. Then I met someone else (a new partner) who decided she could get on with the children, that lasted a couple of months until she decided to go, which means I was only back to work for a couple of months." (Doug)

Thus although the majority of the sample are classified as being not economically inactive their experiences differ greatly. For some their employment situation was immediately affected, while others experienced the change in status after a period of being on their own. For those who were already out of work the pattern of their present situation had, to some extent, already been set. These findings are summarised in table 3.3 below which shows that there is a significant relationship between the length of lone parenthood and time spent out of work ($p < 0.01709$).

The figures in table 3.3 indicate that 4 (50%) of the fathers who had been on their own for one year or less had been away from employment for between two and eight years. The majority (74%) of fathers who had been on their own for between 2-4 years had been out of work for a similar period, however three had been out of work for a year or less and two had been out of work for over five years. Just over one half (58%) of the fathers who had been lone parents for five to eight years had also been away from employment for the same length of time. Of the others, four had been economically inactive for up to five years and one for over nine years. Two fathers had been lone parents for over nine years, one of these fathers had been out of work for between five to eight years and the other for over nine years.

Table 3.3

The relationship between the length lone parenthood and the number of years out of employment

	Years out of employment				
Length of lone parenthood	0-1	2-4	5-8	9+ years	Total
1 year or less	4	3	1	0	8
2-4 years	3	14	1	1	19
5-8 years	1	3	7	1	12
9 years or more	0	1	0	1	2
Total	8	21	9	3	41

In sum, of the 41 lone fathers not in employment at the time of the study, 7 (17%) who were out of employment prior to becoming lone fathers had not had their situations altered, 26 (53%) had been unemployed for roughly the same time as the length of their lone parenthood, and the remaining 8 (19%) had come to be out of employment only after a period of combining lone fatherhood with paid work. These data are consistent with the interpretation that unemployment may be one of the pressures leading to lone parenthood, as well as the interpretation that lone parenthood may lead to unemployment.

Men's work has been described as "their chief activity, their 'master role', the very essence of what makes men" (Cohen, 1987, p.57). Consequently being unemployed proves to be a very negative experience for many men (see e.g. Marsden, 1982). In line with the findings of research into lone fathers by Hipgrave (1982) and George and Wilding (1972) discussed in chapter one, a number of fathers in this study expressed their frustration about being in a situation they had not chosen and felt unable to change. This was eloquently expressed by the following father:

> "I don't think as a man you ever get used to being at home. I know I haven't. I'm never in during the day, you were lucky to catch me in when you 'phoned. I don't like staying in....after working all my life I want to work, I can't accept being at home." (Scott)

In order to discover more about the fathers' feelings about being out of work the men were asked whether or not they missed certain aspects of employment. Pre-coded categories were put to the respondents and the findings are listed below.

Table 3.4

Aspects the fathers missed about being employed

Stimulation	27
Social contact	26
Job satisfaction	19
Identity	18
Status	17
Regular routine	14
Nothing	2

No. missing 1

Note: Several fathers gave more than one reply.

As the above table shows not all the fathers missed going out to work. The two fathers who reported missing nothing about being employed explained: "The job had become so swamped with paper work I was glad to be out. There was nothing at all I missed." (Kenneth)

> "Everything you mention is totally irrelevant. When you get down to the bottom line the only reason you work is to get the money. Not satisfaction, status or any thing like that, I'd work for the money to survive. If they didn't give a wage packet at the end of the week no one would ever work." (Simon)

However, 39 of the 41 fathers who were asked this question did report missing some aspect of paid work besides the money. As Seabrook (1983) found in his study of unemployment, one of the most frequently cited aspects of work missed was "social contact". This was significantly less likely to be expressed by the fathers who had been away from employment for five or more years ($p. < 0.04629$), suggesting that

as time went by they were either able gradually to build up a new social network, or else do without one. The following are examples of those who missed, or had missed, social contact. "Work varies, you work with all types, male and female, that's part of it, you can have a good old yarn." (Philip) For another father it was contact of a special nature that was missed.

> "The contact I miss is being on an equal plane with someone in my own field, and the contact with people in other countries, not simply social contact." (Eddie)

A hobby had proved to be useful for Jon who had found a means of making new social contact: "I suppose I miss social contact, but I've got a lot of social contact now anyway. I play in a band and that gets me out mixing with people." (Jon)

Russell (1987) found that status was missed by a large proportion of men who stayed home with their children, but it decreased in importance the longer the men were out of work. Similarly 43% of the economically inactive fathers in this study admitted that they missed the status of their previous employment, and this proportion declined among those who had been out of work for a long period. The following father realised that as time passed his feelings were likely to change:

> "The thing that I miss the most is the fact I was getting quite successful at work, I was getting a very high status and I would have been a very senior credit controller to the point that I was advising the directors on methods of debt collecting and they were taking my word for it. I do miss that responsibility but, having said that, in time I will probably gain it elsewhere." (Antony)

Three fathers had ideas of their own about what they missed. Two manual workers missed the exercise which they believed stopped them from getting depressed, another father mentioned a change in people's attitudes since he had given up work. "I miss respect from other people. There is a stigma about being unemployed and in my

circumstances I am a 'weirdo' because I am unusual doing a job (being at home looking after children) which is usually done by a woman." (Carl)

3.2 The labour market position: employed lone fathers

The 37 employed fathers shown in table 3.1 above account for 47% of all the fathers in this study. Of these fathers 8 were employed part-time. As in the Labour Force Survey, part time work is based on the respondents' own assessment - not the number of hours worked in a basic week. Men's work is generally described as being full-time and long hours. For example, Harrop and Moss (1994) found that 36% of all employed fathers work 50 hours a week or more, so it is interesting to note that two fathers who worked a 30 hour week regarded themselves as "part-time". In addition three fathers who combined limited employment with benefits (Income Support or Family Credit) considered themselves as "out of work" and consequently answered questions designed for the economically inactive. For example Gordon indicated on the form he returned to the researcher that he did not work, but he wrote on his questionnaire "I just do part-time work and get Family Credit" and continued to answer all the questions about being economically inactive. Another father (Peter) said at the beginning of his interview "I had to give up work when me and the wife split up" he then later explained that he still worked a few hours weekly for the company who had employed him before his lone parenthood. As explained in chapter two, when the results were analysed these three fathers were included among the group of fathers who were economically active. Many of the questions the respondents were asked were the same regardless of their employment situation. In the cases where questions were not answered because the wrong questionnaire was completed the fathers are included among the "no. missing" in the following tables.

Table 3.5 below shows that the age of the youngest child was an important factor linked to the employment status of the lone fathers. Of the fathers with a youngest child of primary school age, 40% were employed and 69% of those with a youngest child over the age of 11 were employed. In contrast only 28% of fathers with a pre-school age child were employed. However, these findings are more comparable with

those of lone mothers than of lone fathers when national statistics are considered. The Labour Force Survey (Sly, 1994) found that the proportion of employed lone mothers was 25% and this proportion increased as the age of the youngest child increased. For lone fathers, the proportion employed with a child under five was about 50% and this proportion did not increase when the children were older. This disparity may partly be explained by the methodology used to obtain this sample. Employed lone fathers with pre-school age children would not have been picked up for the sample to be interviewed if their children did not attend a nursery or a play group. The fathers would also have been omitted from the postal sample if they did not attend a support group for lone parents.

Table 3.5

Relationship between employment status and age of youngest child

	Age of youngest child			
	0-4	5-10	11+	Total
Employed	4	16	16	36
Economically Inactive	10	24	7	41
Total	14	40	23	77

No. Missing: 1

Table 3.6

Relationship between employment status and the number of children

	Number of children					
	1	2	3	4	6	Total
Employed	13	18	2	4	0	37
Economically Inactive	13	21	5	1	1	41
Total of fathers	26	39	7	5	1	78

Table 3.6 shows that the number of children also affected the likelihood that fathers would be employed. 50% of fathers with one child were employed, 46% with two children and 28% of those with three children. The pattern changed among those with four children but possibly this is due to the fact that only a very small proportion

of fathers in this study had four or more children, making statistical analysis unreliable. Similar findings have repeatedly shown that having more than two children adversely affects the likelihood that mothers will be employed (see e.g. Bradshaw and Millar;Mckay and Marsh; Sly,1994).

Table 3.7 (below) shows the number of children also affected the fathers' career prospects. Seventeen of the fathers claimed that their career or promotion prospects had suffered since they became a lone parent. Although the findings are not statistically significant,the figures show that only 25% of the fathers with one child said their career had suffered compared to 66% of those with two children. The age of the youngest child was found to have little effect, but this could be because of the small number of replies to this question from fathers with a child under the age of five. Hardey and Glover (1991) suggest that the reason for lone fathers' careers suffering could be because their household and childcare responsibilities are not recognised by employers. This may result in the employee being unable to fulfil the employers' expectations.

Table 3.7

Relationship between the number of children and whether or not the father's career had suffered

	Number of children				
Whether or not career suffered	1	2	3	4	Total
Yes	3	12	1	1	17
No	9	6	0	2	17
No. missing 3					

Surveys present a "snap shot" of the population at the time of the study. Although 37 (47%) of the fathers were employed at that time, and answered questions relating to their current employment situation, this does not mean the employment status of all these fathers had been unaffected by lone parenthood. Six fathers had spent a period of time away from the labour market since being on their own. This ranged

from three months for two fathers who were able to take this time off from their employment, to two and a half years for another father left with a pre-school age child. In most cases this time away from employment was to enable the father to make childcare arrangements. One father explained that he had been living with a girl friend when he first gained custody of the children:

> "When we split up I had no choice but to give up my job and have a period on Income Support. That was for three months, while I made the necessary baby sitting arrangements ready for when I had an offer of another job." (Ron)

Other fathers needed time to "generally get things sorted out" (Bernard). Neil explained: "I chose to stay at home with my kids for 12 months then as soon as I got sorted out I got a job." One of the fathers said that he felt unable to work for a few months after his marriage broke up:

> "When it first happened I had to stop work for about six months because there wasn't a lot of work around and I was feeling pretty.... I went to the doctor, I was pretty depressed. I couldn't talk without bursting into tears." (Robert)

Because of the difficulties lone fathers are likely to face, it could be wondered why these lone fathers are prepared to cope with the dual responsibilities of work and childcare. The reason might be assumed to be that they do not want to have to manage on the amount of benefits they would receive from the government. However, research shows that there are a number of non-economic reasons why individuals work. As mentioned in chapter one, Brannen and Moss (1991) found that employment gave mothers self-confidence and self-respect as well as enabling them to get out of the house and mix with other people. In addition McLaughlin et al. (1989) suggest that work provides a social identity, a time structure to the day, also a means of satisfying the need for the exertion of energy. In this study the lone fathers were asked if there was any other reason why they worked besides to obtain

an income and as table 3.8 (below) shows, only five of the fathers stated that there was no other reason. Jason replied "I'd leave work tomorrow if they'd give me the money". The other four fathers, for whom money was the only reason for working, stressed the importance of providing for their children. One such reply was

> "The only reason I go out to work is to provide for the children. I could get by on Income Support, every one gets by, but I want to give them what they had when I got married; holidays, nice clothes, things like that." (Ron)

Another father mentioned the perceived long-term benefits of working, "I work to provide for my family now and a pension for me later." (Cliff). An additional reason given by another father was: "I wouldn't have a home if I didn't work." (Neil)

Table 3.8

Reasons why the lone fathers go out to work

To increase self esteem	23
To prevent boredom	23
Work satisfaction	18
Social contact	15
To continue career	12
To maintain friendships	10
No other reason besides money	5

No. missing: 3

Several fathers gave more than one answer

Increased self- esteem has frequently been associated with the employment of mothers (see e.g. Brown and Harris, 1978). Brannen and Moss (1991) also found that having a job increased the self-esteem of many of the mothers in their study, so it is not surprising to find that this was one of the most frequently cited reasons these fathers gave for being employed. 68% of the employed fathers gave this reply. One father explained:

"Self-esteem is the most important factor for me. When my marriage broke down and my wife disappeared it was a way to channel my energy and aggression. To start with it was mainly defiance, I will do it, I will work, now I know that I can work and care for my children as well." (Robert)

Several fathers who worked for self esteem also said that they would be bored at home. Peter who worked for one day a week summed up his reasons "It gets me out of the house. The money is important but the main reason is to get me out of the house."

Another frequently cited reason for working was "to continue career", This reply was given by 62% of the fathers and, as might be expected, was more frequently cited by fathers who had well established employment. In contrast Brannen and Moss (1991) found that before the birth of their children mothers were committed to their jobs and regarded their employment as a permanent part of their lives. After childbirth few high status returners took a "careerist" or long term view of employment job prospects. Instead the mothers spoke about the importance of social contact. Fathers in this study also enjoyed the social contact at work and spoke about the benefits of having others around to talk to "If I want a chat about things there's always someone to talk to, that is a good thing about working." (Rob) "If I wasn't at work the money I'd get off the state wouldn't be much different, but when I am at work I can chat to people, it keeps me going all day" (Paul). This reason was given by 44% of the fathers. Maintaining friendships was a significant factor for fathers who had been in the same employment for a number of years (p.0.04587).

Table 3.9 shows that the majority of fathers employed at the time of the study had secure jobs where they had worked for a number of years prior to becoming a lone parent. Two fathers had recently changed their jobs, but continued with the same type of employment they had been doing previously. In both these cases the length of time in total spent working at their profession or trade has been included in the table, as there was no indication they have spent time away from employment.

Table.9

Relationship between the length of lone fatherhood and the number of years in current employment

Length of lone fatherhood	Number of years in current employment				
	0-1	2-4	5-8	9-14	15+
0-1 year	2	3	1	0	1
2-4 years	0	5	5	4	3
5-8 years	1	0	1	0	2
9+ years	0	1	3	1	0

No. missing 4

Unlike in George and Wilding's (1972 p.85) study there was no reason to assume that the fathers "had to remain in the same job because of their family situation"; instead it is likely that continuity helped some fathers adjust to their new situation. One father explained:

> "My manager has known me for years. Some people there are in the same position as I am, they know how things are and if I want a chat there's always someone to talk to." (Alvin)

As might be expected from studies of mothers with partners and lone parents (e.g. Brannen and Moss, 1991; Hardey and Glover, 1991), some of the fathers were able to remain in employment only by making a number of changes to their employment. Several fathers had to reduce the amount of time they spent at work. Over-time was available for 16 fathers, but only two fathers said they always managed to do extra work. Replies such as "I only work if I can get someone to look after (his child) on a Saturday morning" (Paul) indicated that most of the fathers were restricted to working overtime when childcare was available. Ron, who never worked overtime, explained "There's been a lot. There's a lot of work to do, but I'm not able to do it. My main concern is my daughter." A father who worked from home also found that

the time he could devote to his business had been greatly reduced:

> "It's cut down the hours I can devote to the business, therefore the company runs in a very low key way. If I had the normal working hours to devote to it I could expand and make it a lot more successful." (Alan)

Five fathers changed from full-time to part-time employment. Two fathers were able to continue in the same line of work they had been doing for a number of years, but with greatly reduced hours. One father explained "I've got to work around the children now, Mr Harris (his employer) fortunately understands so what I do now is go in one day a week for just a few hours." (Peter). Among the others was Nigel who gave up the army two years after becoming a lone parent (although this may not have been directly related to lone parenthood) and chose to work two days a week "because of the children". Gordon obtained a part-time cleaning job to enable work to fit in with the hours his child was at nursery school; "full-time work", he said, "usually involved shifts and would not be practical."

Four fathers changed from working "normal" day time hours to shift work in the period after they become lone parents. McRae (1989) describes the advantages of this way of working as being increased earnings and increased free time, but she suggests shift work also considerably disrupts family life. However, these fathers tend to have obtained shift work which allows them to combine their domestic and working roles. Lee continued working as a bus driver and changed to shift work, working an early-late split shift to enable him to care for his children. Trevor chose employment as a milkman as this allowed him to work an early morning shift which actively "fitted in with friends who would care for the children." The third father (Terry) did not choose shift work, but had to change from an ordinary day to a late shift (1.30 - 8.50 p.m) when his manager wanted to increase production. This shift is frequently described as being the most difficult to combine with fatherhood (see e.g. Mott et. al.1965) because fathers are at home during the morning when children are at school and working when the children are at home. Terry, however, was very pleased with

the change in his working hours.

> "It's a blessing in disguise, this shift work. It means I can give them (the children) their breakfast, get them washed and ready for school. I can them come home and do my housework. It's much more convenient than ordinary day shifts." (Terry)

In contrast, one father who had been working shifts found it more convenient to change to ordinary day time work. He explained:

> "I was a call out engineer working shifts, with my turn coming every five weeks. This involved me being called out any time of the day or night. I've kept the same employment but no longer work the call out shift." (Alvin)

Three fathers changed to self-employment on becoming lone parents. Andrew worked from home part-time as a commodity broker and Neil chose work as a gardener to "fit work round the children when they were young." Patrick worked as a debt collector and described his work as being "out on the road with work when my child is at school, and also at home with the paper work." Patrick proudly described how he had quickly worked himself out of the poverty trap; however, he realised that lone parenthood had greatly affected his career.

> "If I'd been in a partnership, with the line of work I've got I wouldn't be paying rent. I'd be living here with a mortgage. I would have had time to concentrate and take on people to work for me and I would have focused on increasing my income. I wasn't able to do that, I regret that and wish I had." (Patrick)

Lewis, however, gave up self-employment when he became a lone father to take on work with a higher income. This involved working longer hours but having one child of 16 another 12, could have meant that he was less restricted in the hours he worked

than many of the other fathers.

Table 3.10

Change in feelings of lone fathers in employment towards employment since becoming a lone parent

	Feelings changed
Yes	12
No	22
Total	34

No. missing: 3

George and Wilding (1972) found that 15% of the fathers in their study expressed that they were less happy or less immersed in their work since becoming a lone parent. In this study the employed fathers were asked if their feelings towards employment had changed since being on their own. Table 3.10 shows that nearly one third (32%) said their feelings had changed. Among the reasons were "I've other priorities now" (Rob), "I'm less enthusiastic, it's not such an important part of my life as previously" (Tony), and "I've too many things on my mind now" (Bruce). Further findings revealed that fathers with more than one child or children under the age of 11 were particularly likely to say that their feelings had changed and they spoke about the difficulties of combining work and domestic responsibilities. "I've a job now, not a career. I get it done as soon as possible and go home to get the children to school and to do the house work etc." (Trevor) "I'd like to stop work to keep up with cleaning, washing and decorating" (Tim). Another father admitted "I don't think I enjoy it so much, I like to get more time off now than I did before. I had nothing to do before, now there's always something that needs to be done." (Bob) A significant number of fathers said their feelings had changed because their employment prospects had declined ($p < 0.00409$). Ken, for example replied "I'm 10 years older and I know that time is my enemy to achieve anything." Another father said "I'm not so interested now, I realise that career development has come to a halt due to the time I need to devote to my son" (Brian).

Fathers who said that there had been no change in their feelings towards employment

were likely to have been in their employment for at least five years. Not all these fathers had positive feelings towards work. Jason, a customs officer for 18 years said, "My feelings haven't changed. I think I always would have liked to give work up." As George and Wilding (1972) found, a few of the fathers mentioned that they were less happy about their work when they first became lone parents but had now regained their interest. This was mentioned by James who said "When it first happened I wasn't interested in my job, but now I'm very interested again." Another explained "When we first split up I found that I began to wonder what it was all about, but after getting over all that my feelings were just the same." (Alistair) Conversely the following father was beginning to lose interest in his work after two years on his own:

> "Just lately my feelings have changed. I've been thinking I'd be better off at home. I find taking (his daughter) to the childminder, and things like that, a bit boring and a bit....well, not really distressing, but it gets to me. I think I'd be able to do more things for her if I was here (at home) all the time." (Rob)

It is evident from these findings that lone fatherhood has a great effect on the fathers' employment situation. The majority of lone fathers are in full time employment at the point of lone parenthood and so have to make a number of changes to their daily working routine in order to continue to remain in employment. Many find that this leads to their career prospects suffering and some lose interest in their work. However, nearly all employed lone fathers mention that they gain many important factors (besides an income) from working. These include social contact, work satisfaction and an increased self esteem.

Other lone fathers stay at home full time with their children. Most give up employment immediately they become lone parents but some continue to work until difficulties such as lack of childcare arise. Fathers who are left to care for a pre-school age child are particularly likely to remain out of work for several years and nearly all fathers find being without work to be a very negative experience.

3.3 The fathers' economic position in relation to welfare benefits and reduced earned income.

Having looked at the various consequences that lone parenthood has on lone fathers' employment the effect of these changes on the fathers' household income will now be examined.

3.3.1 Economically inactive fathers

A total of 45 fathers were receiving State benefits (besides universal benefits like child benefit) at the time of this study. For the majority (88%) of these fathers benefits replaced earnings as their main source of income, 39 claimed Income Support and one received Invalidity Benefit "topped up" with Income Support. Four fathers combined benefits with earned income, two claiming Income Support and two receiving Family Credit. Another father on benefits was Kenneth who had taken early retirement from his work as a Radar Engineer. Kenneth was receiving Invalidity Benefit but was not reliant on this as his main source of income.

Table 3.11

Feelings of claiming benefits of fathers who were in receipt of IS/FC

Benefits seen as a right	9
No strong opinions	12
Dislike claiming benefits	21
Total	42

No. missing 1

Fathers receiving Invalidity benefit were not included.

The above table shows that in response to a question about their feelings towards claiming benefits, nine of the fathers felt that claiming benefits was a right. Their replies showed that these fathers all shared the view that they had contributed towards the government while they were working and so were entitled to claim now that they were in need. " It's a right. I paid full stamps and high taxes for 26 years and

trusted the state that when I was unemployed or a single parent I would not have the stigma of being called a sponger." (Bill) "I paid my taxes when I worked and despite Thatcher and Major destroying Britain and the Welfare State, I am entitled to it." (Andrew). "It's part of the system which I've paid into all my life". (Noel)

Among the lone fathers there were 12 who said they were "not bothered" about receiving benefits:

> "I'm not bothered, I see no stigma or problem. I wouldn't consider it a right.... but it's there (Income Support). It's like the National Health, to me that's one of the great things about this country; it gives people an ability to live, to pick themselves up and to go on. You might not get that in some countries." (Carl)

> "I don't really know. I don't feel one way or another really, it's just a means of getting on until I can get out to work again. I'd prefer to do that rather than go to the post office and get the money, it's a much better way. But for now, I'm not bothered." (Malcolm)

As in George and Wilding's (1972) study, many of the lone fathers said they did not like receiving benefits. In this study 21 (50%) of all fathers in receipt of benefits expressed this view. One father worried because "I feel that I am not setting a good example to the children" (Grant). Many saw the experience as degrading.

> "I've literally worked all my life. I had my first job when I was 12 years old. I find it (claiming benefit) degrading, I'm ashamed that I've got to do it. Most of the guys I talk to feel pretty much like I do, we go and cash our benefit books each week and we're looking around to see who's staring at us because we feel like rubbish. You take on a very low feeling about yourself." (Doug).

Despite the fact they did not like the experience most fathers accepted that it was an

unavoidable necessity. Two fathers explained "I don't like receiving benefits but it's just a case of having to. I have to have it or the child would go hungry or he would go into a home." (Derek) "I don't like it, but without benefits my children I feel would end up in the care of the local authority and I would not be able to care for them." (Charles)

Close examination of the data indicates that as the number of years out of employment increased, fathers' attitudes towards receiving benefits changed. This is shown in the following table.

Table 3.12

Relationship between fathers' feelings towards receiving benefits and the number of years they have been away from employment.

	Number of years out of work		
	0-1	2-4	5-8
Seen as a right	1	3	3
No strong opinion	6	11	3
Dislike of dependence on benefits	0	6	6

No. missing: 2

Among the fathers who had been unemployed for less than five years, 63% said they were "not bothered" and 22% said they "do not like it". In contrast, 25% of those who had been away from work for over five years said they were "not bothered", only 50% cited "do not like it". These results are in line with findings by Dean and Taylor Gooby (1992 p.116) who report that almost 66% (54) of their sample (which included 33 lone parents), when asked their feelings about receiving benefits for a long period of time "indicated negative or uncomfortable feelings about such a prospect".

Fathers were also asked if they thought that the amount of benefit they received was enough for themselves and their family to live on. Table 3.13 below shows the replies from 43 of the fathers who were receiving benefits, two of whom combined

benefits with earned income.

Table 3.13

Fathers' feelings about the amount of benefits received

Just enough	10
Not quite enough	7
Definitely not enough	26
Total	43

Missing 2

A number of studies have criticised the amount of benefit lone parents receive and shown it to be inadequate (e.g. Auty, 1993; Monk, 1993). Results from these studies should be treated with caution as they were carried out by pressure groups for more benefits for lone parents. However, their findings appear to be confirmed by a large proportion of lone fathers whose main source of income came from state benefits. Sixty per cent of these fathers said that benefits definitely did not supply enough money to live on. The amount of benefit is likely to be particularly inadequate if fathers have past debts to be paid off. The following father believed he spoke on behalf of many lone parents who share his situation, "I came out of my marriage without a bean. I sold my car to pay off debts and I'm still paying off debts, so I can't spend the money on things it's provided for." (Eddie) Another father rented private accommodation which cost more than the amount he received in housing benefit. "The housing benefit has a shortfall of £50 a month to cover the rent. I have to try and make this up from income support. I definitely don't get enough, but it's not one it's the overall benefit." (Carl) Other fathers also expressed their views:

> "The government has done its figures very carefully, the amount they pay you is the barest you need to survive, in their eyes. My daily amount I can spend on clothes, food, pocket money is £5.60p a day. You can sustain life on that, but it doesn't allow you to go out, you can't even have a meal on it. It's a drudge. You can't have holidays or do anything to change your daily life." (Simon)

"Allowing for the fact that I own my own house and don't have any mortgage or rent to pay, allowing for that I still have to pay the poll tax (council tax), I still have to pay the full price for gas and electricity, you don't get any assistance with that. I don't feel they pay enough. I don't think the government provides enough care, I don't think they pay enough attention to lone parents right across the board." (Doug)

Fathers who replied that benefits provided "just enough" or "not quite enough" were likely to stress the importance of careful budgeting.

"It's not quite enough, that's the main case for everyone I should think. You have to budget to what you receive each week. Things like.....it's very costly if you have to buy things like shoes or a coat, so you have to miss out on something you budget for each week, things like the fruit for the child to take to school." (Derek)

"To survive I think you have to be very well disciplined with yourself. It's easy to get into trouble, it all depends on how good you are at budgeting and managing money. They are only going to pay you enough to live on. If you expect to live to a high standard then it won't be enough. " (Scott)

Scott's feelings about expectations were echoed by Noel who said "As long as I've got a box of tea bags I'm quite happy, I've never been one for going out. I don't smoke, I don't drink, it covers the bills and so I'd say it's just enough." Of those fathers who have been dependent on benefits for a number of years it is likely that the amount becomes more inadequate, as household goods etc. wear out and need replacing, the cost of children's clothes becomes more expensive and any savings are used up (see e.g Monk, 1993). It could be assumed that fathers who have been out of work for five years or more would be the most likely to say that the amount was definitely not enough. However table 3.14 shows that only 41% of the long term

economically inactive gave this reply compared to 67% of those who had been out of work for a shorter period.

Table 3.14

The relationship between the number of years out of employment and feelings towards the amount of benefit received.

	Number of years out of work				
	1 year or less	2-4 years	5-8 years	9 years	Total
Just enough	1	5	3	1	10
Not quite enough	2	1	3	0	6
Definitely not enough	4	15	3	2	24
Total	7	21	9	3	40

No. missing: 1

These figures suggest that over a period of time the fathers have learnt to adapt to living on a small income, and this was expressed by one of the fathers who had been living on benefits for a number of years:

> "You have to adapt to surviving on what you get because you know there's no more. It's barely enough. I've been on the system now for eight years so I've had to adapt, then you adapt again. It's always going down (in value), they say it's going up but it's always going down." (Philip)

Similar findings were also reported by Millar (1989) who proposed that living on a low income for some time could have led to the lone parents having lower expectations. Also, although low, their incomes would have been relatively stable and not having to cope with fluctuations could make managing easier. Several writers, including Graham (1993,p.185), have suggested that when faced with a stressful situation, such as bringing up a family on a low income, individuals tend to "develop complex coping strategies" to enable them to make ends meet and at the same time keep the children well and contented.

3.3.2 Employed lone fathers

The figures in table 3.15 show the annual income of 34 of the 37 fathers who were employed at the time of the study. Two fathers employed full-time, a milk man and a self-employed builder did not disclose their income. Andrew, a part-time self employed commodity broker explained that he received Income Support when his earnings fell below the level for claiming, but from this information it was not possible to calculate his annual income.

Table 3.15

Annual household income

Income group		All
1.	£5,000- 9,999	10
2.	£10,000- 14,999	7
3.	£15,000- 19,999	11
4.	£20,000- 24,000	3
5.	£25,000- 29,999	2
6.	£30,000+	1

The income the fathers received ranged from below £10,000 to over £30,000. For the majority of these fathers their income was from earnings, but 11 (32%) received income from other sources (see table 3.16 below). Between a quarter and a third (29%) of the employed fathers had an income below £10,000 and were in income group one. As would be expected most of the part time workers were included in this group and four of these fathers had their income increased by benefits. Two were receiving Income Support and two Family Credit. Nearly all of these fathers were employed in unskilled manual jobs and among them were a milkman, a cleaner and a zoo keeper.

Approximately one half (53%) of the employed fathers were included in income groups two and three and received an income between £10,000 and £19,000. These fathers worked in a wide range of manual and non manual occupations. Four were engineers, among the others were two tax managers, a staff nurse, carpenter and a

chauffeur. One part-time worker was included in this group; Nigel a production director who considered his 30 hour week to be part-time, had an annual income of between £10,000-14,999. Nigel's income also included a retirement pension from the army, where he had been previously employed. Three other fathers in income groups two and three received an additional income. One received maintenance and the others had employment related incomes.

Six (17%) of the lone fathers had an income of over £20,000. These included a lecturer, finance officer and two manual workers. Two fathers owned their own companies. Alan, the owner of a flight simulator company worked an average two hour day. He explained "I used to work eight or nine hours a day but now I just work part time. I work whenever I can in between looking after the children and bringing them up." Alan's income was over £30,000 and included interest from his savings. Two other fathers among this group were receiving maintenance.

Table 3.16

Income from other sources

	All
Maintenance	3
Interest from savings	1
Shares	1
Benefits	4
Business Interests	1
Pension	1

This table shows the additional income that was received by 11 of the employed lone fathers. Maintenance increased the income of three of the fathers in this study, (9% of the sample who were divorced, separated or never married i.e. all except widowers). This is a very small proportion but maintenance is usually associated with absent fathers and Millar's study (1989) also found that very few (15%) of the lone fathers included in her study were receiving maintenance. Barker's (1994) study included only one father who received maintenance. Fathers who were economically inactive frequently stated that maintenance would not increase their income as it would

be deducted from their Income Support. A number of the employed fathers indicated that their ex-wives had entered a new relationship and wanted nothing more to do with their previous partners or the children. One father explained of his ex-wife:

> "She used to pay maintenance, but now she's remarried and moved to (name of town) she's totally wiped the slate clean, she doesn't want to know at all. She decided she did not want to pay maintenance even though she had a court order. At the moment she's had to go to court to find out about back payments. There's five months owed " (Tony)

Another father (working part time) whose ex-wife is also employed, faced similar difficulties. He drew attention to the Child Support Agency which became operational in April 1993:

> "Maintenance? she won't pay it. That's a very argumentive point, you hear all about fathers being prosecuted, do you ever hear of a mother being prosecuted? My wife is working, she has a good job, I've told the family department where she works,what her name is, everything, but in 3 years she hasn't paid a penny even though she is earning more money than I am. The ironic thing is she is actually working at childminding in the (name of organisation) in charge of their creche. She'll look after children for money, but she won't do it for her own." (Robert)

Another father realised that paying maintenance would be difficult for his ex- wife who was earning only a small income:

> "My wife is paying £40 a month maintenance, but it's only because she thought she would have to. It's not really.....(pause) In our separation agreement she wanted to put some sort of amount in there so that when she goes to court every thing is seen as being satisfactory. She doesn't earn very much herself and it's not something she'll have to commit herself to." (James)

Table 3.17

Comparison of annual household income at time of study with income prior to lone parenthood

	All
Fallen substantially	15
Fallen slightly	7
Remained the same	6
Increased	6
Total	34

To determine the effect of lone parenthood on the income of the fathers who were employed at the time of the study, they were asked to compare their present household income with that received before becoming a lone parent. The above figures show that 65% of the fathers who answered this question said their income had declined. 44% said the decline was substantial. In comparison a recent study by Barker (1994, p.163) found that only 44% of employed fathers were worse off. However in Barker's study some fathers had "compared their current situations with previous situations which they perceived their ex-partners as mismanaging," thus giving a potentially distorted subjective view. A proportion of fathers from all the income groups said they had been adversely affected economically by lone parenthood. As might be expected the greatest decline was among the fathers in the lower income groups: all the fathers with an income of between £5,000- 9,999 had experienced either a slight decline or, much more often, a substantial decline. The reasons given by the fathers for their decline in income are given below.

Table 3.18

Reasons why income declined after becoming a lone father

Loss of wife's earnings	14
Loss of over time	8
Working fewer hours	6
Change of job	3

No. missing: 4

Note: some fathers gave more than one answer.

The main reason given by 64% of the 22 fathers who had experienced a decline in income was that they missed their ex- wife's earnings. This was significantly more likely to be said by fathers with only one child ($p < 0.08212$), and would suggest that the fewer children there were in the family the more likely it was that the mother would have been working (see e.g. Marsh and Mckay, 1993). As one father explained, the loss of his ex-wife's earnings was compounded by having to pay off her share of the mortgage.

> "My ex-wife used to work part-time and I had just gone in for a new mortgage, so financially things look quite difficult. I also have a loan I took out to relieve my wife of her share of the house. That's over two years and so it's quite a chore at the moment." (James)

Other reasons given for a decline in income were loss of overtime and having to work shorter hours. Working fewer hours was significantly likely to be mentioned by fathers with more than one child ($P > 0.01797$) and frequently cited by fathers with children under the age of 11 years. In addition some fathers also had to pay for the children to be cared for. A father who worked part time and had been left with two pre-school children to care for explained:

> "I have to work fewer hours and on top of that I'm having to pay for the children to be looked after. I used to work 37 hours with no one to employ to look after the children, I'm now working 18.5 hours and pay someone to look after the children." (Jason)

In line with George and Wilding's (1972) findings, some of the lone fathers in this study had given up work which involved a lot of travelling or irregular hours. Typical comments were "we work all over Britain and Europe, but I have to stay here. Any contracts where we work a 12 hour shift, I prefer to stay off them." (Bob) "I can't do night work which means I can't do as much overtime as I'd like." (Paul) Three fathers' decline in income was due to changing their employment. Trevor, for example, chose to work as a milkman, working early morning shifts "to fit in with

friends who will have the children for me."

Six (18%) of the employed fathers reported that they had not experienced any financial changes, but as Terry said "My income is the same, I haven't got a wife to pay now but I don't feel any better off." Similar feelings were expressed by another father who explained

> "I expect the reason I feel worse off is that I'm having to pay for everything. There were probably a whole lot of things that I indirectly paid for but the wife used to deal with and I didn't know the exact expenditure. For example I hadn't a clue what the milk bill was each week, but now if something needs buying I'm the one who buys it." (Alan)

An increase in their annual income was also reported by 18% of the fathers. This can partly be explained by the duration of lone parenthood. 50% of fathers who reported an increase had been on their own for over nine years. It can be assumed that during these years rises in wage rates or promotions would have led to the fathers' incomes increasing. In addition two fathers who experienced an increase had been students before becoming lone parents and were both employed at the time of the study. Another father had changed to better paid employment shortly before becoming a lone father.

These findings have shown that lone fatherhood almost inevitably leads to a decline in income and that often this decline is substantial. Like lone mothers, fathers who give up employment have to depend on state benefits and the majority of fathers considered that they amount they received was far from adequate. In addition fathers who continue to go out to work are also likely to experience a decline in their household income. For some this decline is due to working fewer hours or having to turn down overtime. Others, who had lived with partners who went out to work, miss having two incomes coming into their home. Very few lone fathers are likely to have their income increased by maintenance payments from their ex-partner.

3.4 Changes in expenditure.

Having established the changes in income that had occurred since lone parenthood, changes in spending were examined. It was realised that some fathers were unable to make a realistic comparison because of the length of time they had been on their own, or because their circumstances made this difficult. For example some fathers had always lived alone with their child, while another father had worked away from home when he was married and rarely saw his children. All these fathers were omitted from the analysis of the tables which follow.

Table 3.19

Lone fathers who were spending less on themselves or the home

	Employed full-time	Employed part-time	Not in paid work	Total
Spending less				
Yes	14	6	34	54
No	5	2	5	12
Total	19	8	39	66

No. missing 12

Table 3.19 shows that 54 (82%) of the fathers were spending less on items for themselves and/or the home. This figure represents 69% of the whole sample and is nearly double the proportion (37%) reported by George and Wilding (1972), who were spending less on themselves or the children. The fathers who were employed full or part time experienced a similar decline in expenditure (75% and 73% respectively) and this decline occurred regardless of the level of annual income. Of the unemployed an even higher proportion, 87%, said they were spending less on themselves or the home. There was, however, no evidence to support McCormack's (1990) view that lone fathers lack skills of budgeting and making do.

The main area of reduced expenditure was on clothes. This was mentioned by 33 (50%) of the fathers, some of whom said they only bought clothes for their children. Typical remarks were "I don't buy clothes for myself, I just think about what the

kids need." (Scott)

> "I don't buy clothes for myself, I usually wear more or less day in day out what I'm standing up in, (laughter)...but I wash it regularly! I really wear a pair of trainers out before I think of buying another." (Doug)

Several fathers said they never bought new clothes but relied on second hand shops or jumble sales. Others spoke of the value of credit cards or home shopping catalogues which enabled them to pay weekly for the goods they bought. "The only way for me is credit. I don't like doing it, but I have to. I use credit so that I can spread it and pay gradually. (Philip) "I used to go out and buy things and not worry about it, like clothes and shoes. Now I have to get clothes and that through a club and put aside so much a week" (Mike).

Food has been identified in a number of studies as an area in which low income families make cut backs (see e.g. Graham, 1987; Ritchie 1990; Oakley, 1992). It is also frequently reported that mothers cut back on the food that they consume in order to ensure they provide enough for their children (see e.g Dowler and Calvert, 1995)). Although the fathers in this study went without many items for themselves there was no indication that they went without food to ensure their children had enough. However, this could be because the distribution of food is seen as private and therefore difficult to research (Oppenheim, 1993). Twenty of the fathers described changes that had occurred in their food expenditure. Some went without "luxuries" such as steak, buying a take-away or having a meal out. Others said they were buying cheaper food: "I have to buy the cheapest food I can find. I'm lucky, I've two children who aren't fussy, food is food to them." (Barry) When I go shopping I buy cheaper food, the shop's own, not well known brands." (Graham) A third means of reducing expenditure on food was to shop more carefully and buy less. This method was used by Noel who said "I now find it best to do my shopping on a daily basis, whereas before I used to go to the supermarket and just load up my trolley".

Most of the fathers owned household articles such as washing machines, however, difficulties were likely to occur when these broke down and needed replacing or repairing. Replacing household items was impossible for 14 (21%) fathers. Two such fathers explained: "There are things we need to replace which I can't. If the tele. was to break down I don't know what I would do." (Antony); "Before I got divorced I had a front loader, tumble drier and microwave oven but that got taken when she walked out and I just can't replace it." (Don) Others said they would like to be able to spend money decorating or improving their home, while Peter, who had recently managed to wall-paper his lounge, admitted this was his first attempt and said that he missed being able to afford professional decorators "who would have done the job twice as quickly."

Some fathers (10) said they had cut back on alcohol and another six mentioned spending less on their social life. For Lewis a change in income since becoming a lone parent meant "I can not go out drinking like I used to, probably it's once every three weeks now instead of five times a week." New priorities was one reason fathers gave."If I go out I may drink three or four pints of beer, that's a pair of shoes and I'd feel guilty about chucking the money over the bar, so I don't go nowadays." (Doug). A few fathers realised that they no longer felt the need to drink as much as when they were living with their partners. This is shown in the following quotes "I drink a lot less now than when she (ex-wife) was with me." (Jon)

> "Occasionally I get a bit down and buy a bottle and sometimes I drink more than I should, but not very often as I can't afford it. I also find I don't need to drink so often as...(pause) well, before all this happened." (Dave)

Other items the fathers mentioned spending less on included cigarettes, records, nights out and petrol.

Marsden (1969) found that lone mothers felt guilty about spending money on themselves in preference to their children. In this study it was found that although

these fathers cut back on items for themselves or the home, many said they tried to ensure their children didn't go without. "I scrimp and save and do without", Rob said, "so that the children can have things." Similarly another said "I've let things affect him as little as possible, it's me that's suffered." (Antony) To examine the material changes for their children the fathers were asked if less was spent on pocket money, holidays, clothes or treats since becoming a lone parent. Table 3.21 above shows that 18 (29%) of the fathers said their children did not go without any of the items mentioned.

Table 3.20

Number of children's items that fathers were spending less on

	Employed Full time	Employed Part time	Not in Paid work	Total
No. of items				
None	7	3	8	18
1	4	0	13	17
2	1	3	7	11
3	2	1	5	8
4	3	0	6	9
Total	17	7	39	63

and often these fathers went without themselves. It seemed to be particularly important to these fathers that there were as few changes as possible for their children and that they had as much as their friends from two parent families. The fathers who were employed were the most likely to give this reply (41% employed full-time and 42% part-time, compared to 21% who were economically inactive.) However, a similar proportion of employed and economically inactive fathers said they were spending less on three or four of the items mentioned. (25%:28%)

Marsden (1969) found that a substantial number of mothers and children wanted a holiday, but they could not afford one. In this study holidays or outings was the most frequently cited area in which fathers had to reduce expenditure. This was mentioned by 32 (52%) of the fathers and these fathers were significantly likely to have been out

of work for five or more years ($P > 0.01832$). Some fathers appeared to feel guilty about their admission, for example Eddie said "I don't like having to tell you this, but it's a long time since we had a proper holiday." Another father said "I feel really guilty about this but we rarely have holidays." (Ron) Outings were also a thing of the past for many. As one father said "The cost of petrol is a criteria." (Doug) Others no longer had a car. Some fathers, however, had found a means of compensating: "we can't go out and about in the car, but we get the bus to (near by town) and walk in the woods there, and we've the Common nearby." (Don) "There's no holidays but they (the children) spend an awful amount of time with relatives and friends at the weekends." (Doug) "We used to have days out in London but now we're restricted to having pic-nics nearby with other lone parents, but having said that, we have just as good a time as we used to." (Anthony)

Expenditure on clothes for the children was mentioned by 22 (35%) of the fathers. As might be expected these fathers were significantly likely to have two or more children ($p < 0.00049$). They were also more likely to be unemployed and significantly likely to have been out of work for between two and four years (< 0.04453). Unlike in George and Wilding's (1972) study, there was no indication to suggest that the fathers had little knowledge of what constituted a good buy. For example one father said "We go from shop to shop to find a bargain" (Simon) and another realised it was necessary to ".... buy them what you think they will wear all the time, you don't buy just for fashion, you buy something you know they will use if they go to the park so they get full use of it." (Scott) Some fathers admitted they put off buying new clothes for as long as possible "I try and make things last, so that I don't have to keep buying. I'll patch the clothes up rather than buy new." (Anthony)
Treats were mentioned by 25 (40%) fathers. Treats were generally considered to be sweets, ice cream, small toys, also something "special" on an occasion such as a birthday. Some fathers were obviously very distressed at their inability to provide their children with treats. One such father said:

> "My children never have a birthday, that's in name only, they don't really get a present. I bought my son and daughter cycle helmets for

their birthdays, that was £10 each. I feel very mean about it, but there's bills to pay" (Eddie).

Another father reflected back to when he was married and replied:

> "my wife used to berate me for buying them things. I used to buy my son four or five small cars a week when he was younger. I'm not saying I want to go back to how it was, but I do wish it was easier money wise." (Daniel)

These feelings were shared by another father who said "I used to feel terribly, terribly upset. I used to sit down and cry in the first year I had the children. They're older now and understand, but it's still very, very difficult not to be able to give them things they want" (Scott)

Only 14 (22%) fathers said their children received less pocket money. These fathers were significantly likely to have two or more children ($P < 0.02323$). However, there is no way of knowing if the other children had been given an increase. If their pocket money had remained the same they would, in real terms, also be receiving less after taking account of inflation. Some of the children were too young to need pocket money, others had never had pocket money. In addition, some of the children might have received pocket money from relatives rather than the mother (see Marsden, 1969). A few were considered to be better off as they were receiving money for the first time. Jon's son was one such child. Jon explained:

> "He is better off now because my ex-wife used to spend all the money on herself so there was nothing left to give to the children. Now I control our budget I can eke it out a bit and give him some pocket money." (Jon)

Items other fathers mentioned included television "I no longer have a television, which I know my son misses." (Gregory), piano and ballet lessons as well as food: "their

diet at times can be a little restricted, I just don't have the funds for luxury things." (Carl)

Lone parenthood not only led to a decline in buying certain items, but also resulted in increased expenditure for 18 fathers (23% of all fathers in the sample). This was particulary true of the home owners, but for some this was because they were paying off their ex-wife's share of the home, or settling debts, not because they were spending more on items such as food or entertainment. Many fathers mentioned an increase in expenditure on children's clothes as they became more fashion conscious, and food because they were growing up and eating more. Household bills were also often frequently mentioned, but it was felt these items were "cost of living expenses" and so were not included in the analysis. Many of the other items of increased expenditure can be regarded as providing the fathers with a means of "finding relief from the pressures of every day life" (Graham, 1993), or to compensate the children for things they had to do without.

Food was the most frequently mentioned item. As George and Wilding (1972, p.100) found, it is likely that some food, for example cakes, sweets, chocolates and biscuits, were bought "to compensate for the physical and emotional stress of motherlessness". Dave, for example said: "I find I go out and buy things like cakes and chocolate now". Others, however spent more buying food which could be quickly and easily prepared. This was mentioned by an employed father who said "I spend a bit more on meals. I need to buy things that can be cooked quickly in the micro-wave." (Rob) Some fathers disliked cooking and preferred to buy convenience food or ready made meals. One such father said "It's not often I can be bothered to cook a meal. I might do a roast dinner at the week end, but in the main I buy convenience food." (Doug)

Lone parenthood also brought about an increase in petrol and travel costs. For many this provided a relatively cheap way to combat boredom, an example is provided by the following father "I spend more on petrol to go out with the children. The only thing you can do free is walk around the shops. I used to spend £4, now it is about £5, we drive to the shops and the park and walk around." (Dave) Others found that

lone parenthood produced more everyday journeys "I do a lot more running around in the car, for example I take my daughter over to her mother's three or four times a week then pick her up." (Rob)

Some fathers spoke of an increase of expenditure on entertainment for their children. An employed father explained that this was "to make up for time spent away from the children" (Ian) and a father at home explained "I spend more keeping the children entertained, especially during the holidays, because now I'm here with them all the time." (Peter) Other fathers mentioned their own need for a social life: "I'm spending more on going out enjoying myself. Now I'm on my own I find I want to go out and socialise." (James) "I spend more on the social side. You can't spend all day around kids, you need adult stimulation, you need sports and different things during the evening." (Scott)

Because of the changes that had occurred in these fathers' spending patterns, it was asked how they managed to pay bills and save for large periodic expenses such as household repairs. Table 3.21 below shows that the majority of fathers said they were able to save a regular amount; however, this was for bills, and they frequently had no money left for other savings. As Dave explained "Every week my money goes on shopping, gas and electricity. I pay these then there's nothing left to save."

Table 3.21

Fathers' ability to save a regular amount towards expenses.

	Employed full-time	Employed part-time	Not in paid work	Total
Save regularly				
Yes	10	3	14	27
No	10	5	25	40
Total	20	8	39	67

no: missing 11

The fathers tended to have three ways of dealing with bills. Some like Dave worked out what had to be paid and set a weekly sum aside. Others admitted they found it

very difficult to save. For example Lewis said "When I've got it I spend it. If I've got a little extra I tend to spend it on a luxury, so I can't save." The solution for some fathers was a budget account, this was Doug's method and he explained "I think it's the most sensible thing, then the bank has the worry. I just make sure I put a certain amount of money into the bank each week." Another spoke of using a pre-paid meter, which meant "if I don't get electricity at the start of the week I don't have any electricity at all." (Derek) The third group consisted of fathers like Patrick who described the process of paying bills as "a balancing act" and continued by explaining:

> "some people have to wait to get paid, others get....like the 'phone bill comes in. I need that for business so that gets paid promptly but the rent might have to wait a week, then I catch up. It depends what cash flow I've got." (Patrick)

Eddie admitted to never paying bills until "literally they are days away from taking me to court" adding "That's a terrible position to be in, but I use my knowledge of the law to protect me in a lot of ways."

Closer examination of the data showed that the employed fathers were more likely to say they were able to save. However, the employed fathers who appeared to experience the greatest difficulty were not those in lower paid employment (as might be expected). Of the fathers with an income of £5,000 -15,000, 53% said they were able to save, compared to only 17% earning between £15,000 - 20,000.

Many studies have shown the importance of relatives and friends as a source of material support for lone mothers on a low income (see e.g.Marsden,1969; Leeming, 1994). In this study the majority of the lone fathers had to cope with bills and other expenses on their own, but 25 (37%) mentioned that they received financial help from their friends or relatives. (This is shown in table 3.22 below). The main source of help appeared to be from the fathers' parents who bought clothes for the children or lent money. Some fathers received substantial financial help; for example Lewis said his father "paid the settlement to my ex-wife so that I wouldn't lose the house."

Gregory's parents paid some of his household bills, but the majority of fathers stressed that help was very small, often because their parents were retired or unemployed and in the same financial position as themselves. Help was also often restricted to special occasions. This is shown in the following examples: "They all buy the children clothes for their birthdays" (Don); "Relatives tend to buy clothes on birthdays" (Carl); "My mother might lend me a small amount, just a fiver if I want to borrow some, she'll buy things for the children at Christmas" (Dave). Some fathers also received help from their ex-wife. Simon said "even though we're separated we want what's best for the children. The wife pitches in and helps now and then." Two fathers also mentioned that their girl friends were helping by buying the children clothes.

Table 3.22

Lone fathers receiving help from family and friends

	Employed full- time	Employed part-time	Economically inactive	
Receive help				Total
Yes	6	3	16	25
No	14	4	24	42
Total	20	7	40	67

No: missing 11

These figures also indicate that the economically inactive and the fathers who were employed part-time were the most likely to receive help (40%:43% compared to 30% of the fathers employed full time).

This chapter has shown that lone parenthood led to many changes in the fathers' employment and financial situation. Many had to make a number of changes to their daily working routine in order to combine employment with their new responsibilities. Shorter hours or part-time work was chosen by some fathers, others changed the shift they worked or became self-employed. Over one half of the fathers had no employment at the time of the study. Some of these fathers had attempted to combine employment with childcare until this became too problematic. Other fathers gave up

work immediately they became lone parents. A few fathers were already at home either because they were unemployed, had a disability or had spent time caring for their terminally-ill partners.

The employment changes made by these fathers inevitably led to a decline in income. Those who remained at home had to depend on state benefits and many mentioned that they disliked claiming and felt that people looked down on them because of the expectation that a father should be at work providing for his family. Several of the employed fathers experienced a drop in their income and only 11 of the fathers received additional income e.g. maintenance. Like lone mothers, the fathers had to adjust to living on a reduced income and make a number of changes to their spending pattern. This often meant the fathers going without items for themselves to ensure their children experienced as few changes as possible.

In the following chapter the factors which influenced these fathers' decisions whether to work or to remain at home full-time will be examined. It will also be shown how some of the fathers managed to overcome difficulties they faced in order to combine employment with the care of their children.

CHAPTER 4. FACTORS AFFECTING THE LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION OF LONE FATHERS

Chapter 1 showed that many studies have concentrated on the practical and emotional difficulties that all mothers face if they want, or need, to combine paid work with childcare. In addition these studies have shown the strategies that working mothers adopt in order to resolve conflict between the two roles of mother and employee. However, very little is known about the difficulties that lone fathers face if they want to go out to work or how some fathers are able to overcome these difficulties. In this chapter unemployed lone fathers in the study discuss the reasons why they gave up work and describe the type of employment they would like to return to in the future. The difficulties these fathers expect to face re-entering the labour market will also be examined. The employed lone fathers will discuss their current labour market participation and describe how they manage to combine work with childcare.

Studies have found that a number of constraints face lone parents who want to combine the care of their children with paid employment (see e.g. Hyatt and Parry-Crooke, 1990; Hardey and Glover, 1991; Monk, 1993). In order to understand the difficulties the lone fathers in this study experienced, the unemployed fathers were asked why they were not working; they were also asked about the difficulties they expected to face when they were ready to return to work. The following factors emerged as affecting the lone fathers' decision whether to return to paid employment:

Table 4.1

Factors affecting the labour market participation of unemployed lone fathers

Having sole care of the children	21
Need for "family friendly" Employment policies	16
Local job market	16
Financial disincentives	13
Personal characteristics	13
Lack of skills	8

4.1 Financial Disincentives

Lone fathers are generally considered to have a higher eaning potential than lone mothers. For example Ermisch and Wright, (1989) (cited in Hardey and Glover, 1991), report that the average earned income of lone mothers is about 60% that of the male average. It could therefore be assumed that lone fathers escape the financial disincentives of the benefit system. However, 10 fathers in this study said that they gave up their employment because they realised that it would not be financially viable to work and 8 thought that the benefit system would be a barrier to obtaining future employment. Finance was much less likely to be given as a reason for giving up work by fathers who had been alone for a short time (under two years); only one father gave this answer compared to 50% of fathers who had been on their own for a longer period. This could indicate that, at the actual time of giving up employment, childcare matters received greater attention than financial matters. Similarly, only one father (the same father) who had been on his own for a short period claimed that he regarded the benefit system as a barrier to employment. He complained "The Benefit System doesn't give you any incentive to go and find work" (Ron). Another father who had been unemployed and on his own for eight years explained "I could not afford to go out and get a job and maintain the standard of living we have now." (Noel)

The benefit system was significantly more likely to be mentioned by fathers in the age group 30-39 ($P<0.01151$). This is probably because fathers in this age group were also significantly more likely to have pre- school or primary school age children age ($p< 0.01151$), and would have to take childcare expenses into account if they took employment. As Dean and Taylor-Gooby (1992) and Leeming (1994) found, many of the respondents demonstrated their awareness of how earnings would be used up by expenses incurred through going out to work. These fathers discussed how much they would have to earn before it would be worthwhile going out to work and, like the lone mothers in Leeming's (1994) study, some supplied detailed written information about their expenses and the income they would need. Antony spoke about the calculations he had made:

"When the last days at my job fizzled out I started to find it more difficult to find work, maybe because of the economic situation, and I was beginning to realise that with benefits if I stopped getting that and on top of that had to start paying a childminder again for holiday times and after school, I would have to earn a certain amount and that certain amount was not forthcoming. It is equivalent to about £15,000. It's incredible it's about the equivalent to about £15,000 which would make it financially viable to start work again." (Antony)

Several fathers criticised the limitations imposed by the earnings disregard under the Income Support scheme. Bob explained "The State only allows me to earn £15 a week and then if I worked I'd have to pay a childminder, so it's not worth while going out to work". Charles believed that lone parents should receive a higher disregard and suggested "We need £25 plus travel expenses and flexible childcare in local authority nurseries with minimum or no charge." Barry strongly objected to child benefit being deducted from Income Support and said "I've written to my M.P.about this. 'What's the point of giving it to you and then taking it away?' I said to him. It's all wrong, especially for single parents." Other fathers expressed disapproval for the Family Credit scheme. Two such fathers are Adrian and Eddie who complained:

"All this Family Credit is nonsense because what you earn is taken off your benefits. I would be approximately £16-£20 a week better off if I obtained full time employment, ya hoo! There are several snags as well. I would need an understanding employer. If time off was needed and granted it would likely be unpaid and there would be a lot of times when a childminder was needed and had to be paid for, then before you know it, your being £16-£20 a week better off would be whittled down to being actually worse off than on benefits." (Adrian)

"I've gone into this Family Credit quite deeply, I was going to work for a charity run from the Social Services, all it consisted of was

> cutting old people's grass in the village, £3.50 an hour. It was something I could do when the kids were at school, I could do 3 hours a day then be back in time to collect the children from school but when I worked out what I would be receiving in payment and what I would have to pay out in ordinary bills, I ended up £14 a week worse off. (Eddie)

Dean and Taylor-Gooby (1992) suggested that the more understanding claimants had of the benefit system, the more they were likely to blame the system for the unemployment trap. In this study it was found that fathers with no educational qualifications were less likely to have mentioned the disincentive effects of the benefit system on returning to work (16%:36%) but, of course, educational qualifications need not necessarily result in a better understanding of the benefit system. Possibly their answer reflected the perceived lower earning potential of fathers with fewer formal qualifications. In line with Dean and Taylor-Gooby's (1992) findings other fathers focused attention on the difficulty of achieving a living wage, rather than on the benefit system. Phillip said "I can not commit myself to full time work because of the school holidays and if you get a part time job they won't pay a full wage that you can live on. What can you do?" Scott added "It's very difficult. I cannot find work that provides enough financial support and which fits around school holidays."

Only one father raised the issue about the Child Support Agency which had been set up during the early stages of this study. This was Jon who had one child living with him and four currently living with his ex-wife:

> "If I did find a job which paid enough, they (the Child Support Agency) will take it off me. If I earn a lot then my ex-wife would have it to support her and her husband, she wouldn't give it to the children. I'm in a situation of total resignation. I can't do anything about it."

Despite the disincentives of the benefit system Hardey and Glover (1991) found that

some lone parents devise a strategy which increases the income they receive from benefits. In this study a few fathers, as shown in chapter three, also found ways to increase their income. This was done by either taking work when available and then "signing off" (Andrew), working for just a few hours in order to earn no more than the disregard allowed for Income Support claimants (Peter), or working over 16 hours and claiming Family Credit (Gordon). In addition a small number of fathers appeared to be working in the informal economy in order to supplement their income. The exact number earning an income by this means cannot be determined. None of the respondents was asked if they received undeclared income because it was felt, as Dean and Taylor Gooby (1992) suggest, the fathers were likely to answer "no" in principle; however some fathers produced relevant information during their interview. One father let the information out accidentally: "Whoops I've done it now!" was Peter's reaction when he inadvertently mentioned his second means of income. "You won't tell anyone, will you?" he asked. Others were willing to disclose the information and justified their actions by explaining that it was the only way they could manage. A further justification was that, unlike lone mothers, lone fathers were prevented from legally increasing their income by methods such as childminding and taking in students. One such father said "Childminding would be an ideal way to earn money but who would want to leave their child with a man? I know I wouldn't. Students, I've thought about having students to stay, but a man can't do that either." (Barry) Some fathers appeared to want to be regarded as "working" rather than just at home with their children.

As Dean and Taylor-Gooby (1992) found, a few of the fathers engaged in "hobbies" which did not amount to employment but did generate extra income which, strictly speaking, should have been declared to the Benefit Office. (Although in these cases their entitlement to benefit may not have been affected.) Dennis*, an art student, said that he was interested in sculpturing and could "make a bit on the side by doing sculptures for friends." Jon played part-time in a band and said "I'm not working officially but I do bits and pieces, you know what I mean?" Selling goods at car boot sales was popular with a few of the fathers. One such father was Carl who apologized to the interviewer for the large amount of clothes and household goods

which were piled on chairs and a table and explained "I gather up things to sell at car boot sales, that's how we cope. I go to one at....(name of place) most weekends, make some extra money and I enjoy doing it."

A higher return was likely to have been gained by the fathers who were able to use skills they had developed when in employment. For example Dave, a tree surgeon, was able to spend an occasional few days helping his brother in law who was also a tree surgeon. Scott sometimes did part time engineering in design and developing for a friend "just to keep my hand in". Skills in painting and decorating were useful for Martin: "I can do decorating for friends and relations you see, so that helps out a bit." Fathers who receive undeclared income from these methods are, however, likely to receive a lump sum rather than a regular income. This was found to be the case among the respondents in McLaughlin's (1989) study and it was suggested by the author that although an amount over the legal limit might have been earned in one week, over a longer period their earnings would average out to under this limit.

Voluntary work was mentioned by many fathers, particularly those who liked to be seen as still busy and working. Jordan et al. (1992, p.298) suggests that this activity "confers the status of working but does not disturb the security of regular benefits payments or require deductions from wages above the level of disregarded income." It is possible some of this work might have resulted in a small remuneration but the fathers only mentioned the payment in kind they received. Voluntary driving for the Social Services was mentioned by Scott who said that one of the "perks" of the job was that "costs are covered" and this enabled him to keep his car on the road. Scott considered that his "perk" was "being able to take the children out for the day if it's a long journey." Noel helped at schools and was a school governor, he enjoyed the "added bonus" of helping on school trips.

Fathers who were employed might also have had ways of increasing their income. A number of fathers said they were self-employed and, as Jordan et al. (1992) suggest, "self-employment" can refer to a number of different situations, and it is difficult to fit them easily into categories used by the tax and benefit authorities.

However, only one working father mentioned receiving undeclared earnings. Peter received Income Support and said that he just worked a few hours to earn the maximum disregard of £15, but it became apparent during the interview that he was working several more hours than would be expected for such a small income. These extra earnings could have been deducted from Income Support, but this is unlikely as Peter also said that he worked a few evenings a week in a pub, and admitted this work was not declared.

Despite the expected higher earning potential of lone fathers, in comparison to lone mothers, these findings indicate that the benefit system acts as a disincentive to employment for many lone fathers. Childcare and other expenses incurred through going to work would, in many cases, use up any extra income they gained by coming off benefits. In some cases they would be worse off. Some lone fathers find alternative ways besides employment to increase their income. These methods include using their skills and hobbies, selling goods at car boot sales and working in the informal economy. The fathers consider their actions to be justified by the fact that they are unable to manage on the money received from the government.

4.2 Skills and Qualifications

Training and further education has been widely recognised as an important way for lone mothers to improve their employment prospects (e.g. Bradshaw and Miller, 1991; Leeming, 1994). Of the unemployed fathers in this study, only eight felt that their lack of skills and qualifications would make it difficult to find employment. Of these eight fathers, five had neither a trade or professional qualification and only one father had been working "in trade" at the time of becoming unemployed. Six fathers had no educational qualifications above "O" level (or equivalent). Although few fathers considered their lack of skills or qualifications to be a barrier to finding employment, 14 of the unemployed fathers who responded to this question said they were, or had been, engaged in some form of training or further education to prepare them for future employment. The majority of these fathers were studying for more formal qualifications ("A" levels, Access or degrees). One father was studying for

a City and Guilds in laboratory work and another was half-way through a counselling course. The attraction of further education could be that some colleges have subsidised daycare resources. Hardey and Glover (1991) suggest that the day care can be the initial attraction to lone parents as a "break" and later become a stepping stone into a career. In addition two fathers had previously taken part in a Government Training Scheme but neither had obtained work afterwards. Bob's one year course was abruptly brought to an end when he moved away from the area, but he spoke very favourably about the course, which he referred to as "Just like a proper job".

> "I did have a job in between, the council paid the childminding fees for me, that went on for nearly a year but I moved here and had to give it up. The Government never classed it as working they classed it as training. They paid £50 per child per week childminding fees, but they didn't class it as working. I was a ranger down the County Park, a very interesting job, full time. It was one of the best jobs I've ever had, they called it Employment Training." (Bob)

Similairy Kevin when asked what his previous employment had been replied "a one year joinery course." He continued to speak about the course as being "a job" but his comments were not as favourable towards the course as Bob's. "The course was alright, but I didn't find the work very interesting and it didn't provide the necessary level to enable me to find work afterwards."

Table 4.2

Relationship between educational qualifications and preparation for returning to work

	Highest Educational Qualification			
	None	"O" level	"A" level	Total
Preparation				
Yes	0	7	7	14
No	12	13	2	27
Total	12	20	9	41

The table above shows that the fathers who were, or had been, pursuing education or skills training were already significantly better educated than fathers who were not making preparations for returning ($p < 0.00098$). This is in line with findings by McGiveny (1990).

None of the fathers without qualifications was taking part in training compared to 35% of those with "O" levels" (or equivalent) and 78% with "A" levels. Possibly, as Monk (1993) suggests, those without qualifications were not aware of the training opportunities available to them, or were put off by the fact they might need extensive training. The fathers gave a variety of reasons why they were not making preparations for returning to work. Simon, who had been away from employment for several years, felt that time was a great restraint "It's impossible, my day begins at 7-7.30 then goes on until 1.00 the next morning, so there's no possibility of looking for work or training of any description." Peter said that he had often thought about training but added "I don't think I've got the patience for studying or anything like that." Three fathers believed that the cost of training was beyond their reach. Bill said: "I'm without skills or qualifications but some courses need financing from myself and the maze of financing for courses is inhibitive. That's for further education as well as training." Another father explained:

> "A lot of these courses do cost money and if the difference between me having a day or an evening out training and a pair of shoes on my daughter's feet, her feet are going to win. I'm afraid that's the law of the jungle we're in." (Doug)

However, as these fathers claimed benefits, the cost may not necessarily have been the problem they imagined. Many courses are free or offered at a reduced rate for people on a reduced income. McGiveny (1990) suggests that "lack of money" may serve as a socially acceptable reason for not participating. Other fathers considered their age to be against them. Doug, aged 47, explained:

> "Quite honestly I don't see a great deal of point in retraining at my

> age. There's so many younger people.....I've investigated retraining, computers and things like that but there are so many young people able to use these things that are coming out fully qualified, they're really whiz kids and they can't find anything so what the heck chance have I got? (Doug)

Simon, despite saying he had no time for training, later added that there was no training available for the skill he was interested in:

> I'd like to get into electronics, unfortunately you can't get any courses on it. You can go to colleges and they'll put you on a course, but it's not the kind of course I'm interested in. It's all to do with industry. I'm interested in T.V. videos, things like that and you can't get on a course because they don't cater for it. Every household has a household appliance and any appliance goes wrong sooner or later, but there's no course you can go on unless an employer puts you on a course." (Simon)

Some fathers were not pursuing training but they regarded their hobbies and interests as preparing them for work. John, for example, played in a band and said "I do a lot of rehearsing and so it will be very useful if I eventually go into music." Another father did voluntary driving for the Social Services and said "It's given me some idea of what I'd like to do. I've thought about training in the social services and getting into that type of work." Martin had spent a lot of time helping at his local infants' school and he now intended to pursue a teaching career himself. In addition two fathers were laying the ground for becoming self-employed. Adam, along with his counselling course, was applying himself to photography again. "I've got the hand-outs ready and when my son is at school I will canvass in the area."

In line with findings by Hyatt and Parry Crooke (1990) and Monk (1993) some of the fathers said they would like to make preparations for returning to work but difficulties of arranging childcare for the children prevented them from doing so. This reply was

given by 11 fathers and it can be assumed that it was the cost which concerned these fathers, rather then the availability of child care, because these fathers were significantly likely to have said that the cost of childcare was a barrier to finding employment ($p < 0.00620$). Charles, for example, said that he wouldn't be making any preparations until all his children were in school and settled. He complained "The government doesn't give lone parents any help whatsoever. They don't take into account that if you want to work you might need to train, so you will need a childminder." Furthermore the fathers who were prevented from training because of childcare difficulties were significantly likely to have said that they considered their lack of skills would make it difficult to find employment ($p < 0.0.03364$).

Table 4.3

The Relationship between Training and Type of Work

The Unemployed Fathers wanted

Preparations	Same work as before		Do not mind
	Yes	No	
Yes	0	10	4
No	11	7	9
Total	11	17	13

Table 4.3 shows that, as might be expected, the majority of fathers who were or had started training were significantly unwilling or unable to return to the type of work they were doing before ($P > 0.00559$). None said they definitely wanted to return to the same employment, 10 (71%) said they definitely did not want to and the remaining four said they did not mind. Among the 17 fathers who did not want to return to the same type of work were five who had given up work for health reasons and had been told by their doctors to look for different work. Several of the other fathers considered that lone parenthood had caused them to change in so many ways that their previous employment no longer interested them. These fathers were hoping for more person orientated employment. One such father was Chris who said "I wouldn't be happy in my old line of work (stock controller) because my life has changed and I've different interests now. I'd like to study to become an aromatherapist." Adam who previously had his own advertising business explained:

"I don't like the profession I was in, it wouldn't satisfy my needs now. I might go into counselling, the thing is I've got to take on two new areas. I've got to satisfy my personal needs...how much I've changed. I've also got to do something I enjoy doing, with a regular income and a pension." (Adam)

Other fathers, although not wishing to return to their previous employment, tended to be open minded and flexible about the type of work they did. Many said they would take any work that was going. One typical example was "I don't care, I'd take anything. I'd go and clean out the sewers if I had to" (Doug). Another explained "I'm not fussy what I do. Just to have a job to raise the standard of living. As children become older they become more materialistic" (Derek). This is in line with findings by Bradshaw and Miller (1991) who found that 80% of the mothers in their study said that they were willing to take other types of work if their prefered option was not available.

These findings show that many lone fathers who do not have paid employment develop strategies to improve their future employment prospects. The most popular methods are returning to education or learning new skills. Others keep up their hobbies or develop new interests, such as voluntary work, in the hope that these activities will either prepare them for work or give them more awareness of the type of work they would like to return to. The greatest obstacle to training appears to be the cost of finding someone to care for the children.

4.3. The Local Job Market and the need for Family Friendly Employment Policies: Unemployed Fathers.

A crucial requirement for employment is job availability (Edwards and Duncan, 1996). The lone fathers in this study realised that their labour market participation was affected by the current job market in their area and their access to other areas where employment might be available. The labour market was mentioned by 16 fathers and one father explained:

> "There's not much in the industry that I've worked with that is based in this area. There is a computer belt along the south coast, but with the recession I expect that by the time I'm ready for work there won't be many companies trading out there, not in computing." (Eddie).

The problem was increased for 24 fathers who said they were restricted to finding work within approximately four miles of their home. Edwards and Duncan (1996) suggest that transport is likely to be a severe constraint for lone mothers. Eight of the fathers in this study mentioned that they did not have transport but some saw conditions improving once they actually obtained employment: "Once I get back to work I'll get a car, until then I can't afford it." (Don) "I'm near a good bus service. I don't drive, but if I'm offered a job I'll take my test so distance won't necessarily matter." (Derek) The majority of fathers, however, were concerned about being away from their children. This was expressed by Barry who said "If I travel it means I'll be further away from the kids, further time away." Some of these fathers were worried about their children becoming ill or having an accident while they were away. Antony explained "If I was say 40 miles up the road and I got a phone call to say something has happened I couldn't be there straight away." Other fathers didn't want their child to stay with a minder. Some mentioned the cost, others simply did not like the idea of their child staying with someone else. As Jon said "I think they want their dad to be there for them when they arrive home." Antony explained:

> "It would take a certain amount of control away from me. I don't want my son to have to be in the house alone or to be palmed off all over the place with a childminder and all that. That's why I'm controlled by distance."

One course of action to solve this problem would be for the father to move to a different area where more work was available. The following table shows that the unemployed fathers were almost equally divided in their response to a question about moving. Just over one half said they would not be prepared to move, while the remaining fathers said they would move or at least consider it a possibility.

Table 4.4

Unemployed fathers' willingness to move to another town.

Would not move	21
Would move	11
Unsure	9
Total	41

Fathers were slightly more likely to want to move if they were interested in returning to the type of work they were doing prior to lone parenthood. (55% of these fathers said they would move.) In addition fathers who had been unemployed for only one year or less were also more likely to be willing to move (70%:42%). It is likely that these fathers had not yet adjusted to the idea of being without employment and were keen to resume work as soon as possible.

The fathers gave a variety of reasons why they would not move, or were unlikely to move; the most frequently cited reasons are shown below:

Table 4.5

Reasons which deterred the fathers from moving.

The children's happiness	16
The children's education	15
Near to friends/relations	15
The cost of moving	5

Some fathers gave more than one answer.

The main reason fathers gave was that the children were happy where they were living and they did not want to spoil their happiness. Eddie conveyed the feelings of several of the fathers by saying: "Stability is possibly the most important thing, apart from love and affection, that my children need. Moving isn't going to help them feel secure and stable." Geoff felt that "the settled family routine would be disturbed and that would disrupt a good upbringing." Others specifically thought about the effect that moving might have on the children's education. Simon said "moving might be a good idea to find a job, but I don't like the idea of removing my children from their

home and risk ruining their education." The fathers also considered their own happiness important and considered it best to remain where they had friends or relations. This answer was significantly likely to be given by fathers who had been on their own for over five years; 87% gave this reply compared to 44% who had been on their own for a shorter time ($P<0.05359$). It can be presumed that during this time the fathers had managed to build a network of social support. The idea of moving appealed to Scott who said "In one sense I'd like to get away from everything and start afresh, maybe find a job, but I've got my social life here and that's an important thing when you are on your own." Jon had four other children he was hoping to gain custody of and said "I've no intention of moving away from my other children." In addition the child's mother had to be considered by some of the fathers. One such father explained:

> "It has taken me a long time to persuade her to see the children and now or in the future is not the time to remove the children from their mother just when they have begun to see her regularly."

This cost of moving was significantly more likely to be mentioned by fathers who had been on their own for over five years ($P<0.03025$). This is likely to be because the longer the lone father remains on benefits the extent of poverty increases (see e.g. Monk, 1993)

Some fathers not only took into account that their needs had changed but they realised they needed work that "fitted in" with the children. This was regarded as important by nearly all of the fathers regardless of the age of their children. Sixteen of these fathers regarded flexible or compatible work to be essential if they were to return to the labour market but they realised such work would be very hard to find. "It's essential" said Mike "but in my kind of work (lorry driving) it's very difficult to find work which is flexible." "It's essential, but who wants you from 9.00 until 3.30?" (Phillip). Graham explained "In retail it is almost impossible to find a job with hours which fit around the children." Two fathers realised that there might be an alternative solution, Jon explained: "I've been going steady with a girl now for a few months and

so if I got married again she would help out." Derek also had a steady girl friend and said "If we could get a place and live together it would be easy for her to look after him out of school hours."

Teaching was a popular choice of future career with some of the fathers who realised that the hours would be very compatible with their children. Martin, who used to be a postman, explained "what I was doing before was not practical because it involved shifts. If I manage to get onto a degree course I think I'll do teaching, that would be ideal." Similarly Don said "If I was to go into teaching then I've got a job which fits around the kids". Carl was planning to study law and said "The profession I hope to get into will allow me a 9.00 - 5.00 Monday to Friday routine. That is better than a lot of jobs and should cope with 90% of the problem."

Among the few fathers who did not express concern about finding work which was compatible with school times was Peter who had four children. He said "My eldest one, even though he's only 13, he has got a lot more brightness than most 16 year olds. If I had to leave them for an hour or so I would do it because I know he can be trusted."

4.4 The Need for Family Friendly Employment Policies: Employed lone fathers

Graham (1993, p.18) writes "flexible work, it seems, is work for women and children."

This appears to be confirmed by the fact that although the unemployed fathers had stressed the need for work which "fitted in" with school hours, very few employed fathers actually had this type of employment. The majority of men worked between 37.5 and 40 hours a week, but five worked 50 or more hours. Only seven of the 34 fathers with school aged children who supplied relevant information, had work which enabled them to be with their children at both ends of the school day. Of these seven fathers, three had full-time flexi-hour work which enabled them to start work after they had taken their children to school and finish in time to pick them up. Another father, a milkman, worked an early morning shift which enabled him to be home from

work in time to take his children to school. The other three fathers were Alan who ran his own business from home, also Robert and Jason who had work which could be partly carried out at home.

Another means by which parents might overcome the childcare problem is to work from home (Ford, 1996). Homeworking is frequently cited as being very suitable for lone parents (see e.g. Monk, 1993). However, these three fathers (and others in the study who combined employment\self employment with work carried out at home) showed that although childcare becomes less of a problem, home-working introduced other difficulties. Evenings were generally spent doing paper work and so the fathers were unable to consider their job finished at the end of the working day. Alistair explained "I've always got work to do around the house and then I've got business work to do. It never finishes, the business takes up all my time." Jason also described his situation:

> "Just now we were interrupted by my children talking and my work goes much the same way. It's very hard to do a proper job under these conditions. Ideally one would work when the children were in bed, but in reality by the time you've got them to bed the last thing you want to do is start working."

An additional problem experienced by some of these fathers was motivation. Robert said that lack of motivation prevented him getting started on the paperwork and Donald added that he not only had a problem "getting going with my work" but also "knowing when to stop."

For the other 27 fathers the periods before and after school were the times when childcare was most likely to be needed. All of these fathers said they sometimes or always were likely to be at work when their children arrived home from school. In the morning 22 fathers had to leave home for work before the child's school day began.

Table 4.6

Care for children during out of school hours.

	A.M.	P.M.
Selves	7	10
Professional	5	7
Friend	5	4
Relative	3	5
Child's mother	1	2
Neighbour	2	0
No. missing	2	

Some fathers did not need childcare, others used more than one type.

Table 4.6 shows that the single most common situation involved children being left to care for themselves during at least one of the out of school periods. This is in line with George and Wilding's study (1972, p.162). There was, however, no indication in this study that this arrangement was considered by the fathers to be "insecure and unsatisfactory" or that "the fathers' nerves must be tested to the limit" as George and Wilding suggested. Only one father expressed misgivings, this was Ken who said "Although it is only two hours at the most that the children are on their own, I would much rather be at home with them." Probably this was because all the children who were left alone were of secondary school age and two also had siblings over the age of 16 at home with them for at least one period. In at least two cases the father was at home within an hour. The DSS/PSI National Survey (Ford, 1996) also found that parents whose youngest child was aged 11 years or older felt their children old enough to look after themselves. Other fathers (37%) relied on their network of kin, neighbours and friends, and 26% used professional care (ie childminders and au pairs). An after school club was also mentioned by one father who said he picked his child up from the club and they both arrived home together. Ex-wives provided help for two of the fathers.

Child care arrangements for these periods were frequently described as being

complicated. James, for example, said "presently my (former) wife picks them up from school, I pick them up at 5.45 ... it's very complicated." Ron also described his arrangement:

> It's quite complicated. My friend comes round at seven in the morning to baby sit with the children until 9.00 when she has to take them to school, then she has to pick them up from school at 3.30 and them I'm around to pick them up from her at 4.20."

At least one father's children had a very early start to their school day. Callum's children were driven to his mother's and arrived there by 7 a.m. Apart from the two fathers who received help from their ex-wives, all the respondents appeared to be satisfied with their arrangements. Both these fathers had also expressed dissatisfaction with having to rely on their ex-wives during the holidays.

> "I don't like her having them between 3.30 and 5.45. If she didn't she would be able to get better employment than she has now. Because as you can imagine, trying to finish work to pick the children up from school limits what job you have." (James)

> "It's difficult having to rely on my ex-wife. If I get on a removal which drags on it can mean she's with them until 7.30 p.m., if she has made plans to go out I have to phone my boss and say 'I've got to get home'." (Peter)

It could be assumed that these employed fathers had very good "family friendly" employment conditions which enabled them to combine employment with childcare, and so information was also obtained about the ease with which fathers could obtain time off work to be with their children. The fathers were asked whether they were able to obtain time off take their child to the dentist\clinic or to visit their school. Only 18 of the 33 fathers who responded to this question were always able to obtain time off to keep dentist\clinic appoints and 11 could visit their child's school. Both these events can, however, sometimes be scheduled for after work or holiday periods

but child sickness can occur at any time and can lead to the child being at home for several days at a time. Of these 33 employed fathers, 17 (51%) said they were able to obtain time off, 13 (39%) were unable to have time off and two (6%) were unsure (one father did not reply). Table 4.7 shows that only 2 (11%) of these 17 fathers were given leave with pay. The other fathers had to use their annual leave (35%), take unpaid leave (35%) or make up the time at a later date (17%).

Table 4.7

Time off for children's illness

Family Responsibility Leave	2
Unpaid Leave	6
Time to be Made Up	3
Holiday Leave	6
Total of Fathers allowed Leave	17

(Fathers who ran their own business were not asked this question.)

The only fathers who were able to obtain payment for child sickness were Nigel, a Production Director at a packaging and design company,and Max who had been employed as a Local Authority Finance Officer for eight years. Max enjoyed very favourable conditions: "When ever my son is sick I can take paid leave, but if I have used up all my leave entitlement it is possible I could get additional paid leave." For Jason there was no provision laid down, but he explained:

> "I can say to my boss 'my child's sick' and he enters it as me being sick so that I will get paid, it's an unofficial arrangement. If it's officially my child who is sick I won't get paid. In reality I take it off as if I'm sick." (Jason)

Bob's position was not so favourable; "I'm not given time off, employers are not sympathetic nowadays." Another father explained "if it's a serious illness and I need say three days off, I won't get paid. If I just want a bit of time off to see that she's O.K. then I'ld get paid." James was able to make up any time he was off work by going in to work on a Saturday:

> "I just have to cover my job basically. I have to make up the time but it doesn't mean I have to work extra hours to cover the hours I'm not there. My job is my own sort of thing. I cover my own position so if I feel I need to go in on a Saturday morning, which I usually do every other week, it's to make up for times like that." (James)

Of the 13 fathers who were not entitled to time off work for children's illness it can be assumed that such occasions caused great difficulty and worry for the fathers. No daycare provision, apart from live-in arrangements such as nannies, are able to easily provide care for unexpected child illnesses (Hardey and Glover, 1991). Friends, relatives or, in one case, the child's mother was able to help seven of the fathers but two of these fathers explained that this help could not always be relied on. On such occasions these fathers, and the others without a network of friends or relatives to help out, had to make personal excuses and stay at home with their children. Martin was one such father who explained "Sometimes a relative is able to look after them, but there has been time when they've got certain engagements and I've had to make an excuse and stay home myself." Another father confessed:

> "If there is a problem and her mother couldn't have her, I'd have to go sick myself. Now I've put myself right in it....none of this will get back will it? This hasn't happened too often, normally I'm quite lucky. " (Rob)

Overall, it appears that lone fathers' employment prospects are likely to be affected by their local job market. Many fathers are unwilling to move to an area where more work is available because they consider this would upset their children or, in some cases, they consider it important to remain near to friends and relatives. Fathers also place importance on finding work which will fit around their children's school time. However, it appears that such work is very difficult to obtain. Very few employed lone fathers have work which is compatible with school hours and an even smaller percentage are able to have paid time away from work when their children are ill.

4.5 The responsibility for the children

Approximately one half of the lone fathers who were not in paid employment regarded having sole responsibility for their children as the major factor affecting their participation in the labour market. One such father was Richard who said "the children's welfare and security is my priority. Any work I do has to be fitted around the children, not the other way around" and this view was echoed by many other fathers. One of the problems mentioned by 39% of the fathers was finding childcare. Fathers with primary school age children were the most likely to mention this difficulty (48%), compared to 40% of fathers with pre-school children and none of the fathers with secondary school age children . This suggests that childcare becomes an even greater problem when the children begin school and confirms Ford's (1996, p.147) findings that although the education system offers supervision for at least part of the day the "constraint is then finding care that complements school hours and holidays." One father with three children, two at primary school and another at secondary school, expressed his difficulties.

> "The majority of firms, such as garages, they expect you there between 8 and 8.30 in the morning and you stay until whatever job you are doing is completed, you can't just walk away and leave somebody else to pick up where you left off because it's not the way it's done. Finding someone to be here to take my children to school, look after them and be here during the day should there be an emergency then again in the evenings until I come home, it's not on, it's not possible." (Doug)

Hardey and Glover (1991, p.96) claim that the cost of private sector childcare provision "is very likely to be inhibitive for many on low incomes". For this reason Ford (1996) suggests that the anticipated cost of care also acts as a disincentive on work entry. It is therefore not surprising to find that 21 fathers mentioned the cost of childcare. Fathers with pre-school and primary school aged children were equally likely to be concerned about the cost (60%), while in contrast none of the fathers with

children of secondary school age children gave this reply ($P < 0.02497$).

Table 4.8 shows that the cost of childcare was significantly more likely to be mentioned by fathers who had relatives living in their area ($P < 0.01731$), suggesting that many of these relatives were not available for childcare.

Table 4.8

Relationship between concern about the cost of childcare and whether or not relations were living in the neighbourhood

	Concern about the cost of childcare		
	Yes	No	Total
Relatives in the neighbourhood			
Yes	13	8	21
No	5	15	20
Total	18	23	41

The fathers were not simply concerned with finding and paying for childcare but many had given up work and remained at home with their children because they felt it was wrong to combine work with the care of young children. This reply was given by 59% of the fathers. "Lone parents", Geoff explained, "need to be at home to raise their children." As would be expected, fathers with pre-school age children were the most likely to cite this reason (60%) but this answer was by no means confined to this age group. Of fathers with primary school age children 40% gave this reply and 57% of fathers with secondary school age children also said they thought it was wrong to work. One father remembered his own experience of working parents and said:

> "When it (his becoming a lone father) first happened I wanted to stay home 'cause my mum and dad weren't there when I was a youngster. They were both out working so as soon as it happened I tried working for a couple of months but I wasn't happy as I don't think you can mix both properly. I had three (children) and one was under school age." (Scott)

Another father felt that the children needed time to come to terms with the absence of their mother and explained "Until the children have adjusted to the new situation I will be a full-time parent, but I hope to go back to work eventually." (Bruce)

The employed fathers in this study were asked about the care arrangements they made for their children during the hours they were at work. Most studies into childcare arrangements made by working parents focus on the care of pre-school children. But in this study only three of the lone fathers with pre school aged children were employed, and so very few details of the care of children in this age group could be obtained. However, childcare problems do not stop when the children reach school age. Care is almost always needed during the long school holidays and one father explained "It can be a nightmare holiday times, that is my greatest problem. The children are much more demanding during the holiday" (Alan). In addition, care is frequently needed for the days off that occur during the school term.

Table 4.9 below shows that the majority of lone fathers who responded to questions about childcare relied on informal childcare provided by relations and their friends. This is in line with a great number of studies which have looked at the childcare arrangements of working parents, (for example McKay and Marsh, 1994; Bradshaw and Millar, 1991). Relations were used by 44% of the fathers, this is a slightly higher percentage than the 38% reported by George and Wilding (1972) but a lot less than the 62% found by Bradshaw and Millar (1991). This difference could be due to the fact that this study, unlike that by Bradshaw and Millar, consisted entirely of lone fathers who, on average, are likely to be older than lone mothers (Haskey,1991a). Consequently in some cases it is likely that their parents would have been too old to want to care for young children. This is borne out by the replies given by some of the fathers including Jason who said "My mother is little use (for childcare) as she is elderly and living in a nursing home, and Eddie who said "My mother is an O.A.P. and she is living in sheltered accommodation." Even so the most frequently mentioned person that the fathers turned to for childcare was the child's paternal grandmother, but fathers' sisters were also included as well as aunts and occasionally ex-in laws.

Table 4.9

Care for children during school holidays and occasional days off.

Relations	15
Friends/Neighbour	11
Child's mother	9
Professional	8
Take child to work	4
Father home	3
Self	5
missing	2

Some fathers used more than one type of care

Although Bradshaw and Millar (1991) found that 50% of all lone parents pay for childcare in cash or kind, even though the majority use relations, only two fathers in this study mentioned giving their relations any kind of payment. Lee, a divorced father, had solved the problem of childcare by allowing his ex mother-in -law to live with him, rent free, in return for help with the children. Tony paid a weekly amount to his sister who had given up work to care for his children. This could support Bradshaw and Millar's (1991) general suggestion that lone fathers are more likely than lone mothers to obtain childcare without paying.

Although partners play an important part enabling many mothers with partners to go out to work (see e.g. Witherspoon and Prior, 1991), lone mothers are unlikely to have this form of support from their ex-partners (see e.g. Bradshaw and Millar, 1991) However, this study found that just over 25% of fathers mentioned the active part their ex-partner took in caring for the children during holiday times. Such help, however, usually was the result of access arrangements, rather than a means of helping the fathers' employment activities. Eddie, for example, said "my children are away now for two weeks with their mother. The court arranged that she can have them for two weeks during their summer holiday, provided that someone sensible is there when she has them." (Eddie's wife was "hooked on various types of drugs.")

James explained how he and the child's mother, plus their families, shared the childcare during the long holidays between them.

> "Holidays are very well organised. We basically cater for half the holidays each, my family or hers looking after them for the periods of time we can't cover with our holidays from work. Just got the six weeks holiday coming up soon, she's taking two, I'm taking two and the other two are being shared between us." (James)

A similar arrangement existed for Rob who said "I normally have two weeks with her in the summer then her mother has her for the rest of the time." A few fathers were able to rely on their ex-partner to care for their children throughout the six week summer holiday and also for all the occasional days off from school. Others, however, as Hardey and Glover (1991) found, had to rely on a package of various carers. For example, Alistair said "I try to take my holiday with her. When I can't be at home my mum comes over here or she goes to my mum's or to my brother or sister's. Sometimes she stays with a neighbour if it's just for a couple of days." Other fathers occasionally made use of playschemes and childminders when no other help was available.

Almost all these fathers expressed satisfaction with the childcare but, as Kremer and Montgomery (1993) suggested, this is likely to be because of the fathers' dependence on relatives and friends. Making different arrangements could mean the father would have to pay a professional carer or even leave his current employment. Rob used a childminder when no other help was available and was happy with the care his daughter received but said "I find it a bit of a chore having to take her there and I miss not being able to take her to school as I think that's a parental thing." Two fathers who relied on their ex-wife felt that they were imposing. James explained:

> "It's probably more convenient than satisfactory. Personally I don't think it's a good idea the amount of time she does have with them. I feel it's a bit of a chore for her to have them and if I could find

someone to look after them while I'm at work it would be easier."

Peter expressed similar feelings: "I feel I'm imposing, whereas if I could afford a proper childminder I wouldn't."

As in the study of George and Wilding (1972) the fathers without (female) relations living nearby, or friends to rely on, made a variety of improvisations to suit the needs of their family circumstances. Trevor had specifically chosen work as a milkman to ensure that he could be at home during the daytime. Robert, a landscape gardener, employed subcontractors and was able to give up work throughout the holidays. Alan ran his business from home and during holidays he reduced the number of hours he worked, in order to "try and devote as much time as I can to keeping the children occupied and doing things with them." Alan also employed an au pair to help with his children. Other fathers solved the "childcare problem" by taking their children to their place of work. Neil, a self employed landscape gardener, had taken his children to his place of work for seven years. Now aged 15 and 17 they still joined him at work and were able to earn themselves extra pocket money. Garry, a university lecturer and Brian, a college tutor, also took their children to work, but at times Brian also made use of playschemes and a childminder as his son was only 6 years old. In addition Tim, a British Telecom engineer, took his two children to work. Another five fathers left their children to care for themselves. None of these fathers appeared to like this arrangement, but explained that they had no other choice. Ken admitted "I would much rather be on hand. During the long holidays I try to come home for dinner." The youngest child to be left on her own was Patrick's daughter, aged 12. Patrick, a self-employed debt collector explained, "I've got the flexibility to reschedule so that she isn't on her own for too long. Sometimes she will go off to play with her friends in their home." Three of these fathers had children over the age of 16 whom they left in charge of the younger siblings. One daughter earned her pocket money by caring for her younger sister but her father said he was not happy with the arrangement and added "I do not like placing the burden on my eldest daughter, she should be able to go out and enjoy herself on her own" (John). Another five fathers relied entirely on professional care (childminders or an au-pair).

These findings show that the main factor which is likely to prevent lone fathers from being employed is having sole responsibility of the children. Like lone mothers, lone fathers have to not only find some one to care for their children while they are at work, they also have to consider the cost. In addition some fathers consider it inappropiate to return to work while their children are young. Employed lone fathers are likely to obtain most of their childcare from friends and relatives, particulary the child's grandmother. Further help during holiday times is likely to be obtained from the child's mother who may have access to her children during this period.

4.6 Personal characteristics

A small number of fathers felt that their personal characteristics, such as age or health either prevented them from participating in the labour market or would make finding suitable employment difficult. Age was mentioned by five of the fathers, one of whom was in his thirties, three in their forties and another of fifty. Steven, aged 41, described his situation: "Age is against me getting work. By the time the girls are at secondary school I shall be at least 43." Phillip, aged 45 explained "I've given up. They don't want me, I'm too old for certain jobs and it's.... (pause) well, I give up. It's a waste of time looking." The younger father (Graham aged 32) was concerned that by the time he had completed another three years of a four year university course, he might be considered too old to find employment as a lower primary school teacher.

Another five fathers had a health problem. One father said he was not looking for work because of a long-term back problem, another had become disabled as a result of a road traffic accident since becoming a lone parent. Jon, a former medical herbalist, feared the arthritis he had developed might prevent him from returning to work. The other two fathers had suffered a heart attack when their wives had died and both were unable to return to a stressful job. Ken had taken early retirement and said "Right now I'm enjoying myself at home and I've no inclination at all to return to work." Lack of inclination was also mentioned by Noel who had been away from employment for eight years. He said "I've got into a routine, I actually enjoy being at home." As he had recently become engaged to another lone parent Noel added "Of

course when I marry things might change dramatically, she might send me out to work!" Some fathers spoke about the stigma of lone parenthood and how being a lone father affected their likelihood of finding employment.

> "I think the main barrier, apart from childcare, is the prejudice you encounter. Employers, and half the population, stick you in a pigeon hole and stick a label on you. You are just another single parent and they don't want to know." (Simon)

> "If you've got two single parents, one male and one female going for a part-time job, you can guarantee the female will get it because they expect a man, whether he's got kids or not, to do a full day's work." (Doug)

> "You mention to anybody you're on your own with four children and they don't want to know you. If something happens.... I mean a few weeks ago my nipper fell down the stairs at school and broke his leg which means I had to drop everything and take him to the hospital." (Peter)

In addition Thomas considered that problems his son had would prevent him finding employment. He explained that since the break-up of his marriage his son had been visiting a child therapist and said "My son has a number of problems and he is very immature for his age. I could not trust my son to get to and from school unless I was with him and I need time off to take him to the therapist."

It appears that like lone mothers, lone fathers have a number of obstacles they have to overcome in order to continue with, or return to employment. Having sole care of the children causes the greatest difficulty, some fathers consider it inappropiate to work while their children are young; others are concerned about finding, and the cost of, childcare. Other difficulties include finding work which pays enough money to enable them to come off the benefit system. Lone fathers face additional difficulties

in that few employers expect a male employee to need time off to care for a sick child. In addition very few men are able to find employment which "fits in" with school hours. The findings also show that many lone fathers, like lone mothers, develop a number of coping strategies to overcome these difficulties and go out to work. Many fathers who remain at home develop strategies to obtain suitable employment when they consider their children are old enough to manage without full-time care.

Having looked, in this chapter, at the difficulties some fathers have combing childcare and employment we will now look in the next chapter at other practical and emotional problems many lone fathers face. The help and support received by lone fathers from the community will also be examined as well as the fathers' feelings about lone parenthood.

CHAPTER 5. SOCIABILITY AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

Chapter 1 showed that very little is known about how lone fathers feel about, or cope with, lone fatherhood, housework and other related issues. According to Grief (1985), this has led to a number of myths and stereotypes being formed about lone fathers. By some they are regarded as extraordinary because they care for their children alone. Others consider that they need help in order to cope. Hipgrave (1982), for example, has suggested that they receive sympathy and practical support from the community and female kin. Abercrombie and Warde (1988) believe that they receive more help with their children than lone mothers. This chapter will focus on the informal support that was received by the lone fathers in this study. It will discuss any practical difficulties that they experienced with childcare and domestic responsibilities and also describe the practical and emotional support they have received since being alone. The effect of lone parenthood on the fathers' social life will be examined and also the fathers' feelings about being a lone parent.

5.1 Support with Domestic Activities

Domestic activities are traditionally viewed as women's work, but recent studies have shown that women are now doing less housework than they were in previous generations and men are now doing more even if responsibility for housework continues to lie with women. Fathers are also now spending more time with their children (see e.g. Hewitt 1993). This could suggest that fathers face relatively few difficulties if they are left to manage on their own. The fathers in this study were asked if they used to help with domestic activities, such as child care and housework, when they had been living with their partner and, if so, what did they used to do? It was recognised that fathers were either likely to over estimate their contribution in order to appear domesticated, or under estimate if they considered such work to be unmasculine. However, there was no reason to assume this question was answered less truthfully than others. In a few cases sons or daughters, present at the interview, were keen to verify their father's answers. A typical example occurred when Bob was

interviewed; his son interrupted to say "He did nothing, Mum did it all. Dad just sat down and watched the television." Bob confirmed this was true. All the fathers answered this question and 68 (84%) said they used to help with the domestic chores. The remaining fathers consisted of two who had always been on their own and eight others who explained that their full-time employment had left them with little time to help at home.

The fathers were assessed as "high", "medium" or "low" on their participation in domestic activities. Of the 71 fathers who gave enough information to be assessed 10 (14%) were rated as "high", 27 (38%) "medium" and 34 (48%) "low". This assessment was subjective and was done by comparing the fathers with one another. Those who said they did just a few chores around the house, or none at all, were labelled "low". Fathers who appeared frequently to have taken charge of house work and childcare were assessed as "high". The wording of this question was very general: "What did you do regularly?" Fathers were also being asked, in many cases, to remember behaviour that had taken place a number of years previously. These factors make comparison with other studies difficult, but it did seem that fathers with partners who were employed helped the most with domestic responsibilities. This is in line with other studies, for example Jowell et al. (1992). Two fathers assessed as "low" said: "My wife was here all day so she did all that type of thing" (Ron). "I did hardly any, my wife was at home all day so she did that sort of thing" (Alan). In contrast a typical quote from a father with a partner who had worked long hours was:

> "I did washing, ironing, sewing, polishing, dusting, hoovering. I used to come home from work and she used to go to work so I used to get the kids bathed, dressed, teeth, bed then I'd do the ironing. (Don)

Oakley (1974) carried out a similar method of assessment and found that the participation in housework was class-related, with the working-class fathers doing the least. Table 5.1 shows that this also appears to be the case in this study. Among the fathers in social classes 1 and 2 18% of the fathers reported a high participation in domestic chores. This can be compared to 16% of the fathers in social classes 3n and

3m and none of the fathers in social classes 4 and 5.

Table 5.1

Relationship between Social Class
and Father's participation in domestic activities

	Social Class			
	1 and 2	3n and 3m	4 and 5	Total
Level of participation				
High	3	7	0	10
Medium	7	16	3	26
Low	7	20	6	33
Total	17	43	9	69

2 fathers did not give details of social class

Several of the fathers said that housework was just common sense. For example Brian said "It's a myth that we men can't cope. Men are capable of any domestic or childcare responsibility." However, despite their previous experience it was interesting to note that 43 (55%) out of 76 fathers reported having difficulty with at least one domestic task. Some of the fathers mentioned the task they found most difficult or disliked and these are listed below.

Table 5.2

Tasks the Fathers found difficult

Ironing	21
Cooking	9
Child Care	8
Laundry	7
Getting a routine	6
Total number of fathers naming tasks	51

The most frequently mentioned activity was ironing and several of these fathers said they still experienced difficulty with this task. Typical quotes included: "I didn't mind anything except ironing because I couldn't iron to save my life" (Simon). "I don't like ironing. I used to do it before but I left most of it to my wife. I find it

very difficult" (Tony). The "solution" mentioned by several fathers was not to do any ironing. Carl said "If I don't like something or I can't do it I devise a way round it or I don't ever do it." Martin explained " Once I had sorted out the washing machine I found it was pretty good, we just hang it on the line and it comes out without needing too much ironing. I don't ever do it unless it's for an important occasion."

Laundry was also mentioned by seven of the fathers. Their problems varied from "operating the washing machine" (Martin), to "sorting out the washing" (Alistair). A few of the fathers experienced difficulties with their children rather than household tasks. Such problems were mentioned by eight of the fathers and included such tasks as "Doing the girl's hair. She's got long hair, I had to learn to put conditioner on when I wash it and that sort of thing and plait it" (Ron) and "buying clothes for the girl" (Chris). Other fathers mentioned behaviour problems: "The kids' behaviour is difficult to deal with, perhaps I'm a bit too strict at times. Being a single parent I feel I'm rougher on them than I should be" (Barry). For another father the problem was his son's temper tantrums "I used to smack him when he was younger because I didn't understand it, but now I'm learning to try and sit down and talk to him" (Derek). Lewis admitted that he experienced difficulties when the children were sick:

> "I haven't got the patience, I tend to get very frustrated that I can't help them. When my wife was here I was able to show sympathy, but when you are there nursing them and they don't respond to logic, I tend to get very .....(pause) I'm not very good at it."

A few fathers, particularly those employed outside the home, mentioned difficulty in getting into a routine or "keeping the place together" (Rob). This father continued: "I do my best but I find it hard to find time to do things like hoovering every week." Another father said "Working out a schedule was difficult, at first I had a child minder which meant my daughter was out until 9.30 p.m sometimes" (Len). For four of the fathers everything was a problem. Two such fathers were Andrew who said "Everything was difficult, from doing the household chores to keeping a cheerful face

on for the children", and Ron who conceded: "Everything, I still find it difficult to keep the place together. I do my best but whereas it used to be hoovered once a week now it's more like once a month".

Despite the difficulties that some fathers experienced, when asked to rate their domestic skills, by placing themselves on a scale from 1-10, well over one half of the fathers rated themselves highly, 46 giving themselves a rating between eight and 10. One such father was Neil who explained: "I'm very methodical, always have been even when I was first alone. I prepare everything before I go to bed, then it's very easy to get my household chores done the next day." Grant was also very satisfied and rated himself an eight: "This is because I have always been domesticated from an early age." Ron who rated himself as eight said "Ironing lets me down, but all the other things I'm pretty good at." Others explained they were satisfied because the home, although not perfect, was how they wanted it to be. This was expressed by Simon "I'm satisfied because I cope. I know the place isn't perfect, but it's lived in. I'm not one of those to stand to attention on everything, as long as it's reasonable I'm happy."

Fathers who did not have a routine or those who disliked housework were likely to rate themselves between 5 -7. Carl explained "I'll do nothing for a few days and then I'll blitz it. I haven't got a routine." Doug rated himself as five: "I haven't yet got into a routine but I'm managing". Only seven fathers rated themselves below five. One such father was Andrew who said "four, I'm less than happy. It is a case of I cope, rather than excel." Another father explained:

> "I'll give myself three, I know I could do better, but I hate housework. If I had more incentive then probably I would do more. I do the barest minimum and then sort of cover over the cracks" (Martin)

The fathers were also asked about the help they had with housework. It was found that only nine fathers received any additional help with domestic tasks. Table 5.3 shows where this help came from.

Table 5.3

Sources of help with household chores

Relations	5
Au pair	2
House keeper	1
Friend	1

Apart from one father who paid for a house-keeper, the help the fathers received was usually restricted to ironing. Alan, who had an au-pair, explained "her main task is looking after my youngest daughter. I only expect the minimum of help, maybe run the hoover around once a morning, help with the ironing or something like that." Tony said that his sister "often pops over, if ever she sees any clothes in the washing basket she very often takes it and does it for me. That's a real treat because it saves me having to do it." Bob said that his girl friend "does the washing for us." Peter, who had four children, appeared to receive the most help: "Mum comes one day a week to keep me in line and do all the things I haven't done like the ironing."

The children, however, provided a source of help for 74% of the fathers. This is a slightly higher percentage than the 66% found by Barker (1994). Of course, the actual amount of assistance the children were able to give was likely to depend very much on the age of the child, but even fathers with very young children mentioned the way in which their children helped. Grant explained "They all have to wash up, even the four year old." Donald said that he was encouraging his son aged two to help: "He helps already by enjoying copying what I do. Hence I can do it when he is around and we make a game of it." Many of the older children's activities were restricted to washing up and keeping their rooms tidy. Often this was to earn their pocket money, also in a few cases only done "now and again" (Rodney) or "with encouragement and occasional criticism" (Patrick). However some children appeared to play a much larger part in the running of the household. Just two examples include Bill who said "My children help me with every thing. If I was to pop my clogs (i.e. die) I know that they could easily carry on as brothers and sisters together." "She does a great deal to help me. She hoovers, polishes, makes her bed, keeps her room

tidy, loads the washing machine, tidies up" (Alistair).

A study carried out by Morrow, (1992, cited in Graham, 1993) collected information from children about things they did when they were not at school and found that less than a third of the boys but over half of the girls were involved in domestic labour. Graham (1993) suggests this confirms gender relations because the majority of the children described how they "helped mum" In this study there was very little evidence of gender differentiation; boys appeared to give as much help as girls and carried out the same tasks. However in households where there were both boys and girls it was occasionally noted that less help was expected from the sons. Chris illustrates this point by saying "The girl helps me a lot because she wishes to. The boy is just a boy. Ha ha!" Alan said "My daughter in particular, she's a great help and also my son, in his own way." A possible explanation for the different findings is that some of the boys in Morrow's study were reluctant to admit they took part in an activity that is generally thought of as girl's job.

Morrow (1992) also found that children were particularly likely to help their mother if she was employed or if she was a lone parent. A total of 24 fathers in this study said they felt their children did more chores than they would have done if they had not become lone parents. Of these fathers 14 (59%) were employed. It is realised, of course, that these answers are very subjective. The fathers had no idea how much help their children would have given if circumstances were different, but several felt that their children realised their fathers needed help. For example, Paul said "I feel she does more because she knows I haven't got time to do things." Antony said, "He realises the position I'm in and he likes to help me." Fathers who received no help often preferred it this way. One such father was Derek who explained "He doesn't do anything, I don't expect him to. I think children find that with school and everything else they've enough on their plate." Tony said "things like the gas or microwave worry me a little bit, it might explode or something like that." He also added "Funnily enough they very often do want to do something. They may say to me 'can we cook the breakfast Dad?', but I find they get in the way more by doing something."

It appears that very few lone fathers enter lone parenthood without any experience of childcare or household chores because nearly all have helped their ex-partner with these tasks. However, the extent of this experience varies greatly and the majority of lone fathers face at least one difficulty when left on their own. Ironing is considered to be the most disliked and difficult household task and several fathers try to avoid it whenever possible. Few lone fathers receive any form of practical help from friends or relations and only a small minority receive formal help, However, many are able to rely on their children for help with chores such as washing and tidying up and, in some cases, a good deal more. Once the initial difficulties have been overcome most of the fathers are very pleased with the way they manage to cope with house-work and child care.

5.2 Sources of Emotional Support.

Information was also obtained about the emotional support the lone fathers received. The fathers were asked which, if any, of the following people or organisations they first turned to when they were first on their own.

Table 5.4

Sources of support when first becoming a lone parent

Parents	32
Friends	22
Lone Parent group	22
Relations	13
Social Services	10
Church	4
Health visitor	2
No One	10

A further five sources of help were added by the fathers: Relate, Cruse and other Counselling services, solicitors, Macmillian Nurses and a psychologist. Although the fathers were asked whom they first turned to, nearly all named two or more sources of support.

The table above shows clearly that, as in George and Wilding's (1972) study, fathers received a great deal of help from their parents and other relations. In the majority of cases it was "Mum" that the fathers were likely to mention when describing their support. "Mum gave me a lot of support. After a while I got involved with a girl, but then I became dis-involved and Mum was there once again" (Robert). "I turned to my Mum" (Barry). "My mum gave me a hand to start with when I was getting over the separation and she had the kids for a couple of weeks" (Martin). Carl, a separated father whose mother had recently died, turned to his aunt. He explained "Mum had asked her to keep an eye on me, she's also taken on the role of grandmother to my children." A few other fathers, who may not have had mothers alive, mentioned that they turned to their fathers. "I immediately turned to my Dad and he let me stay in his flat" (Nigel). "My father helped me a lot, he was very supportive" (Tony). Parents were only mentioned by divorced and separated fathers, none of the nine widowed fathers who answered this question, said they turned to their parents for support. Other relations mentioned by the fathers included sisters and, in two cases, older children from a previous marriage. Tony said his sister "not only gave me emotional support but she also gave up her job so that I could continue working." Lee also spoke very favourably about his sisters: "My sisters were very supportive. They had me to meals and they often came to visit me, sometimes staying the night." Lee mentioned additional support he received from his first wife : "She was very good listening to my problems and helping with our daughter." As George and Wilding (1972) found, there were various explanations why some relatives did not help. Some fathers mentioned friction with their relatives but most reasons related to the age of their parents or the fact that fathers didn't want to burden them with their troubles. In some cases the relations lived too far away.

Other informal support was supplied by friends. Twenty two fathers said that it was friends they first turned to for support. Over one half (64%) of these fathers had no relatives living in their area. In comparison to other findings about divorced and single men the proportion turning to friends appears very small. Ambrose et al. (1983) found that 71% of men approached their friends and Spanier and Thompson (1984) claimed that almost all the men in their study received emotional support from

friends. It would be wrong, however, to underestimate the help the fathers in this study received from friends because these fathers were specifically asked whom they first turned to. George and Wilding (1972 p.147) found that relatives were the "first line of defence" for the fathers and that help from friends "increased with the passage of time as the fathers' situation became known and accepted." This could have been the case for fathers in this study. Alvin for example replied "I turned to my four sisters, they were the first to help. Later a good friend heard what had happened and he rallied round without a word." Among the other fathers who mentioned the support they received from friends was Alan who said "Friends were the greatest help of all. I was fortunate in that I had lots and lots of friends and they were all a great help." Doug also spoke about the help he had received from friends: "They did all they could to help me. They helped me out of the doldrums, listened to me and took me out. I've been so much luckier than some single parents I know, in that I've had so much support." Some writers, for example Allan (1985), claim that divorce tends to undermine friendships, particularly joint friendships with (former) partners. This is discussed in greater depth later in this chapter.

A number of the subjects for this study were contacted through lone parent groups and for 22 fathers this is where they first turned for support. These fathers were significantly unlikely to have had relations living in their area to whom they could turn ($p < 0.08245$). Several of the fathers spoke about the help and support they received from belonging to a group of people in a similar situation: "It helped just to be able to talk to people in the same position as myself" (Daniel). "I was able to speak to some one I could relate to" (Jim). "I received support and friendship from people who were in the same situation as I was" (Darren). Brian said that "It took me some time to make any move to ask for help, but once I did I received a lot of help from Gingerbread; friendship, support, acceptance from others and a growth in confidence."

George and Wilding (1972 p.149) found that almost one half of the lone fathers in their study received help from the social services at the beginning of lone fatherhood "usually with the father making the first approach rather than the social worker." In

this study only 10 fathers said that they turned to the social services when they became lone fathers. This difference could be due to changes that have occurred during the last 20 years. For example George and Wilding wrote (p.150) "The crisis situation inevitably brought fathers into contact with the personal social services: the divorced and some of the separated would of necessity have seen the probation officer." It is unlikely that this would happen to the fathers today. In line with other findings by George and Wilding (1972), fathers in social class 1 and 2 were less likely than the fathers in the other social classes to have received help from social services. In addition it was found, in this study, that 80% of the fathers who contacted social services had no relatives living in their neighbourhood.

Some of the men had already made contact with the social services prior to lone parenthood. One such father explained: "Both my children were in the care of the social services. One has been adopted but they kept an eye on Adam because I took him out of care and cared for him on my own" (Derek). Don became involved with the social services "because of circumstances to do with the divorce." He continued to explain: "When I got my kids back and I came here the house had been turned up-side down by my ex-wife. I needed beds and stuff like that and they helped me get them." Other fathers approached the social services for a variety of reasons: "I was worried how my son was going to suffer from all this, that's why I called them in. There was no one else I could turn to" (Antony). "I went to find out about schools and things like that" (Brian).

> "The welfare people, I went to see them just for reference. I hoped they would give me some advice about finding a baby sitter...I wanted time out. I also thought they ought to know about the situation with me and the children" (Adam).

Unlike those fathers who turned to relatives, friends and support groups, not all the fathers were satisfied with the support they received from the social services. Some appeared to be very bitter. One such father mentioned a number of times during the interview that he was still feeling angry about the lack of help he received: "I went

there looking for support, but they gave me none what-so-ever." Eddie complained "I never got the right sort of support from the social services." This however need not be a reflection on the help the fathers received but instead due to the fathers' expectations of the help they would obtain. Similar findings were reported by George and Wilding (1972, p.155) who explained "This gap between clients and Social Work expectations is a well known problem in social work services."

Other sources of support used generally depended on the age of the children and the circumstances surrounding the end of the partnership. Two fathers with pre-school aged children approached health visitors. Those who had experienced a particularly difficult break up were likely to have turned to, or continued sessions with, Relate or other counsellors. Three mentioned receiving support from their solicitor. Three other fathers whose partners had died mentioned the help the received from nurses and, in two cases, from a support group for the bereaved. The church was mentioned by four fathers. No support of any kind was received by 10 (13%) of the fathers.

The fathers were also asked if they considered they had enough support when they first became lone fathers. It was found that, regardless of whom they had turned to, just under one half (46%) of the 76 fathers who answered this question were dissatisfied with the amount of help they had received. Widowers were particularly likely to have felt they needed more support (60% of the widowers gave this reply compared to 45% of the other fathers). Phillip, whose wife had been in a hospice, described his circumstances which he considered to be better than those experienced by many widows.

> "There's no help at all. Nobody contacts you because there's nothing in the system, but for me, because the wife was at the hospice, contact was there. If it wasn't for that, for anyone normal, if she wasn't in a hospice there would be nothing there to help. No one comes and checks up on you, you're just another fact and figure and that's it, you just carry on."

Similar feelings about the lack of support for lone fathers were expressed by others regardless of their route into lone parenthood. Carl complained: "There's nothing out there to help a man. People suggest support groups but if you're feeling hurt because of a woman you don't want to go and talk to another woman. That's adding insult to injury." Adrian felt "everybody wants to know your business. Because you're a man on your own you're different but nobody wants to help." Barry considered that:

> "Being a single father is more difficult than being a lone mother and so we should be able to get more support. I went to a social service group for support and I was the only bloke. They had all had trouble with men and I got picked on. I definitely didn't get enough support."

There were some fathers however, who expressed a preference for doing without support. "I just wanted to be left alone to do things my way. I didn't want people in my house trying to help me" (Lewis). "I didn't go seeking support, I just got on with it on my own" (Rob). Another father explained:

> "When a marriage breaks down there's damn all you can do about it. Probably like a lot of men, I wanted to stand on my own two feet. I looked after my kid and I did it and I'm proud I did it" (Patrick).

Fathers who had been on their own between two to five years were the most likely to say they were not receiving enough support at the time of the study. This suggests that when the father appeared to be coping, support was withdrawn. This was expressed by Cliff who had been a lone parent for just over two years "Being an only child myself, I expected more from my late wife's sisters. My late wife's family no longer bother with us much now that they see I am 'coping'. I find it difficult to understand." Adam believed his lack of support was due to being a lone man:

> "I don't get any support now. People are great listeners, but they don't actually help. I think a man on his own can be seen as a threat.

> You'll see mothers talk amongst themselves up the school but you don't get their support. Single men I think are seen as a threat and women withdraw from that".

Only three (17%) of the fathers on their own for longer than five years felt they were not receiving enough support, suggesting that as time passed, the fathers became used to their situation and no longer felt they needed support. The majority of fathers however mentioned that they had become very independent and shared the view expressed by Alan: "There's a limit to what people can do for you. Basically if you're able to you have to crack on and do it yourself." However, Scott felt differently:

> "I think it gets worse as you go along, it eats away at you. If you are working you've got a steady, stable life, I think that until you get back into work, have a decent job and fending for yourself I feel it gets worse".

Studies including those by Marsden (1969) and, more recently, Morris (1992) and Kurz (1995) found that some lone mothers reported that they had become closer to their children since being on their own. In some cases mothers said they looked on their children more like sisters and brothers (Marsden, 1969). The divorced women in Kurz's (1995) study mentioned that their children kept them going under difficult circumstances. The children also appeared to be a valuable source of support for many of the lone fathers in this study. A total of 62 out of the 75 fathers who responded to this question, said they had become closer to their children since being on their own. The actual amount of support is probably a lot higher than this may suggest as several of the fathers answered "no" and explained this was because they had always been close to their children. Fathers frequently described this closeness as an emotional bond: "I've got this bonding with them now. We're more closer and we're more truthful" (Adam). "I can definitely say yes I am a lot more closer. We've created a bond, which, if anything needs to be justified, I'd say that's why it happened" (Lewis). A number of other feelings were also described. James

explained "The children respect me a lot more now, and we spend more time together or perhaps in thought, more thought together than we did before." "Closer definitely, but I feel the word is 'sensitive', I'm more sensitive to them now" (Carl). "Since being a lone parent we have become a lot closer and I feel we are much more reliant on one another" (Martin).

Two thirds (50) of the 75 fathers said they were able to discuss their problems with their children. One such father was Neil who said "We always have a family get together once a week, when we sit down and discuss everything." Also Andrew: "We are very close. We sit here of an evening and discuss everything." The extent of problem sharing, of course, greatly depended on the age of the children, 18 fathers said their children were too young and 6 said they did not want to burden them with their problems. Among the fathers with older children was Jon who was full of praise for the support he received from his 11 year old son.

> "I try not to burden him, but he's brilliant. He will turn to me and say 'Dad you're upset and worried, I know what it's about.' He talks to me and we discuss everything. There's very few things I keep from him."

Antony spoke with praise about his son who was only nine years old. "We always discuss any problems I'm having, for example with money. He's very good like that and if he sees me talking to any of the girls at 'Gingerbread' he'll tell me if I ought to pursue it or not."

These findings have shown that the majority of lone fathers turn to their relatives for support when they are first on their own. Those without relations living nearby turn to friends or support groups. Many lone fathers feel that there was not enough support available for them at the beginning of lone parenthood, others explain that although they initially received support from friends and relatives this was withdrawn once they were seen to be managing. A shared feeling among lone fathers is that more support should be available and one suggestion is to have support groups or

other help in the community set up specifically for men. However, nearly all lone fathers find that their children become a valuable source of support. Not only do they become closer to one other but many fathers are also able to discuss their problems with the children.

5.3 Friendship Networks

Although only 22 fathers had mentioned turning to their friends for support, it was assumed on the basis of the available literature that all the fathers had a network of friends at the time of the break up (see e.g. Allan 1989). In order to discover if this network of friends still existed the fathers were asked if they still had contact with these friends. Their social network was explored further by asking the fathers about their contact with other lone fathers. Economically inactive fathers were asked if they had kept in contact with their former workmates and also about the activities they joined in with the children as it was felt this was a possible way for the men to meet new friends.

Two fathers did not respond to the question about friends. Another explained that he had no friends prior to his wife's death. "My wife was an alcoholic, so all my spare time was devoted to making sure she was alright. I could never have gone out and met friends because I had to be with her" (Antony). Of the remaining fathers 68% said they had kept in contact with their friends. However, as George and Wilding (1972) and Barker (1994) found, many of these fathers mentioned they now had fewer friends. One of the reasons given for this loss of friends was that some mutual friends had sided with their ex-partner. A typical comment was expressed by Ron "I have kept in touch with a few of them. Some were the husbands of my ex- wife's friends and my ex-wife's friends tended to side with her so I lost touch with them." Adam found that "Friends go when you get divorced because they don't want to take sides. They don't come back." Other fathers believed that their friends felt it was wrong that a man should have custody of the children. Don was one such father, and he explained: "My friends didn't want to know. They didn't think a bloke should have the kids."

George and Wilding (1972 p.130) suggested that the separated and divorced show that marriage can be less than lifelong and as a consequence they "represented a threat to couples held together by nothing stronger than habit or conversation." This view was expressed by Brian: "Some couples don't like single people around. It reminds them what might happen to them (Leper complex!)." Similarly Matthew found "Some friends shy away when you split up with a partner, they worry it might happen to them." In line with Allan (1996) a further restriction cited by the fathers was that they were single but their friends had partners. Several spoke about the difficulties they were currently experiencing. "Before, everything was couples and now it's all singles. I mean most of my friends when I was with my wife were to do with my wife and we'd all go out together" (Robert). "They're still all couples and I feel different" (Lee). Other fathers explained that they were not able to socialise as much as previously due to the changes that had occurred in their circumstances. "It's hard to find the time nowadays" (Charles). "My interests are different nowadays" (Adam). "They go to places like the pub and the gym, I don't go there now" (Martin). Lack of money was also mentioned: "Some friends I have not been able to maintain through financial and domestic restrictions,i.e. not being able to go out and socialise with them" (Gregory).

Fathers who no longer saw any of their friends were likely to have given any of the reasons already mentioned, but 11 explained that they (the fathers) had moved away from the area in which they lived previously. Bob, for example, had left his partner and moved from Scotland to the south of England before he became a lone father. When his ex-wife handed over custody of the children to him he had found that he had difficulty keeping in touch with his friends. "I don't see them so much now. I used to shoot up to Scotland, or they would come down here but it's useless now, there's no place for them to stay and I've no time to see them."

The majority (84%) of lone fathers said they knew other men in a similar position. This high percentage is partly due to the fact that many of the respondents had been contacted through lone parent support groups. Also, as discussed previously, several of the fathers who were interviewed did know others but for a number of reasons they

were unable to be included in the study (for example, they did not have dependent children). Other studies (e.g. Marsden 1969, Cashmore 1985) have indicated that lone mothers are able to receive support from other lone mothers and in this study a few fathers compared their position unfavourably with that of lone mothers. For example, Martin said "I wish there were more things for lone men. Lone mothers get together and chat about their children but there's nothing like that for us." However, it appeared that many of the men who did know other lone fathers did not receive, or even want, support from them. Typical quotes from these fathers include "I know other men in my position but it makes no difference if you're talking to men or women, they've all been through it" (Steve). "It's not useful knowing other men because we don't talk like women do about housework and things" (Dave). "I've met them in the past and found them very depressing" (Jason). Some of the fathers explained that they had little in common with other lone fathers they knew. Peter said "When I mentioned that I knew one, he was my best friend at school but nowadays when I bump into him we don't talk. We've nothing much in common." Adrian mentioned several differences between himself and the other lone fathers he knew: "I don't find it at all useful as the ages of their children are greatly different, as are the circumstances behind our respective divorces. The children's attitudes are also different." A few had strong reasons for not mixing with other lone fathers:

> "People say 'why don't you join a group?' I don't want to. I could go to the park and meet a thousand lone parents, male and female I expect. I don't want to mix with other lone parents. I just want to be treated as an individual bringing up two children, not to identify as a lone parent" (Adam).

> "I'm not at all interested. I've gone through a lot but I think going through it, coping and actually organising my lifestyle now, I don't want to hear about how anyone else is doing it. I'm quite happy not knowing others" (James).

In contrast, there were some who found it useful to meet others in a similar position.

These fathers gave two main reasons; it prevented them from feeling isolated and , as French (1991) found in her study of lone mothers, it gave them a means of comparing themselves with others. Some examples include Richard, who explained: "It boosts my confidence to see that I appear to be managing better than most." "It helps me to realise that I am coping better than some others in my position" (Jon). "It helps to know you are not on your own" (Andrew). "I found it helpful in that it made me aware I'm not the only single parent father" (Charles). A few other fathers considered that it would be useful to meet other lone fathers and were planning to join a group but, at the time they were contacted, had not yet found the confidence to do so.

The economically inactive fathers were asked if they had remained in contact with their work mates. It was found that fewer than half (42%) of the economically inactive fathers who responded to this question said they still saw their work colleagues. Adam explained "I was self-employed. If you are self-employed you don't have any colleagues, they are all your competitors." Several said that they had no desire to see ex-colleagues. Typical examples include "I didn't like them" (Derek), "I had no reason to keep in touch" (Gordon), "I didn't want to" (Pat). Phillip said "I never wanted to keep in touch with people I worked with because, every one to his own thing. They always wanted to talk about football and I didn't." Simon spoke at length about the particular difficulty of being in sole charge of children.

> "When you are a single parent with two children you are very restricted. Whenever you go out you have to make sure you are back in time to pick the children up from school, that you've got the dinner waiting for them or whatever. You don't think of yourself when you go out, you think of the children and you try to fit your day around the children so that they are first and foremost on your mind all the time. Colleagues from work who are not in this position don't understand."

Others spoke about the effect of the stress caused by the ending of their partnership.

"Because of all the stress I simply lost interest in seeing them" (Jon).

> "Up to the time of my wife departing, yes I did see them. Since then no. For at least the first six months I was suffering 'shell shock'. I didn't bother seeing anyone, I basically had enough problems just coping and living" (Carl).

A significant number of fathers had moved since becoming lone parents ($P < 0.00102$) and of these only two still saw their work mates. Two fathers explained that it was their colleagues who had moved away. "My main customer went bankrupt and my work friends scattered to new jobs and this meant some left the area" (Richard).

> "If you want to earn more money you move from company to company and most have moved on. Some have moved back to the country they originally came from; the States, South Africa, Scandinavian counties and I don't know where they are" (Eddie).

The fathers who had remained in contact with colleagues differed in several ways from those who had not remained in contact. Fathers who had been out of work for less than 5 years were more likely to still be in contact with their work mates than those who had been economically inactive for a longer period. They were also significantly likely to have children aged between 5-11. It can be assumed that those with children in the younger age group (0-4) would have less opportunity to see their ex-colleagues. Over a half of those with children aged 12 and over had been economically inactive for over five years.

The economically inactive fathers were also asked if they joined in daytime activities with their children, such as helping in play groups, schools etc. Of the 39 economically inactive fathers who answered this question 29 said that they had helped, or were helping, with various daytime activities at the time of the study. This appeared to be something the fathers did either for their children's sake or as something to do during the day, rather than as a means of meeting other adults.

Adam, whose son had just started school explained:

> "I had to stay in the play group because he was too young to stay on his own. I had to take him because he had no other female contact. I ended up helping in the art quarter with about ten children."

Fathers with children at infant school were the most likely to be involved with daytime activities. Graham was one father who clarified the reason for this:

> "I used to help at the infants school. Now they are in the middle school parents don't go up their so much. I miss going up but I've found that most children don't want their parents joining in as they get older."

The fathers helped with a wide range of activities. Don, for example said "I'm just painting the playground. They've got things such as snakes with numbers on and they all have to be repainted. I also make toys for the playgroup." Most were involved in activities which David suggested "Women would be unlikely to want to do." This father helped with football and said "I used to also help with science and technology." Scott said "I go down there and take them for football every week and do woodwork lessons." Several other fathers mentioned helping with school outings, driving mini-buses and helping at fayres and fetes.

Fathers who did not join in daytime activities were likely to have said they were too busy. "I usually find there is more than enough to do around here. By the time you've sorted out the beds, washing, had a clean around ..." (Doug) "I find that I've already got enough to do around here" (Antony). Others felt that it was difficult to fit in with the mothers who went up the school or playgroups.

> "I find it very hard. It's just so completely different for a bloke on his own than it is for a woman. A woman going up the school is an every day thing, a man on his own is not. You are treated completely

differently" (Peter).

"I did when I first moved here but that was the only time I helped, mainly because I felt out of place. I still feel an oddity even though I'm not the only single male parent in this area" (Edward).

A further, rather surprising, reason was expressed by Nigel: "I personally don't believe men should be trusted in childcare of other people's children." There can be little doubt that this father was very conscious about the "deep seated fear many express about men having contact with young children" (Russell, 1983, p.209).

It is evident from these findings that lone fatherhood frequently results in a loss of friends. Some fathers discover that they have fewer friends and others no longer see any of the friends or workmates they had when they were with a partner. Like lone mothers, lone fathers find socialising with couples becomes difficult not only because they frequently have little money or time but also because they feel out of place. In addition they are likely to find that they lose friends who side with their ex-partner and that there are other friends who no longer want to know them once they have sole care of the children.

Lone fathers also find that they lose interest in doing things which they used to do with their friends, such as going to the gym or pub. However, making new friends also appears to be difficult. Some fathers attempt to help at their children's school or play group but soon feel that they do not fit in with the mothers. Others join lone parent groups, but although this prevents some fathers from feeling isolated, many find they have little in common with the few male members they meet and find it depressing listening to their troubles.

5.4 The Fathers' Social Life

Table 5.5 shows that 29 (38%) of the fathers were not at all satisfied with their social life. Fathers in the oldest age group (40+) were the least likely to be satisfied. Only

two of these fathers said they were very satisfied, the others said they were either "not at all satisfied" or only "fairly satisfied".

Table 5.5

Satisfaction with Social Life

Not at all	29
Fairly satisfied	25
Satisfied	13
Very satisfied	10
Total	77

No. missing: 1

Typical examples from this older age group are: "Apart from my hobby (steam engines and attending rallies) there isn't any. I never go out, if I had the chance to go out I wouldn't know where to go" (Phillip).

> "It's almost non existent. I get a few friends come round to visit me but that's about all. Still I don't worry if I can't go out, I did all that when I was younger so it doesn't bother me too much. I'd say I'm fairly satisfied" (Simon).

The fathers were asked what they considered to be the greatest restriction on their social life. The most frequently cited reason why the fathers were not satisfied with their social life was "lack of money". This was cited by 44 fathers (67% of the 65 fathers who responded to this question). Divorced and separated fathers were more likely than widows to have given this answer (74%:33%). They were also more likely to be either economically inactive or employed part time but 45% of fathers employed full-time also said their social life was restricted because of lack of money. Eddie explained "There isn't money to waste on going out, there really isn't. There isn't even the money to pop into McDonald's or something like that." Adam also described his current situation:

> "I can't go out, I can't afford baby sitters. I've a lady comes on a Monday when I go to my evening class and she does it voluntarily. I

don't have a social life, I can't afford a social life. I'm completely cocooned here."

Robert felt it was "harder for a lone man to afford a social life." He continued to say:

"A man's got more expenses than a lady on her own. You get a lady and there is always some bloke willing to take her for a drink. If I wanted to do something like that I haven't the money. So it's impossible to have a proper social life."

Having sole charge of the children was said to be a restraint by 26 (40%) of the fathers. These fathers were significantly likely to be widows (p,0.05002). They were also significantly likely to have children under the age of 5 ($p < 0.01257$) and to have more than one child. Some fathers explained how they now live their lives with, as well as for, their children (Mayall, 1986). One such father (Adam) said: "Children make it very difficult, you can't just whiz out the door. You have to arrange something every time you walk outside the house." Two fathers mentioned that having children made it particularly difficult for them to meet and go out with women:

"Every thing I do socially is with my son. Not that I begrudge it but occasionally I wouldn't mind going out with one of the chaps from Gingerbread, or even one of the girls. I just don't like leaving Adam on his own" (Antony).

"My social life is non existent. The children limit me, how can I expect to meet women? Women in my age group always have children, if they're young she's not going to want to take on more, if they're older then she won't want to start again" (Doug)

The employed fathers were significantly likely to have said that lack of time restricted

their social life ($p<0.00349$). Of the fathers who gave this answer 61% were employed full time, 50% part time and 19% were economically inactive. These fathers were also significantly likely to have children in the oldest age group ($p<0.01086$). Comments from two such fathers were "I'm not very satisfied because I don't get enough time for a social life" (Alan). "Lack of time because the business does tend to take up a lot of time" (Alistair). However, lack of time is not confined to lone parents but is also experienced by working parents in a two parent household (see e.g. Brannen and Moss, 1991). Another restriction mentioned by 15 (22%) of the fathers who were not "very" satisfied with their social life was specifically caused by being a single person. Some fathers mentioned that women regarded them as weirdos or predators, others spoke about the stigma attached to this role and how this made it difficult for them to socialise. Phillip, for example said "where ever you go you feel that you are an outcast." Mike explained "I feel out of place. Not only do I feel that women consider that I am an oddity, I've noticed that other husbands feel that I'm a threat". Patrick felt that the main restriction to a single person was knowing where to go to make new relationships. He added: "I'm not at all satisfied. I didn't want to be an unmarried man, it stems from that." Jon had recently found a girlfriend but he recalled:

> "Being single used to make a big difference. When you are single again you notice all the people are couples. You are no longer a couple so you feel lost and you wonder what you have done. You've done nothing....but it's couples, couples, couples."

The fathers who gave "being a single person" as their answer were significantly likely to have children in the oldest age group ($P<0.01086$).

In line with George and Wilding's (1972) study, several fathers referred to a loss of interest in going out: "In a way it's one worry less now as I'm not that interested. Now and again I think I'll go out, but I can't be bothered" (Phillip). "I'm not that bothered about a social life nowadays. I'm not one for drinking, to me drinking is a waste of money" (Graham). Some fathers also spoke about how they had adapted to

changes in their social life since being alone. Bob said:

> "I used to go out with my work mates to the pub and that but now I have to stay in. Mostly I take the children and go away for weekends and I'm satisfied. You know it's a big change for me but I'm starting to get used to it and in that sense I'm very satisfied" (Bob).

> "Before I had the children I used to go out clubbing and drinking and things like that. It doesn't really bother me that I don't go out much now, I'm happy to go to the pictures occasionally or out for a drink" (Derek).

To gain further knowledge about the fathers' social life it was decided to ask about the amount of free time they managed to have away from their children. The replies are shown in table 5.6 below.

Table 5.6

Opportunity to have a whole day to self

More than once a week	11
Once a week	19
Once or twice a month	19
Less than once a month	27
Total	76

No. missing: 2

The above table shows that 30 (39%) of the fathers had a whole day to themselves at least once a week, but almost an equal portion (35%) replied "Less than once a month". As might be expected, the majority (17) of the fathers who had a day to themselves less than once a month had also said they were not at all satisfied with their social life. One important factor was the age of the youngest child. Of those with pre-school age children 80% said they had a day to themselves less than once a month as did 38% of those with children aged 5-11. In comparison only 13% of those with older children gave this reply. Phillip who had two children in the oldest

age group, explained about the difficulty he had getting a whole day to himself:

> "I get time on my own less than once a month, it's more like once a year. My mum will have them for two days at a time, but now they're older they don't want to do that sort of thing."

Although the fathers were not asked who cared for their children at these times, their answers revealed that both the child's mother and the father's mother played a large role in enabling the fathers to have time to themselves. Ron was just one father who mentioned his ex-partner having care of the children. "I have one day a week to myself when their mother has access. In the daytime I get to see people, then maybe in the evening have a drink." The following father was able to rely on his mother:

> "Maybe once a month. Just occasionally she will have them overnight. She did that the other week and I was able to take the Sunday paper back to bed, which I enjoyed. But I wouldn't want it too often as I miss the children when they are not here" (Graham).

Patrick did not have an ex-partner or mother living locally. He replied "It happens occasionally because my daughter goes to her friend's house now and again for the night, so on average I get a day to myself once a fortnight."

The fathers were also asked about the number of times a week they were able to go out for pleasure. Table 5.7 below shows that, in an average week, almost an equal number of fathers went out once or twice a week as stayed at home. Comments ranged from a father who went out at every opportunity "whenever they are not here I go out. It's very quiet when they are not here, very lonely as well. I try to get out as often as I can, but of course, financially it hits me" (James). At the opposite extreme was Phillip who said "If I was forced out I don't know where I would go." Comments also showed that some fathers had to combine pleasure with training or employment: "The only time I get out for pleasure is three hours a week when I do my counselling course" (Adam).

"Pleasure? Well I work part-time in a pub. It gets me out of the house and ... yes, I do enjoy it so I suppose it 's pleasure. After spending 18 months at home every evening I was cracking up. So it is a pleasure but work as well" (Peter).

Table 5.7

The number of times fathers went out for pleasure in an average week.

Once a week	27
Twice week	10
Stay at home	39
Total	76

No missing: 2

Neither the age or the number of children had any effect on whether or not the father went out for pleasure. There were however two differences between the fathers who went out and those who stayed at home. Fathers who went out once or twice a week were more likely to have kept in touch with friends they had when living with their ex-partner. Of those who had kept in touch with friends 51% went out once or twice a week compared to only 42% who did not keep in touch with their friends. This, however, could be because these fathers had the opportunity to go out and socialise with their friends, or possibly because their friends were willing to care for their children during the evening, while they went out. Those who knew other lone fathers were also particularly likely to say that they went out once or twice a week (51%:33%).

It can be assumed that the availability of childcare was an important factor in enabling the fathers to have a social life. Of the 76 fathers who responded to the question "Are you able to obtain childcare at short notice?" 27 (37%) said "yes", 29% were sometimes able to obtain childcare and the remaining 34% replied that they were unable to obtain childcare at short notice when they wanted to go out. Fathers with pre-school aged children had the greatest difficulty. Only 2 (15%) of fathers with children in this age group could always obtain childcare compared to 51% with

primary school-aged children and 24% of fathers with children aged over 12 years ($p < 0.04042$).

As might be expected the majority (56%) of the fathers who could not obtain childcare had also said that they were not satisfied with their social life. They were also most likely to have given the reason for their dissatisfaction as "being a single person" Possibly these fathers had previously been able to rely on their partners caring for the children while they had an evening out. Barry spoke about his difficulties: "It's very hard to get childcare because even though I know a lot of people, I'm a very private person. I think my children are my responsibility and I don't wish to put the burden on any one else." Another father explained:

> "Daytime is not a problem because of all the mums there are around here. I have their children and they have mine. Evenings however are a real problem so I have to base my socialising around the house. I invite people in" (Carl).

Having relatives living nearby did not necessarily mean that childcare was more readily available. Of the fathers with relatives living in their area 48% said they were unable to obtain childcare and 19% said that childcare was some times available. A few of the fathers explained that it was usually necessary to give their relatives advance notice. Don explained "I have to give the family a couple of days notice. They're pretty good but they like to go out themselves." "Given a few days I can probably arrange something" (Cliff). Some of the fathers, however, showed a reluctance to involve their relatives. Phillip explained "I don't really like to keep using people." Similarly Tony said:

> "I don't like to put too much on my sister. Because she is good I don't like to take advantage. I know jolly well that if I phoned her she would say 'yes' if I wanted to go out anywhere."

A few fathers felt that being a single man was a disadvantage when it came to asking

people to baby sit. Ian explained that women did not understand lone fathers and because of that they preferred to stay away from them. He added " When I do manage to find a baby sitter I notice that I never get just one woman on her own. I'll ask one but they always bring a friend around."

It appears that lone fatherhood greatly affects the father's social life and many become dissatisfied. Several have to stay home nearly every evening and rarely, sometimes never, have a whole day to themselves. The main restraint, mentioned by both employed fathers and those without a job, is lack of money. Employed fathers are also likely to say that lack of time prevents them from having a social life. Other restrictions include being a single person and having care of the children. Some fathers, however, find that they are no longer as interested in going out socially as they were prior to becoming a lone father and are happy to stay at home with their children.

5.5 Feelings about being a lone father

The following table shows the factors which the fathers found the least rewarding about being a lone father.

Table 5.8

The worst thing about being a lone father

Loneliness	41
Worry about the children	9
Prejudice	6
Restriction	12
Monotony	4
Total	72

When asked what they considered to be the worst thing about being a lone parent the majority of the fathers expressed feelings of loneliness or isolation. As George and Wilding (1972) found, loneliness for many of these fathers was the result of having no adult company, particularly in the evening. Typical quotes about the loneliness

experienced include: "I've been guilty of keeping my children up for company when they should be in their beds. I need the company, it can be a bit lonely at times" (Neil). "I miss adult company, particularly female company" (Gordon). "Loneliness when my daughter is not with me and when she has gone to bed at night" (Rodney).

> "Even though I've got the children I still feel lonely without having an adult to talk to. As soon as the children go to bed it's so silent you just wonder what to do with yourself. There's the television but I've stopped watching it as it just doesn't interest me now" (James).

Some fathers specifically missed having an adult that they could turn to for advice. "It's hard having no one to discuss and share problems and experiences with" (John).

> "There are certain things that you do as a couple that you just can't do on your own. The other day I went to get some curtains. There was another couple there saying 'What do you reckon?' I had to choose completely on my own" (Phillip).

Another group of fathers who found loneliness to be the worst thing about lone parenthood said it was their partner that they missed. This was particularly likely to be expressed by the widowers, but was also mentioned by a few of the divorced or separated fathers. Adrian, divorced after a long marriage, replied "I miss not being able to share things with my wife. Without her I've no one to confide in and talk over problems. I feel lonely, bitter and rejected after 18 years marriage." Two widowers replied: "I miss not having my wife's support in dealing with my daughter's problems. We have always been a loving family, but I miss my wife's wisdom and insight" (Kenneth).

> "Loneliness because I miss my wife. Losing a loved one is an extremely difficult thing to go through, it's just indescribably bad. I just haven't got the words to say how bad it is, but I think every day is another day and every thing can only get better" (Alan).

Worry about the children was expressed by nine of the fathers. Simon explained "You are always worrying if you are doing the right or wrong thing for the children." A particular source of worry was expressed by three of the fathers "I fear the effect on the children of losing their mother" (Richard). "I worry about my daughter not being in a family. Sometimes I've even wondered if she would be happier living with her mother" (Len). "The worst thing is trying to explain why mum deserted the children" (Richard). Ron was able to foresee a problem he was likely to have with his daughter when she began to grow up: "The only thing I am bothered about is my daughter approaching puberty. Normally this would be explained by a mother, I'm not saying my ex- wife won't explain to her, but it is already a worry for me."

For six fathers the worst thing about being a lone father was the prejudice they encountered. Robert said he was "very, very annoyed about the school's attitude" and proceeded to list a number of incidents which had occurred since he had been on his own. Finally he had said "Every one seems to think that because I'm on my own they won't be fed properly, but I did most of the cooking when my wife was here anyway, because I'm the better cook." The following are comments from another three of these fathers:

> "There's a stigma to separation and divorce. I think society finds the concept of a man bringing up children on his own very, very difficult to cope with. People can understand the bloke walking off and leaving three kids, but they find it hard to understand what had happened to me" (Michael)

> "There's all this stigma attached to us. Esther Rantzen heightened awareness of child abuse but what it also did was magnify the problem so much that I have to consider every move that I make when it comes to how I behave in this house, how others perceive me outside, what happens if they go to school with a bruise etc. I'm not accountable to anyone inside here but ultimately I'm accountable to the law" (Adam).

> "The worst thing is stigma. A single father is looked down on by, I'm sorry to say, women. A man in their eyes should be out to work....it's like the so called female threat to man when a woman enters their work place. I am on their domain" (Bill).

A further 14 fathers disliked the restrictions lone fatherhood imposed upon them. Jason spoke of the "inability to do anything, even walk to the shops and buy a loaf of bread without arranging childcare or taking the children with you." Derek explained "I no longer have any freedom to do as I please." Some fathers mentioned the financial restriction they experienced "I can't just get up and go, partly this is because I miss the money I used to have when I was working" (Dave). "I'm restricted to when I can go out, financially restricted" (John). For other fathers the greatest restriction was lack of time. "There's not even the time to be ill yourself and recover properly when you are" (Colin). "Lack of time for a social life, particularly meeting girls. Also there never seems enough time to keep up with all the domestic chores" (Max).

In addition three fathers mentioned the monotony of their lives and described themselves as being "bored and fed up" (Don), "boredom and a feeling of despair" (Lee). Bob gave a fuller description of how he felt:

> "Don't get me wrong but sometimes I come into this room and I just feel as if I'm going daft. It gets that bad. You've got to come in and do the same thing every single day. It just gets a bit too much at times."

Despite the despair that was obviously felt by many of the fathers, the majority were able to name one aspect of lone fatherhood which they had come to enjoy. Table 5.9 below shows which aspects of lone parenthood these fathers considered to be the best. Of the 71 fathers who answered this question, the findings show that 28 regarded having care of the children to be the best thing about lone fatherhood. Occasionally this was added as an "after thought" by fathers who at first were going to say

"nothing". For example Nigel wrote "None (not to be recommended)" then added "P.S. I receive twice the love from my children, maybe that is the best thing." Richard also said "There are no good points or benefits to consider as best. Except perhaps receiving the children's undivided love, if that can be considered the best thing." This answer was significantly likely to have been given by fathers who said they had become closer to their children since being on their own ($P<0.03841$). Further comments from fathers who gave this answer include: "The best thing is the fact that you get a lot of time to spend with the children and it's fulfilling" (Simon). "It's got me closer to the kids. We can have a good time and I enjoy having them" (Bob). "The children and the pleasure they give you when they tell you they love you for no reason, just out of the blue" (Charles).

> "The best thing about being a lone father for me means that I am in charge of my children's welfare. Their welfare is paramount to me and it is not neglected any more as it is top of my list. Before I got custody it was not being catered for in any way" (Ron).

> "You get all the benefits of watching the children grow up and slowly develop into adults. The first time they read, count, first girl friend etc. The absent parent misses all that and it's a feeling all the money in the world can't buy - watching your child develop their own personality" (Adrian).

Table 5.9

The best thing about being a lone father.

Having the children	29
Independence	18
End of domestic friction	8
Other	4
Nothing	12
Total	71

No: missing 7

In line with the findings about lone mothers in Sharpe's (1984) study, several fathers found that they liked the freedom and independence they gained by being a lone father. This was described in a number of ways: "The satisfaction of knowing that I'm doing it on my own" (Lewis). "Not having to consider your partner when making decisions" (John). "Independence, having and being able to make decisions for yourself" (Rodney),

> "I enjoy being able to do things my way, not having someone saying 'I don't like it this way, can we do this?' or 'can we do that.' Now it's all my own way, how I like it, no one else coming in" (Barry).

Some fathers, however, saw the possible disadvantage of too much independence. Patrick, who had been a lone father for nine years said:

> "I get to do things the way I want. I wash up when I want to, not when my wife tells me to. But it's also very selfish, you can get too used to doing it. I'd like to get involved in a relationship where we live together, but I believe I would find that very difficult, because you develop your own way of doing things and to learn your way out of that into sharing is very hard."

> "I like the ability to be selfish and free and not have to answer to anybody...not that this is a good quality and has a tendency to lead to long term by oneself, relationships become a commodity" (Bill).

As Hardey (1989) and Sharpe (1984) found, lone parenthood appeared to be a preferred way of life for some of the fathers. Some of the divorced and separated fathers were obviously pleased to be away from their ex-wives and they regarded the absence of domestic friction as being the best thing about lone fatherhood. The answers from these fathers were all very much alike: "Not having to put up with a moaning wife" (Max). "No emotional grief from a partner" (Alvin). "Less domestic friction between spouse and spouse and children" (Matthew). "Not having a wife

nagging at me" (Don). For Grant the best thing was the changes that had occurred in his life since being on his own:

> "My whole life has changed and I am now doing so many different things, such as working in this Gingerbread group. Maybe a year ago, if you had said I would have been working with children, working with Gingerbread and have so many new friends I would not have believed you."

Gregory felt pleased with the fact that he now knew who his true friends were. "I would consider the friends I have now to be true friends, many are in a similar position to me and those who always treat me as an equal despite my lack of financial wealth."

As might be expected there was also a group of fathers (12) who considered that there was nothing good about being a lone parent. In addition seven fathers chose not to answer this question, suggesting that they too had discovered nothing good about their situation. Three of the widowed fathers gave this answer, possibly these fathers shared similar feelings to those expressed by Antony:

> "I feel I'm at an advantage from the majority of single parents, where they went through perhaps a bad marriage. Because despite the problems I had with my wife's drinking, it wasn't a bad marriage. Those who have been through, perhaps, a bad marriage enjoy the freedom of being on their own. But I miss having a relationship terribly and can't see any advantage at all of being on my own."

Typical comments from the divorced and separated included "I wouldn't think there are positive things about being a lone parent. When you are married you've got arguments and when you've got kids you've got arguments, so I don't see there's much difference" (Carl). Other replies were more brief: "None that I know of" (William), "Nothing at all is good about it for me" (Darren). James laughed at the

thought of a "best thing" about being on his own and said "Best? Is there something that's good about being on my own (more laughter). If there is then let me know because I haven't found it yet."

Finally the fathers were asked to show how they considered they were coping with lone fatherhood by, as before, rating themselves on a scale from 1-10, with 10 being the score indicating "coping fully".

Table 5.10

The father's rating of their satisfaction with lone parenthood

8-10	54
5- 7	21
0- 4	3
Total	78

This table shows that 54 (61%) of the fathers considered that they were highly satisfied with the way they were coping with being a lone father. Typical quotes include: "I'll give myself 10 out of 10. Overall I'm very happy with the way I am coping" (Paul). "10, I'm very happy doing what I'm doing at the moment". (Dave). It is likely that an even greater proportion of the fathers were highly satisfied because some of the fathers may have underestimated themselves. For example Paul said "I'd like to say 10 but I don't expect anyone else has rated themselves that high, so I'll go lower, say eight." Also, it is likely the fathers' view of how they were coping changed frequently. This was expressed by Jon: "It depends which day you ask me."

Fathers who rated themselves between 8-10 differed in a number of ways from the fathers who gave themselves a lower rating, however none of these differences were found to be significant. They were more likely to divorced or separated. Of the divorced and separated 48 (71%) rated themselves 8-10 compared to only four (40%) of the widowers. Both of the fathers who had never been married to their child's mother also gave themselves the highest score. Fathers who rated themselves as highly satisfied were also slightly more likely to have been on their own for over five

years (79%:65%) Other factors found to play a part in the fathers' satisfaction with lone fatherhood are: the availability to obtain child care at short notice and to have a day on their own at least once a week. They were also likely to have stated that they felt that they were receiving enough support at the time of the study. In addition employed fathers who rated themselves 8-10 were likely to have said that their income had either increased or remained the same. Of those who had given that reply 83% were highly satisfied compared to 59% who had experienced a decline in their income. Of the economically inactive fathers, those who had been away from employment for five years or over were more likely to rate themselves between 8-10 than those who had left the work force more recently (92%:52%). They were also more likely to have given up work specifically to be with their children because they considered it wrong to combine employment with childcare.

This chapter has looked at the support received by lone fathers and shows that the majority of lone fathers receive no outside help with domestic responsibilities or childcare. However the fathers quickly develop all the necessary skills and experience few problems. Emotional, and in some cases practical, support is usually given from friends and family at the onset of lone parenthood but is frequently withdrawn when the fathers appear to be coping with their new situation. Fathers are particularly likely to notice that their social life becomes unsatisfactory, or in some cases becomes non existent. In some cases this is because the father cannot afford to go out, or because he feels ill-at-ease mixing with couples. Other fathers find that their friends side with their ex-partner or simply stop calling round to see them. Without these friends to socialise with meeting people becomes very difficult and many fathers become lonely or isolated.

The findings also showed that despite the negative aspects of lone parenthood, such as loneliness and lack of money, most lone fathers are very pleased with the way they manage to cope on their own. Nearly all come to find at least one aspect of being on their own which they like and many find that living alone with their children can be enjoyable and sometimes can be regarded as an improvement to their previous life style.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

This study has argued that although lone mothers and lone fathers are faced with many common difficulties,lone fathers are disadvantaged in particular ways because of society's expectations of a man's role. Several of the problems they face have been dealt with in the previous chapters: the difficulties of coping with what is traditionally regarded as woman's work; housework and childcare, combining the "breadwinning" role with being a parent with sole responsibility for his children and managing on a reduced income. The support these fathers receive from kin and the wider community has also been examined. A number of debates about lone fathers will now be reviewed and the findings from this study used to explore them more closely.

6.1 Social isolation and loneliness.

Lone parents are commonly depicted in the literature as being socially isolated (see e.g. Marsden 1969; McNeill Taylor 1985; George and Wilding (1972)). Their disadvantaged economic situation is particularly thought to cause difficulties in relation to paying for baby sitters and childcare. Consequently they take part in few social activities outside the home and have little contact with other adults. Other accounts (e.g.Shaw, 1991) suggest that lone parents are not socially isolated but lonely. Loneliness is an emotional feeling and does not depend on the amount of social contact; anyone can feel lonely even if they are with a crowd of people. However, for lone parents, loneliness is likely to mean being without a close adult companion to talk to, who loves and understands them. For lone mothers this emotional intimacy may be replaced by an alternative source of support and intimacy received from same sex friendship networks (Elliot 1986). However, lone fathers are generally cut off from forming informal relationships with women (Hipgrave, 1982) and the relationships they form with men are likely to be shallow (Allan, 1979).

Chapter five showed that even if lone fathers have a network of friends and relations many are likely to regard loneliness as the worst aspect of lone parenthood. For each

father the word "lonely" appears to mean something specific. For some loneliness results from having no close adult company, particularly in the evening when the children are in bed. Others feel lonely because they have no-one to turn to with whom they can discuss problems about the children or to share experiences. Unsurprisingly, widowers and those who had lived with their partner for a number of years are particularly likely to say they feel lonely because they miss their ex-partner.

However, there is also evidence to show that some lone fathers find that lone parenthood restricts their opportunity for social involvement and leads to them becoming isolated. Typical quotes from fathers in this study who appear to be isolated include: "I never go out socially, I haven't been to the pub or anything for two years. All I do is stay at home or go to my mother's or backwards and forwards up the school" (Don). "I don't go out. In all the time I've had the children (three years) I've only been out once socially without the children. That was two weeks ago to go to my sister's silver wedding anniversary" (Eddie).

As Allan (1979) suggests, it appeared evident that for some lone fathers isolation can occur even before the onset of lone parenthood. Family circumstances, in some cases, can make it extremely difficult to make friends. For example, Antony's partner had a drinking problem, and until her death he spent all his free time at home with her. Consequently, fathers without friends and other sources of emotional and practical support have to face the initial difficulties of lone parenthood on their own or turn to professional sources of support such as Relate, Cruse, social workers or the church. The findings also showed that for other lone fathers isolation occurs after their partnership ends and as they gradually lose touch with the friends they had prior to lone parenthood. A third of all the fathers in this study said they had lost touch with their friends since being on their own and others said they now had fewer friends. In addition over one half of the economically inactive fathers said they no longer saw colleagues, from their working days.

Studies of the divorced and separated, for example Hart (1976), show that the withdrawal of friends can occur for a number of reasons. This study found some men

who are married or in a steady relationship appear to become reluctant to remain friends with separated or divorced fathers because they regard them as a threat. This threat can be either a sexual threat or fear that they too will be left on their own. In addition some mutual friends either side with the ex-partner, or withdraw from both partners in order to avoid having to take sides. Lone fathers might also find that their friends gradually see less of them because they feel embarrassed, awkward or disapproval about the new family situation. Don is just one father who spoke about how his friends' attitude towards him changed when he became a lone father: "When I do see them, they don't feel or act the same towards me."

Social networks may also break down because the "main actor" (Hart, 1976, p.165) is responsible for breaking off his ties with friends and colleagues. The findings showed the "lack of ease" (Allan, 1996, p.96) many lone fathers experience with their previous friendships. Lone fathers are particularly likely to feel uneasy about remaining friends with couples and complain about feeling out of place when socialising with them. In addition the changed circumstances of lone fathers reduce their ability, or desire, to join in activities with their friends. Lone fathers, regardless of their employment position, are likely to experience a decline in their income and many can not afford to join in activities with their friends, particularly if childcare costs have to be considered. Adam's only outing was for three hours a week to attend a counselling course and he described his situation as being "...totally cocooned in the home. I can't afford to go out and even if I did I couldn't afford the childcare." Other lone fathers are likely to gradually find that they no longer have much in common with their friends. Activities such as going for a drink no longer appeal to them and they prefer to spend their money on the children or the home.

Apart from the above mentioned reasons the onset of lone parenthood can also result in geographical mobility. Lone fathers may move home in order to make a fresh start, find employment or to be nearer to relations and this often prevents friendships from continuing. The findings also showed that some fathers simply drift away from their previous friends and others have no wish to keep in contact with ex-colleagues with whom they had very little in common.

As might be expected socially isolated fathers are most likely to be economically inactive. Lack of employment not only cuts them off from stimulation and conversation with work colleagues, several miss having a regular daily routine. Fathers with school aged children are likely to find the hours their children are out of the house are very long and boring. Philip, whose only source of social support was a similarly placed lone father, described how they spent a typical day together:

> "Say we are decorating, we might go to Wickes (builder's merchants) for a piece of wood and spend two hours getting it. We make it a sort of semi social outing. We spend longer than we would normally because we know we've got so much time. We spread the day. We look a lot, we dream a lot but that's that.

Many lone fathers are able to avoid isolation by remaining in employment. They enjoy the social contact and find that employers and colleagues provide practical and emotional support. However, not all work provides an opportunity for social contact and some jobs allow little time for chatting to others. This is shown by the following father who described his working day:

> "People don't have time, nobody talks about children or family life. It's just get on and get the job done, nothing's spoke about. I mean people just want to get their work done, they are not interested in anything outside of getting it done" (Bob).

In addition, as George and Wilding (1972) found, social involvement after work is likely to be restricted by the fathers' responsibilities. At the time when work colleagues are likely to go out lone fathers have to be home preparing meals, caring for their children and also doing the housework. Robert was just one of the working fathers who said "I don't socialise. By the time I've been to work, done all the jobs that need doing here, I've absolutely no time to call my own."

Some lone fathers attempt to avoid isolation by joining a club or an organisation such

as a support group for single people as this enables the lone parent to mix with other similarly placed people. Some find the experience very useful as besides companionship it also provides a means of comparing themselves with others (see French, 1991). However as Hart's (1976) study revealed,clubs which specifically aim to facilitate friendship are not always successful. Chapter five showed that generally lone fathers who join a group hope to meet other men in the same situation but instead they frequently find that they are greatly out- numbered by single women. The following quotes show that those who do manage to meet other lone fathers sometimes find that the experience to be depressing instead of helpful as they had imagined it would be: "I tried a lone parent group but I didn't like it. All the men were discussing their problems. It was very depressing" (Bill). "I made one trip to a support group and it depressed me so much I never went again" (Patrick). Others are likely to discover that often they had nothing in common with other lone fathers they met because the ages of their children were greatly apart or the circumstances leading up to lone parenthood were entirely different. Other fathers are likely to discover that often they have nothing in common with other lone fathers they met because the ages of their children are greatly apart or the circumstances leading up to lone parenthood were entirely different. Joining such organisations also, as George and Wilding (1972) suggest, requires confidence to meet people and mix easily and this can sometimes be missing at the end of a partnership. Robert was one such father: "I'd like to join a club. I've never been brave enough, I've never been sort of brave enough to walk through the door."

A few lone fathers attend educational courses or do voluntary work, but as we have seen from Adam's case, this provides company for only a few hours a week. Other fathers with young children, who have no outside employment, help with activities at their children's play group or school. However this tends to be a means of getting out of the house rather than a way of mixing with other adults. Feelings of being out of place are common and causes some fathers to give up helping. Phillip, for example explained: "You feel people are looking at you... you're still a minority... and saying "Oh,it's a man' or 'Oh yes, that's the chap' because it's mainly mums who do that sort of thing" (Phillip).

A viable solution to the problem of isolation is to find another partner. However for lone fathers whose daily routine consists of little more than walking to the local school, it is extremely difficult to meet a prospective partner. Not only does lack of money restrict what the fathers do during their leisure time. Robert explained that even if he did meet a lady he would not have the money to take her for a drink. Other fathers either have difficulty finding childcare during the evening or as in Antony's case, are reluctant to go out socially without taking their children along as well. Fathers who are in the older age group and have young children are likely to face a further difficulty if they want to form a relationship with a woman of the same age. Doug (aged 47) explained that if the woman has teenage or adult children she is unlikely to want to start caring for young children again. If her children are still young she will not want to care for more.

Despite the obvious loneliness and the social isolation of some lone fathers, it would be wrong to believe that they all feel unhappy or depressed. On the contrary, it was found that most appear to accept the restrictions on their lives and some find that there are advantages to their new life-style. Others appear to consider that "being a lone parent despite its problems might be seen as an improvement" (Hardey, 1989). As shown in studies of lone mothers (see e.g. Shaw, 1991; Sharpe, 1984; Hardey, 1989) many lone fathers find they enjoy the greater degree of freedom they have without a partner. Typical comments from fathers in this study include: "I like the fact that I haven't got to consult anyone. If we want to go out we just go" (Tony). "I enjoy not having anyone to answer to, you can come and go as you please" (Mike). I enjoy being able to do things without being answerable to anyone. If we want to lie in bed we can do that" (Rob). Like the lone mothers in Sharpe's (1984, p.209) study, some fathers find that it is a "welcome release" to be on their own. This was expressed by Lewis who said "There's no bloody nagging now! Her family turn it into an art form!" A further emotional gain lone fathers experienced is a "feeling of doing a hard job (that is parenting) well" (Shaw, 1991, p.147). This is demonstrated by the following remarks:

"I feel proud now of the kids. When I go to school assemblies and

watch them act out parts in infant plays, or when I hear my son reading or see him attempt to do things he's never done before, I feel quite proud of my children" (Eddie).

"I feel I've proved that a man can look after a baby. Sorry if that sounds odd, but I have become more and more aware of attempts to say men should not be with children" (Cliff). "It's hard being a lone parent, but it's good when your children are doing well at school and you feel that they are fairly happy, whereas in the past they were not" (Mark).

6.2 Stigma.

As the following extracts show, a further debate exists in the literature about people's attitude towards lone fathers. Cashmore (1985, p.251) cites Ferri and Robertson (1976) who claim that "Society looks askance at the father who gives up work to care for his children thereby becoming dependent on state aid .... our social system is not geared towards helping them." Referring to both mothers and fathers, they continue "Society's attitudes are frequently judgemental rather than accommodating, suspicious rather than sympathetic." In contrast Cashmore (1985,p.251) in his study of lone parents argues that lone fathers are not discriminated against to the same extent as lone mothers and suggests that within a decade attitudes towards them had changed. "Whilst in the 1970s society might have "looked askance" at men who opted to rear children unassisted by women, in the mid 1980s such men are looked on as positively virtuous."

This study found that stigma towards lone fathers does still exist in the 1990's. There were a few indications that some of the fathers were regarded as virtuous but many fathers spoke about feeling stigmatized. Lone fathers, however, appear to be stigmatised for different reasons than lone mothers.

The apparent change in attitudes suggested by Cashmore (1985) could be due to the different views held by society towards all lone parents (see e.g Duncan and Edwards,

1997). One view about lone parents is that they are victims who need help to improve their lifestyle. This view has led to a number of organisations being set up, for example the National Council for Unmarried Mothers (renamed the NCOPF in the 1960s), to help lone parents and their children and to campaign for major changes in the law. Others regard lone parents as being a natural result of the many changes which have occurred in society since the 1960s. Attitudes to sex outside of marriage, and marriage itself, have led to an increase of births outside marriage and changes in the divorce law have led to even more lone parent families. A further view is that lone mothers choose this lifestyle in preference to being controlled by a man. These parents regard lone parenthood as having emotional and financial advantages not found in traditional family life. These views all share the belief that lone parents want to improve their situation but constraints make it difficult for them to do so. However, negative views of lone parents have increased since the beginning of the 1980s when the Conservative government was installed (McCaskill 1993). Lone parents are regarded by many as a social threat and they are labelled as being 'problem parents', who in turn, raise problem children. This negative view originated from unfavourable evidence relating to illegitimate children and those from one parent families carried out from the 1950s (see Page, 1984). It is now realised that child adjustment following lone parenthood is influenced by numerous interacting factors (see e.g. Hetherington and Arasteh 1988) but government ministers encouraged this stigma to remain by calling for a return to 'Victorian values' with the 'immorality' of single parents being blamed for many evils' (MaCaskill, 1993 p.44).

A result of this negative view is that lone parents are likely to feel their parenting is under surveillance. Marsden (1969, p.100) described "feelings of ostracism" and a sense of stigma among the lone mothers he studied. One mother in his study expressed the fear that people would say she was not capable of looking after her children. A mother in a more contemporary study (Hyatt and Parry Crooke, 1990, p.19) said "One parent families have to work ten times harder and keep their kids ten times cleaner to prove themselves able parents." From this study it appears that, like lone mothers, lone fathers also feel under surveillance. Adam, who lived with two young children, described his situation as "being under a magnifying glass."

Lone fathers also have to cope with the increased sensitivity towards child abuse in recent years. Adam continued by explaining how he felt that he had to consider every aspect of his behaviour inside and out of the home because of how others might perceive him. "What happens if they (his children) go to school with a bruise?" he asked.

In addition it is generally thought that lone fathers find it more difficult to cope with childcare and other domestic matters than lone mothers do when left on their own. For example the 1993 British Social Attitudes report (Jowell et al. 1993) showed that less than a quarter of the respondents thought a single father could bring up a child as well as a married couple. When asked about lone mothers less than a third gave the same reply. The findings in this study also revealed that people do not expect a lone father to be able to cope. However, it appears that the majority of lone fathers are soon able to overcome any childcare and domestic difficulties they initially experience and nearly all are satisfied with the way they manage on their own.

> "There's a stigma to lone parenthood. People seem to have a strange idea I can not cope. I know I surprise them when they come in here because the place is tidy and the children are nicely dressed and well behaved" (Graham)

> "When it first happened (wife died) everyone wanted to know but as time went on I felt that they were just here because they wanted to see how a 'mere male' was managing with the kids on his own. They thought a man wouldn't be able to cope with children and everything" (Richard).

Because of this perception that a lone father cannot cope, Cashmore (1985, p.251) points out that "such men are looked upon as positively virtuous and are likely to be congratulated whereas mothers are not." This study showed that praise is not always acceptable because lone fathers feel it emphasises the fact that they are different. Charles, for example, felt praise from women was patronising and said: "I notice

women praising me but they take no notice of women in the same situation. I don't ask for praise and don't want it for caring for my own children."

Edwards and Duncan (1996) suggest that a further reason for lone parents to be seen as a social threat has developed in recent years alongside the rapid increase in lone parents and government concern about the perceived need for cuts in public expenditure. The State benefit system has been seen by some commentators as a cause of families splitting up and in addition it is suggested that lone parents are content to remain on benefits, rather than get a job and improve their economic situation (see e.g. Murray, 1990). This stigma is generally associated with divorced and single mothers, however, there is evidence that lone fathers also attract a great deal of unwanted attention if they give up their employment to care for their children. Some fathers feel that women, in particular, look down on them because they are not working. Adrian expressed his feelings: "I do hate this stigma, I feel I'm being treated like a third class citizen since I've been at home." It appears that most lone fathers miss being at work but consider they are "faced - as they perceived it - with no choice" (Barker 1994, p.144) if they want to fulfil their caring responsibilities. Lone fathers are particularly likely to miss the psychological aspects of work such as having status and a greater self esteem. The following father missed having the respect of other people and explained:

> "I don't like it when people say to you 'what do you do?' or 'what's your profession?' When you say 'oh I don't do anything, I'm a lone father' they look at you as if to say 'eh, what's that then?'" (Carl).

Giving up employment also means that lone fathers come up against even more stigma due to the fact they have to rely on state benefits as their main source of income. Since 1979 lone fathers, like lone mothers, have been able to claim state benefits without having to sign on as unemployed. Consequently lone fathers do not experience any pressure from the benefits office to return to work. However, this study found that some lone fathers choose to have their benefits paid into their bank account in order to ensure that other people will not know they are receiving it.

Fathers who have to queue at the post office are likely to feel degraded. Doug, for example said: " I feel like rubbish" and he explained that he and his friends always looked around when they were in the queue at the post office, waiting for their benefits, in order to see who was staring at them.

In addition to the stigma of being a lone father and, in some cases, being away from employment many fathers also face the "stigma of poverty in both the absolute and relative sense" (Hart, 1976, p.147). Chapter three showed that lone fathers have to make a number of changes in their expenditure and many frequently go without items for themselves, in order to ensure that there are as few changes as possible for their children. Some endeavour to ensure that their children avoid the stigma attached to lone parenthood by giving them the same as their friends from two parent families. One such father was Paul who spoke about his daughter: "She doesn't miss out on very much. I try to let her have all the things she needs and I make sure she doesn't go without a lot compared to other children who have both parents." Expenditure on items for the home, outings and holidays are also likely to be reduced and in addition many lone fathers have to reduce expenditure on their clothing and make do with buying items from jumble or car boot sales, receiving "hand me downs" from friends and relatives, or doing without, thereby conferring a sense of degradation on the men who had not been used to living that way.

6.3 Strategies to combine childcare and employment.

It appears that some of the problems lone parents experience could be overcome if they obtained employment. As we have already seen, many commentators consider that lone parents are content to remain on State benefits and do not want to go out to work. It will now be argued that a large number of lone parents do manage to go out to work even though their access to the labour market is more restricted than that of other parents. Rather than concentrate on those who are economically inactive, more attention should be given to the way that those in employment manage to over- come the constraints they face. This chapter will now show that these lone fathers actively develop "strategies" within their constraints which enable them to combine the role

of breadwinner with that of principal carer. The concept of a "strategy" has been employed in a number of ways (see Crow, 1989), but it is generally accepted by sociologists that strategies are forward looking plans which individuals make to control their lives and achieve long or medium term goals. Strategies differ from coping devices which enable individuals to "get by" or manage on a long term basis but require no long term plans to be made.

In this study 48% of the lone fathers were employed. This figure reflects national figures from the Labour Force Survey (1993/4) which suggests that 54% of all lone fathers with children under 16 were employed. For employed lone mothers the figure was lower (39% employed) but these mothers were more likely to work longer hours than mothers in couples (Sly, 1994). Chapter three shows that having employment is very important for lone fathers. They not only work to provide an income to support their family but also enjoy the intrinsic rewards they receive, such as increased self esteem and job satisfaction. Few of these fathers in this study explicitly mentioned making "plans" to enable them to go out to work; however, in several cases this could be inferred from the accounts they gave of the difficulties they had experienced since becoming lone parents. It is evident from the findings that lone fathers have to make a number of changes to their daily working routine in order to remain in employment. One strategy many fathers develop is to reduce the number of hours they spend at work. This enables the fathers to spend more time with their children but it is often at great expense to their career prospects and income. Fathers are seldom able to do over-time or participate in meetings or activities after the normal working day. A few other fathers have to make more drastic cuts to their working day and change from full-time to part-time employment (part time work in this study is based on the fathers' own assessment - not the number of hours worked in a basic week). This plan frequently involves taking the complexities of the state benefit system into account and ensuring that they work the right amount of hours and receive maximum benefits to make employment financially viable. For example, one of the fathers in this sample (Peter) decided that the best way for him to remain in employment as a van driver was to work for just a few hours once a week. This allowed him to earn the maximum disregard (£15) without affecting his Income Support. Robert, a

gardener, preferred to work longer hours and have his income "topped up" with Family Credit. He explained:

> "I wanted to work. I don't like depending on the State so I decided to fit my hours in with the children's school day. I went to see about Family Credit and found it gives me another £35 each week."

Other fathers devise a plan which enables them to work the same length day but they change their hours to be more compatible with the hours their children are at school. The following two fathers show the advantages this enabled them to gain. Trevor took on a new job as a milk man and by working an early morning shift he was able to return home in time to get his children off to school and then do his household chores. Tony had his working hours changed by his employer and he found this enabled him to make a new, more convenient plan for the care of his children. He was now able to prepare and take his children to school and then have time for housework before starting work. Before the change Tony had to "get the children up very early, 6.15, take them across to my sister at 7.00. She would give them their breakfast, take them to school then pick them up from school and give them their tea."

Another strategy adopted by some lone fathers is to change from being an employee to being self-employed. This gives the fathers the flexibility to choose the hours they spend at work. However, one disadvantage of self employment for some fathers is that the evenings often have to be spent doing paperwork instead of relaxing with their children. In contrast, this study showed that some lone fathers look for more money, and job security when they become, or are about to become, the sole breadwinner, and this is not always provided by self-employment. Lewis changed from being self-employed to being an employee. He explained "I decided to work for a managing director as a chauffeur. This was before my ex-wife actually left home but after I found out she had a boy friend." There are also fathers who, on becoming lone parents, manage to find opportunities on which they can subsequently base long -term plans. One such father, Patrick, described how he moved many miles from his home

town to be near his sister and immediately found a casual job as a debt collector which he combined with benefits. Patrick decided to remain in this type of employment and to overcome the benefit trap by expanding his work to take on more companies.

As we saw in chapter three, on becoming lone parents many fathers suspend their breadwinning role in order to fulfil their childcare commitments. There is no reason to assume that these fathers are lazy and do not want to work. The majority appear to dislike being on benefits and many have particular aspects of working which they miss such as social contact, status and having a regular routine. Virtually all lone fathers appear keen to return to work once their children need less of their time. Chapter four shows that many lone fathers spend the period they are at home making long term plans for the future. A popular aspiration among lone fathers is to invest time in education, with the long term aim of finding employment which will bring them out of the poverty trap and eliminate the constraints of childcare. Such plans take into account the needs of their children at the present time and enables the fathers to continue controlling their lives by allowing them to enter professions with a 9.00-5.00 day, Monday to Friday routine. Carl, for example who had decided against his previous line of employment which had involved evening and weekend work and said "I have decided to go and train. That's where I want to go and that's where I see a better future." He continued:

> I've been accepted on an Access course at (name of college). It starts in September. I'm then planning to do a Law degree. My son starts school in September so then I'm in the position that I can work around him. I will only need a childminder for a couple of hours a day and that's quite acceptable in society as a whole" (Carl).

Another option considered by lone fathers is self-employment because they realise this would give them a more flexible means of employment and would enable work to be fitted around the children's day. However, because such work does not always provide security, stability or a regular income some fathers realise that they need to

give thought to an alternative future. For example Adam was also taking into account the need to recognise the personal changes that had occurred to him since becoming a lone parent and so alongside his long term plans for returning to his previous work as a self employed photographer, he had also started training for a possible future as a counsellor. Antony was prepared for the possibility things might not work out successfully and for that reason he had also decided to remain in contact with former work colleagues. If the right opportunity came along he would be able to return to being an employee.

Although strategies are generally defined as conscious decisions to structure actions, Anderson et al (1994, p.20) claim they "may also manifest themselves in conscious decisions not to act." The writers suggest that, for example, an individual may review their labour market position and then decide, for various reasons, to remain in their present job for the next period of time. Findings in this study revealed that some lone fathers make a rational plan to remain out of the labour market for a period of time, then in many cases, return to the same type of work they had been doing previously. One reason given for making this decision is that the fathers do not feel it is right to work while they have young children to care for. Fathers, particularly those with pre-school children, are concerned about the cost and availability of childcare. Others are concerned about the financial disincentives of the benefit system. These fathers have calculated the amount of money they would receive from earnings and decided that it would not be financially worthwhile for them to go out to work and pay for childcare. Charles for example explained: "Right now employment for me would not be financially viable, my wages would be taken up by childcare costs. I've decided to go back to work when all the children are in school and settled."

If a lone father does not have a strategy this does not necessarily mean that he has never made plans for the future. This study showed that sometimes strategies can be unsuccessful and in these cases the fathers may have to abandon their long time plans. Instances of lone fathers who were unsuccessful in their strategies were found among the fathers who, on becoming lone parents, planned to combine employment

with their domestic commitments. It is evident that these fathers continued in employment until unforseen circumstances such as redundancy or childcare difficulties forced them to remain at home full time. Doug was one such father. Doug gave up work to care for his terminally ill wife and after her death he planned to return to work in the motor industry. To help achieve this aim he moved house to live near his eldest daughter from a previous marriage. His daughter moved in with Doug to help care for his children, however, after just a short time she decided that she needed time on her own. Doug then devised several coping strategies to try to combine work with childcare but these all proved to be unsuccessful and he had to eventually abandon his plan to remain in employment.

Some fathers who are at home full time with their children may not make plans or preparations to obtain employment, had instead developed strategies that enable them to get out of the house on a regular basis. A popular strategy is to do voluntary work which can frequently offer work experience upon which plans can be built. Scott, who had a voluntary driving job with the social services was now beginning to think about his future and saw paid work with the social services as an attractive option. Another father (Martin) helped at the local primary school which his sons attended and was beginning to consider the possibility of becoming a teacher himself.

There was also evidence in this study that a few fathers were not making plans and they appeared to have less control over their lives, but it is wrong to consider these fathers to be lazy or unwilling to come off state benefits and find employment. Whether or not strategies are made depends very much on the available resources. The resources needed by these fathers include skills and educational qualifications which can be used to gain employment. As was shown in chapter four (table 4.2) "non-planners" are much less likely to have educational qualifications than fathers who were making plans to return to work. A second resource is the local job market. Lack of suitable work in their area can make it difficult for some lone fathers to plan ahead. For example Dave said "I can't see how the government can say there are any jobs out there. I certainly can't see any around here." Access to the wider labour market, in some cases, may be restricted by lack of transport or a lack of desire to

move home and uproot the children. Fathers also find that although they would like to make plans they are restricted by the cost and availability of suitable child care. In addition the findings showed that some fathers who do not make plans have personal characteristics which they consider would act against their desire to obtain employment. Among this group of fathers were some who were resigned to the fact that they were too old to be offered work. One such father, aged 50, said:

> "I'm not saying someone in their 50s and 60s should be out on a limb but why should they take on an older person? There's so many young whiz kids and they can't find anything, so what chance have I got?" (Nick)

Health is a further difficulty which constrains some fathers from planning ahead. For example three fathers were found to have a disability and two were suffering from stress. Thomas mentioned that his son's health problem kept him from thinking about work. Very few fathers appear reluctant to give thought to obtaining employment; Just two fathers in this study mentioned that they preferred being at home: Kenneth had taken early retirement and although he would like to have a part time job, found that he was enjoying himself so much at home he was reluctant to make any plans. Noel was also enjoying himself at home and, although he had spent a lot of time thinking about work he could do, he had not yet developed any plans.

6.4 Conclusion

The general picture which has emerged from this study is that lone fathers should be recognised as a distinct group of lone parents. There seems little doubt that they share a number of the difficulties experienced by lone mothers, however, lone fathers face particular difficulties because the principal responsibility for care of children is usually associated with mothers. This chapter has focused on three debates about lone parents; social isolation and loneliness, stigma and employment and the findings showed that, like lone mothers, many lone fathers find that lone parenthood leads to social isolation and stigmatisation (albeit by a route distinct to that followed by lone

mothers). In addition, lone fathers who want to go out to work face similar constraints as lone mothers and attempt to develop strategies to enable them to successfully combine employment with childcare.

The factors which can sometimes lead to individuals becoming isolated when a partnership ends include lack of employment, a decline in income and loss of interest in activities previously shared with friends (see e.g. Hart, 1976; Allan 1979). In other cases friends withdraw their friendship because they feel embarrassed about the new family situation. This study found that lone fathers are particularly likely to find that some of their friends disapprove of their having custody of the children. They also have difficulty finding male friends who are in the same position as themselves.

Stigma is generally associated with divorced and single mothers because it is considered by some commentators that these mothers are content to remain on benefits instead of going out to work. However, the findings from this study confirmed lone fathers also experience stigma. Those who remain at home with their children are likely to be looked down on because of the expectation that a man should go out to work. Like lone mothers they are also likely to experience the stigma of poverty. Many also feel that their parenting is under surveillance, particularly as it is generally thought that men are unable to cope with childcare and domestic responsibilities.

It was also argued that despite the constraints that lone parents face many lone parents want to work and manage to develop strategies which enable them to remain in the labour force or to return when their children need less care. Lone fathers face particular difficulties because the majority enter lone parenthood at a different stage of their employment career than lone mothers. This frequently means making changes to the hours they work and is often at great expense to their career prospects and income. Other fathers look for employment with hours which are compatible with family life.

As the number of lone parents continues to grow it is evident that more research needs to concentrate on the specific difficulties that lone fathers experience. From the preceding findings it is possible only to speculate what the future might hold for lone

fathers. With more fathers taking on the responsibilities usually associated with mothers, society's concepts of what is appropriate behaviour for men might change. Lone fathers would no longer be considered "odd" and consequently much of the stigma associated with their role might disappear. Isolation also might become less of a problem when fathers feel that they are accepted by the rest of society. These changes may also affect the nature of men's employment. As more fathers feel that it is socially acceptable to take sole responsibility for their children more employers will find that they need to change the structure of work. Working hours may decline, part - time employment increase and the importance of leave for childcare will be recognised. This might be referred to as the more optimistic scenario for future developments.

On the other hand it has to be recognised that it is very difficult to change the views that influential groups in mainstream society have held for many years. Throughout this century it has been considered that mothers should care for their children and a father should be the breadwinner. In addition, there has always been stigma towards lone parents (see e.g. Page, 1994). Although most stigma nowadays is directed at lone mothers because it is thought that they deliberately avoid working, it is possible that in time society might begin to regard lone fathers in the same negative way. In addition changes may not come easily to employers who may continue to expect their male employees to work long hours with no time off for family responsibilities even though this may mean that they lose skilled workers. This more negative scenario is more plausible if certain assumptions about the future direction of economic and social policy are made, less so if alternative assumptions are adopted. Either way, the future prospects for lone fathers and their dependants will be shaped to a large extent by forces beyond their control.

APPENDIX I - GLOSSARY OF LONE FATHERS

Fathers who completed a mail survey

ADRIAN is 47 years old, divorced and has been a lone parent for 4 years. His children are boys aged 7 and 6. Adrian was employed as a groundsman/maintenance at a swannery but has been out of work for 5 years.

ANDREW is 46 years old. He is divorced and has been a lone parent for 3 years, he has three daughters aged 12, 8 and 6years. Andrew was unemployed for two years before being on his own but now works from home as a self employed commodity broker.

ASHLEY is 38 years old, he has been separated for nearly 2 years and lives with his daughter aged 61/2. Ashley was employed as a British Telecom technician but has been unemployed for 8 months.

BERNARD is aged 38, divorced and has been on his own with his daughter of 14 and son 16 for 5 years. He is employed as a tyre and exhaust fitter.

BILL is 44 years old and lives with his 2 daughters aged 19 and 13 years and his son aged 6. He is divorced and has been a lone parent for 2 years. Bill was employed as a buyer for an electrical contactor for 16 years, but just after he became a lone parent the firm went into voluntary liquidation.

BRIAN is aged 40. He is divorced and has lived on his own with his son aged 6 for 3 years. Brian works as a community tutor (youth) in a community college.

BRUCE is 31 years old, divorced and has been living with his two daughters aged 7 and 11 for 3 years. Bruce has been working as a zoo keeper for 3 years.

CALLUM is aged 39, divorced and has been a lone parent for 5 years, He has one

son aged 11 and manages to combine caring for his child with employment as a production engineer.

CHARLES is aged 37 and has been a lone parent for 4 years. He is divorced and has 3 daughters living with him aged 8, 7 and 6 also a son aged 4. Charles was a dock labourer but gave this up to care for his children.

CHRIS is 52 years old, divorced and has been a lone parent for 8 years. His children are a boy aged 14 and a girl aged 12. Chris's previous employment was a stock controller but he has been unemployed for 12 years. He is now hoping to study aromatherapy.

CLIFF is aged 41, divorced and has been a lone parent for just over 2 years. He lives with his daughter aged 6 and his son aged 3. Cliff is employed as an accountancy assistant.

DANIEL is 34 years old and has been a lone parent for 4 years. He is divorced and lives with son aged 9. Daniel' s previous occupation was a joiner but he gave up work when he became a lone parent.

DARREN is aged 31. He has been widowed for 4 years and now lives with his son who is 4 years 9 months old. Darren has been out of work for 2 years, he was previously employed as an accounts assistant.

DONALD is 29 years old and has been separated for 6 months. Donald has 1 son aged 2. He owns a small computer company supplying software to the construction industry.

EDWARD 37 years old and separated . He has been a lone parent for 7 years and shares his home with his 9 year old son. Edward was a sergeant in the army, but gave this up when he became a lone parent as he claims a "lone parent in the forces becomes desk bound".

GARRY is aged 38 and has always lived on his own with his daughter, who is now aged 13. Garry is employed as a lecturer and has worked in his present job for almost 2 years.

GEOFF is 40 years old, divorced and has 1 child living with him, a son aged 12. Geoff was employed as a HGV driver but gave this up 6 years ago when he became a lone parent. Geoff is now disabled as the result of a road trafic accident and so will be unable to return to the same type of work and so he is hoping to retrain for future employment.

GEORGE is 27 years old and has been a lone parent for just over a year. He is divorced and has his two daughters living with him who are aged 2.5 and 5 years. George is unable to work because of a bad back, he gave no details of how long he has been out of work or what previous employment he has had.

GORDON is aged 31. He is divorced and has been living alone with his son of 2 years for 2 years. Gordon is currently working part-time as a cleaner and claiming Family Credit.

GREGORY is 32 years old, divorced and has lived alone with his two children of 5 and 7 for 3 years. Gregory gave up employment as a film planner/platemaker in the printing trade 1.5 years ago, since then he has taken an Access course and is now at university studying to become a primary school teacher.

IAN is 35 years old. He is separated and has cared for his daughter of 10 and his son of 7 for 1 year. Ian is employed as a purchasing manager.

JIM is 41 years old, divorced and has 6 children living with him; daughters aged 6 and 11 and sons aged, 7, 10, 14 and 17. Jim gave up his employment as a panel beater and sprayer 3 years ago when he become a lone parent.

JOHN is 41 years old and living with his daughter of 19 (non dependent) and his son 13. He is widowed and has been a lone parent for 2 years. John is a tax manager for

a firm of accountants.

KEITH is 34 years old. He is divorced and has been a lone parent for 4 years. He has three sons and a daughter, but did not give their ages. Keith has been employed for 4 years as a part time counter in a book makers. KEN is 47 years old, divorced and has lived on his own with his children for 10 years. His daughter is now aged 17 and his son 14. Ken is employed as a postal officer.

KENNETH is aged 55. He has been widowed for just over two years and lives with his daughters who are aged 17 and 12. Kenneth was employed as a Radar Engineer, but had to take early retirement due to the stress caused by the death of his wife.

KEVIN is aged 39. He is divorced and has been a lone parent for 4 years and lives with son aged 8. Kevin did a one year joinery course 4 years ago, but has not worked since.

LEE is aged 47, divorced and has been a lone parent for 2.5 years. He lives with his 2 children a girl aged 15 and a boy 13. Lee has been employed as a bus driver for 14 years.

LEN is aged 42, separated, and has been a lone parent for 3 years. He shares his home with his daughter aged 9, a lodger and an au-pair. Len is a RMN staff nurse and has been employed in nursing for 14 years.

LEWIS is 40 years old, divorced and has 3 childre. He lives with his daughters who are aged 16 and 12. Lewis is employed, and is a chauffer to a managing director.

MALCOM is 38 years old and divorced. For 2 years he has had sole care of his son aged 8 and his daughter aged 12. Malcom previously worked as a financial consultant, but has been unemployed since becoming a lone parent.

MARK is aged 42 and has been a lone parent for 2 years. He is divorced and lives with his 4 children; daughters aged 18, 14, 12 and a son of 8 years. Mark is a self

employed carpenter and joiner.
MAX is 46 years old, divorced and has been a lone parent for 2 years. Max has 2 children, a girl aged 5 and a son aged 9. His daughter lives with his ex wife and Mark has lived alone with his son of 9 for 2 years. He has been employed as a Local Authority Finance Officer for 8 years.

NICK is 50 years old. He is divorced and has been a lone parent for over 11 years, he has one son aged 15. Nick has been out of work for 14 years.

NIGEL is 39 years old. He is divorced and has a daughter of 10 and a son aged 6 and has been living on his own with his 2 children for 5 years. has been employed as a production director at a packaging and design company for 2 years. Before this he was in the Army.

PAT is 27 years old and lives with his 6 year old son. He is divorced and has been a lone parent for 5 years Pat was previously employed as a weaver (textiles) and has been out of work for 5 years.

RICHARD is 43 years old. He has been widowed for 1 year and has 2 daughters aged 4 and 6. Richard was a self employed electician but he has been out of work since his wife died.

RODNEY is aged 49. He is separated and has been a lone parent for 6 months. He has 1 daughter living with him aged 11. Rodney is a leading trackman for British Rail where he has worked for 20 years.

SEAN is aged 33, separated and has been a lone parent for 3 years. He lives with his daughter who is 3 years old and gave up working as a truck driver in order to take care of her.

STEVEN is 41 years old, divorced and has been a lone parent for 3 years. Steven lives on his own with 2 daughters aged 8 and 9. He was previously employed as a clerical assistant but gave this work up 3 years ago.

TERRY is aged 42, divorced and has been living on his own with his daughters aged 8 and 13 for 5 years. Terry is unemployed, he gave no information about the type of work he did previously.

THOMAS is 41 years old and has been separated for 10 months, he lives with his 11 year old son. Thomas was employed as a plumber, but gave this work up when he became a lone parent.

TIM is 44 years old and has 2 sons living with him aged 13 and 16. He is widowed and has been a lone parent for 6 years. Tim is a B.T. engineer.

TOM is 38 years old. He is divorced and has been a lone parent for 6 years, his children are aged 7 (daughter) and 11 (son). Tom was employed as a line setter when he was first on his own, but he has been out of work for 4 years.

TREVOR is 31 years old and separated. He shares a house with a friend and has lived there with his two daughters aged 9 and 10 for 1 year. Trevor became a milkman so that he could start early in the morning, and be home when his daughters got ready for school and then has the day to do the housework.

WILLIAM is aged 45, divorced and has been a lone parent for 10 years. William has 2 children, a son of 17 and a daughter aged 6. He gave up work as a motor mechanic 2.5 years ago.

Fathers who were interviewed

ADAM is aged 40. He is divorced and has lived alone with his 2 children (a son 4 and a daughter 6) for 2.5 years. Adam had his own advertising business but gave this up 6 years ago to care for his children while his wife went out to work. He then combined looking after the home with part - time photography until his wife left home. Now that his son is about to start school Adam is currently trying to build up his photography bussiness again.

ALAN is 41 years old and widowed 1 year ago. He lives with his 2 daughters 14 and 7, a son 15 and an au pair. Alan owns his own flight stimulator company and works from home.

ALISTAIR 38 is divorced and has been a lone parent for 2.5 years. He has 2 children, a son and a daughter, and lives with his daughter who is 13 years old. Alistair has been a self employed gas fitter for 8 years.

ALVIN is 47 years old, divorced, and has been living on his own with his son aged 14 for 5 years. Alvin is employed as a service engineer with British Gas, where he has worked for 30 years.

ANTONY is aged 35 and is widowed. He has been a lone parent for 2 years and lives with his 9 year old son. Antony was employed as a credit controller until the company closed 2 years ago. Since then he has had 2 temporary jobs, but is presently unemployed. He is now planning to become self employed.

BARRY is aged 27, divorced and has been a lone parent for 5 years. He lives with his 2 sons aged 8 and 7. Barry gave up work as a duck farmer to care for his children, and is hoping to return to the same employment when his children are older.

BOB 39 is divorced and has been a lone parent for 10 months. His 2 children, a girl of 10 and a boy 7 live with him in a bed sitter which he has been renting for 4 months. Bob is employed at an oil refinery and was due to move into his own bungalow a few days after our interview.

CARL 37 is separated. He has been a lone parent for 1 year and lives with his son (4 years) and his 2 daughters (7 and 8). Carl's previous employment was a sales director, he was made redundent 3 years ago.

DAVE is aged 31, divorced and has been a lone parent for 2 years. He lives with his 3 boys aged 5, 8 and 9. Dave was employed as a tree surgeon and is hoping to return to this work when his children are older.

DEREK 30 is divorced and has been on his own with his son of 8 for 6 years. He has lived in a council flat in Southampton for the last 6 years and is currently hoping to be rehoused with his girl friend, their son and her 2 boys. David was employed as a barman before giving up work to provide a home for his son who had been put into care.

DON 35 is divorced and has been a single parent for 2 years. Don had been married to a (previously) lone mother, and had 2 step sons. He now lives with his own childrn, a girl of 5 and a boy of 2.5 in a council house which he moved into 1 year ago. Don gave up work as a truck driver when he became a lone parent.

DOUG 47 is widowed and he has been on his own with his sons of 12 and 6 and daughter of 9 for 2 years. He owns his own house and moved to Southampton 4 months before the interview. Doug was a motor mechanic and he has worked "on and off" since being a lone parent, but he is now at home with his children.

EDDIE is 41 years old, divorced and lives with his son who is 7 years old and his daughter aged 6. He was employed as a corporate buyer but gave this work up 3 years ago when he became a lone parent.

GRAHAM is aged 34 and has 2 children, a girl aged 9 and a boy aged 11. Graham was widowed 9 years ago, he remarried 6 years ago but this marriage only lasted 3 months. Until 3 years ago Graham was employed as a retail assistant in a department store. He is now unemployed.

JAMES 35 has been separated for 7 months. He lives in his own home which he moved into 2 months before his wife left. James's children are a girl of 6 and a boy 8.and he is employed as a service demonstrator supervisor.

JASON is 35 years old and has been widowed for 3 years. He shares his home with his 2 daughters aged 3 and 5. Jason has been a customs officer for 18 years and has manages to combine this work with caring for his children.

JON is 38 years old and has 5 children, he lives with his son aged 11 and is trying to gain custody of the other children. He is divorced and has been a lone parent for almost 2 years. Jon was a medical herbalist but gave up work this work two months after becoming a lone parent.

MARTIN is 28 years old and divorced. He has been a lone parent for 6 years and lives with his 2 boys 7 and 9. Martin was a postman but gave up work 6 years ago to care for his children.

MATTHEW is 37 years old and separated. He has been a lone parent for 2.5 years and lives with his 4 children; 3 daughters 15, 13 and 12 and a son of 12. Matthew has been employed as a lift engineer for 14 years.

MIKE is 29 years old, divorced and has been a lone parent for 9 months. He lives with his son who is 3 years old and his daughter aged 2 years. Mike gave up his work as a lorry driving when he became a lone parent.

NEIL 47 has been a lone parent for 8 years. He is divorced and lives in a council house with his 2 sons of 15 and 18. Neil gave up work for 1 year to care for his children then became a self employed gardener.

NOEL is 37, he has been divorced for 8 years and lives with his 2 daughters 9 and 11. Previously employed as a lorry driver Paul gave this work up and took redundency after his divorce. He is now engaged to a lone mother with 3 sons.

PATRICK is 49 , divorced and has lived with his 12 year old daughter for 9 years in a house rented from a housing association. Paul was a college student in Scotland but moved from Scotland 7 years ago to be nearer to his sister. After 3 months on benefits Paul found work as a self employed debt collector.

PAUL is 41 years old, divorced and has been a lone parent for 4 years. He lives with his daughter of 11. Paul is employed as a medical attendant and ambulance driver for British Rail.

PHILLIP is aged 45 and has been widowed for 6 years. He owns his own home where he lives with his 2 sons aged 13 and 16. Phillip gave up his employment as a electrician 8 years ago when his wife became ill, and has not made any plans for future employment.

PETER 33 is divorced and for the past 2 years has been on his own with 4 children; a girl of 10 and boys 7,11 and 13. Formerly a van driver, Peter is now unemployed.

ROB is 37 years old and is separated. He has been a lone parent for 2 years and lives with his daughter of 8. Rob's occupation is a sheet metal worker.
ROBERT is 39 years old. He is divorced and has been living on his own with his son of 10 and daughter 11 for 3 years. Robert is a self employed landscape gardener.

RON 30 is divorced and has been a lone parent for 1.5 years. He lives on his own with his 2 children; a girl aged 5 and a boy 8. Ron is a self employed brick construction worker.

SCOTT 36 is divorced, he has been a lone parent for 5 years and lives with his three children; girls of 9 and 16 and a boy 18. Scott was previously employed in engineering but gave up employment after becoming a lone parent to care for his children.

SIMON is aged 40 and has been separated for nearly 4 years. He lives with 2 sons 7 and 9 and has been unemployed for 10 years.

TONY 40 is divorced and has been a lone parent for 3 years. He lives with his 2 children aged 10 and 8. Tony's occupation is an air craft fitter.

Colin, Gavin, Grant and Jeremy are not included in this list

APPENDIX 11 - COMPARISON BETWEEN LONE FATHERS WHO WERE INTERVIEWED AND THOSE THAT COMPLETED A POSTAL QUESTIONNAIRE

UNEMPLOYED LONE FATHERS

	Postal	Interview	Total
Do you feel social security provides enough money to live on?			
Just enough	5 26%	5 19%	10
Not quite enough	3 16%	4 15%	7
Definately not enough	11 58%	18 67%	29
Missing		1	
How do you feel about receiving benefits?			
It's a right	5 26%	3 12%	8
Don't like it	9 44%	13 48%	22
Not bothered, it's a necessity	5 26%	9 30%	14
Missing		3 12%	2
Which of the following applies to you now?			
Unable to find employment	3 16%	2 7%	5
Feel it's wrong to work while the children are young	12 64%	12 44%	24
Difficult finding childcare	6 32%	7 25%	13
Not worthwhile financially to work	9 56%	10 37%	19
Other		1	1
Missing		1	1
Besides a regular income are there other things you miss about working?			
Social contact	10 53%	17 61%	27
Sense of identity	9 47%	12 67%	21
Job satisfaction	7 37%	18 64%	25
Status	7 37%	12 67%	19
Regular routine	6 32%	9 32%	15
Stimulation	10 53%	18 64%	28
None	0	2 7%	2
Other	3 16%	2 7%	5
Missing	0	2	2

Would yu be prepared to move to find work?					
Yes	8	40%	4	15%	12
No	9	50%	12	46%	21
Possibly	1		10	38%	11
Missing	0		2	8%	2

ALL LONE FATHERS

	Interview		Postal		Total	
Employed	16	47%	22	46%	38	
Unemployed	18	53%	26	54%	44	
Age of youngest child						
0-4	6	18%	8	17%	14	
5-10	21	62%	24	50%	45	
11+	7	20%	16	33%	23	
Age of youngest child when first alone						
0-4	20	59%	25	52%	44	
5-10	12	35%	17	35%	17	
11+	2	17%	6	13%	8	
Length of time on own						
0-1	6	18%	7	15%	13	
2-4	19	56%	25	52%	44	
5-7	7	21%	10	21%	17	
8-10	2	6%	4	8%	6	
11+	0		2	4%	2	
Housing						
Own	13	38%	28	58%	40	
rented	21	62%	18	38%	39	
parent's	0	0	1		1	
other (friend's)	0	0	1		1	
Education						
No qualifications	13	33%	11	23%	24	
up to A level	12	35%	25	52%	37	
A level/Access	9	26%	8	17%	17	
Degree	0		2	2%		2
Higher degree	0		1		1	
Missing			1		1	

EMPLOYED LONE FATHERS

Income						
5,000- 9,000		4	29%	5	26%	9
10,000-14,999		4	29%	3	16%	1
15,000-19,999		4	29%	7	37%	11
20,000-	0		3	16%	3	
25,000-	1		1		2	
30,000-	1				1	
Missing	2		3		5	
Has your household income						
Fallen slightly		4	29%	3	16%	7
Fallen substantially		5	36%	10	53%	15
Remained the same		3	21%	2	11%	5
Increased		2	14%	4	21%	6
Missing		2		3		5
Are your workmates and employer sympathetic to your position?						
Yes		13	87%	15	79%	28
No		2		4		6
Missing		1		3		4
Reasons why you are working apart from financial gain						
Would be bored at home		9	60%	14	70%	23
Self esteem		9	60%	14	70%	23
Social contact		6	40%	6	30%	12
To continue career		4	27%	9	45%	15
Maintain friendships	3	7	35%	10		
Work satisfaction		8	53%	10	50%	18
No other reason		4	27%	2	10%	6
Total		15		20		35

These figures include 4 lone fathers who were not included in the final analysis.

APPENDIX 111 - LETTER TO HEAD TEACHER

I am a post-graduate student at the University of Southampton currently engaged in researching the experiences of lone fathers. I am writing to ask you if you would be able to help me with my research.

Ideally I would like to receive lists of names and addresses of any lone fathers known to you, in order that I might write to them to ask if they would be prepared to participate in my study, but I appreciate that any such information may be regarded as confidential. If this is the case, an alternative is for me to ask you to forward my letter to lone fathers in which I invite them to participate in my research, a copy of which I enclose.

The particular focus of my research is on the ways in which fathers bringing up children on their own manage their childcare and, in some cases, combine it with paid work. There are roughly 50 questions in my questionnaire, ranging from issues such as housing situation and employment experiences to attitudes towards domestic responsibilities and childcare arrangements. All the information collected is treated in strict confidence, and people interviewed are of course at liberty not to answer any questions if they prefer not to.

So far I have found that the lone fathers I have spoken to have been interested in the topics which we have discussed, and I am encouraged that the information which I am collecting will be useful in my project of describing the lives of fathers bringing up children on their own. Unfortunately the numbers I have interviewed to date are not yet large enough to draw any firm conclusions from, and it is necessary for me to contact a larger sample in order for my research to be useful for social scientific analysis.

I hope that you find the subject of my study interesting and worthwhile and that you will be able to help me with the research. I will be happy to answer any questions about the project which you may want to have answered before you go any further. My supervisor in this research is Dr Graham Crow of the Department of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Southampton, and he is also prepared for you to contact him with any questions; his work telephone number is (0703) 592672.

I look forward to hearing from you. I will then, if you are agreeable, forward further copies of my letter and reply paid envelopes. Should you wish to contact me at home my address is 3 Alandale Road, Sholing, Southampton SO2 8DG telephone 391971

Yours sincerely

Annette Mellish

APPENDIX 1V - LETTER TO LONE FATHERS (INTERVIEW)

Dear Sir

I am a post-graduate researcher at the University of Southampton currently engaged in researching the experiences of lone fathers and I am writing to ask if you would be prepared to help me with this work.

This will involve you answering a number of questions covering issues such as your housing situation, domestic responsibilities, difficulties in combining the care of your children with employment (if applicable) and social support. You will be free to leave any questions you would prefer not to answer and, of course, all the answers you do give will be treated in strict confidence. The interview will take about 30 minutes. If you are interested in taking part in this research I will visit you any day between 10 and 8 p.m. (including weekends). To arrange this please complete the form at the bottom of the page and return it to me in the envelope provided. Alternatively you may 'phone my supervisor Dr G Crow on the above telephone number and he will pass your details on to me.

Yours faithfully

A. Mellish.

I am interested in taking part in your research.

The ages of my children are.....

Name .....

Address.....

..... tel.....

The most convenient day for an interview is a.....

or a.....

The most convenient time is.....

APPENDIX V - LETTER TO LONE FATHERS (MAIL SURVEY)

Dear Sir

Iam a post-graduate researcher at the University of Southampton currently engaged in researching the experiences of lone fathers and I am writing to ask if you would be prepared to help me with this work.

This will involve you answering a number of questions covering issues such as your housing situation, domestic responsibilities, difficulties in combining the care of your children with employment (if applicable) and social support. You will be free to leave any questions you would prefere not to answer and, of course, all the answers you do give will be treated in strict confidence. The questionnaire should take about 15 minutes to complete. If you are interested in taking part in this research Iwill forward a copy of my questionnaire to you. To arrange this please complete the form at the bottom of the page and return it to me in the envelope provided.

Yours faithfully

Annette Mellish.

.....

I am interested in taking part in your research.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

In order for me to forward the appropriate questionnaire please indicate if you are employed ( ) or unemployed ( )

APPENDIX VI - INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

QUESTIONNAIRE

TO ALL

1. Age: UNDER 20 20-24/25-29/30-34/35-39/40-44/45+ N/R
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

2. How many children do you have living with you?

3. How old are they? Girls..... Boys .....

4. How long have you been a lone parent?
1-2 years ( ) 1
2-6 years ( ) 2
6-9 years ( ) 3
Longer ( ) 4

5. Are you: divorced ( ) 1
separated ( ) 2
widowed ( ) 3
other ( ) 4

6. Apart from your children do you share your home with any one else? parents ( ) 1
lodger ( ) 2
friend ( ) 3
nanny ( ) 4
housekeeper ( ) 5
other ( ) 6

7. Is your home your own ( ) 1
rented ( ) 2
parents ( ) 3
other ( ) 4
If rented:
7a) is this: council ( ) 5
housing authority ( ) 6
private ( ) 7

8. Do you have any relatives living in this neighourhood (other than those mentioned in Q.5) YES ( )1 NO ( )2

if yes:
8a. Please state which relatives:
Aunt/Uncle ( )1
Cousins ( )2
Parents ( )3
Sister ( )4
Brother ( )5
Parents in law ( )6
Sister in law ( )7
Brother in law ( )8

9. How long have you lived at this address?
if less than answer to Q.3 ask

9a. Was your decision to move due to any of the following?

a) to be near relatives ( ) 1
b) need to find more affordable accommodation ( ) 2
c) to be near place of existing employment ( ) 3
d) to improve chance of finding work ( ) 4
e) to move away from former partner ( ) 5

10. Would you tell me which of the following you have in your home?

A telephone ( )1 A freezer ( )2
A fridge ( )3 An automatic washing machine ( )4
Central heating ( )5 A tumble drier ( )6
A dish washer ( )7 A microwave ( )8

11. What educational qualifications do you have?

a) no qualifications ( ) 1
b) GCSE/GCE ( ) 2
C) A levels ( ) 3
d) degree ( ) 4
e) higher degree ( ) 5
f) other ( ) 6

12. Do you have any trade / professional qualifications?
YES ( )1 NO ( )2

if yes:
12a) Please state:

13. Are you employed ( ) 1 or unemployed ( ) 2

if unemployed which of the following applies to you now?
a) you are not able to find employment?
b) you feel it is wrong to work while the children are young?
c) you have difficulty finding childcare
d) you feel it is not worth while financially to work?
e) other

14. At the time of becoming a lone parent were you
a) employed ( )1
b) unemployed ( )2

TO ALL EMPLOYED

15. Would you tell me what your employment is?

16. How long have you worked in your present job?

17. Does your employment fit any of the following categories?

a) self employment	( )	1
b) flexi hours	( )	2
c) home working	( )	3
d) shift	( )	4
e) part home / part office	( )	5
f) part time	( )	6
g) job share	( )	7
h) school term time only	( )	8

if d (shifts) ask 14a

17a) Which shifts do you work?

a) nights	( )	1
b) evenings	( )	2
c) early mornings	( )	3
d) double day	( )	4
e) alternate day / night	( )	5
f) other	( )	6

If yes to Q. 17 ask Q.18
If no to q. 17 Ask Q.19

18. Were you working ..... before you were on your own?

YES	( )	1
NO	( )	2

if no:

18a) Why did you choose this option

a) because of the children?	( )	1
b) only work available?	( )	2
c) preferred way of working.	( )	3

19. Which days of the week do you work?

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

20. How many hours do you work in a basic week?

21. Is there opportunity for paid overtime?

YES	( )	1
NO	( )	2

If yes:

21a) Do you work over time?

a) sometimes	( )	1
b) always	( )	2
c) never	( )	3

22. Are you able to attend after work engagements connected with your employment such as meetings or social events?

a) sometimes ( ) 1
b) always ( ) 2
c) never ( ) 3
d) not applicable ( ) 4

if c (never) ask:

22a) Do you feel this affects your work performance?
YES ( ) 1
NO ( ) 2

23. Do you feel that your career / promotion prospects have suffered since being on your own? YES ( ) 1
NO ( ) 2

if no:
23a) Do you feel they will in the future? YES ( ) 1
NO ( ) 2

24. Do you feel your employer and workmates are sympathetic to your position? YES ( ) 1 NO ( ) 2
(prompt for ways in which they are/are not sympathetic.)

25. Apart from financial gain are there other reasons why you are working? (tick all mentioned)

a) would be bored at home ( ) 1
b) self esteem ( ) 2
c) to continue career ( ) 3
d) social contact ( ) 4
e) maintain friendships ( ) 5
f) work satisfaction ( ) 6
g) other ( ) 7
h) no other reason ( ) 8

26. Have your feelings towards outside work changed since you have been on your own? (eg are you still as interested?)

a) yes ( )1
b) no ( )2

CHILDCARE

TO ALL EMPLOYED

27. Other than for sickness, have you at any time had to give up work to care for your children? YES ( )1 NO ( )2
if yes:
27a) How long was this for?
27b) Was your job kept open?

If employed with school aged children ask Q. 28 - Q. 32
If employed with pre-school children ask Q. 33 - Q. 36
If homeworker ask Q. 38 - 42

28. Do you get any time off work when your child is sick?
YES ( )1 NO ( )2 DON'T KNOW ( )3

if no ask 28a
if yes ask 28b

28a) Which of the following applies
a) You ask a relative or friend to help out ( ) 1
b) You take time off, using a personal excuse or illness as your reason. ( ) 2
c) Other ( ) 3

28b) Is this counted as
a) Family responsibilities leave (paid) ( ) 1
b) Unpaid leave ( ) 2
c) Time to be made up ( ) 3
d) Holidays ( ) 4

29. Are you able to take time off to take your child to the clinic or dentist?
A) always ( ) 1
b) sometimes ( ) 2
c) rarely ( ) 3
d) never ( ) 4
e) don't know ( ) 5

30. Is this the same for visiting your child's school eg for sports or open days?
a) always ( ) 1
b) sometimes ( ) 2
c) rarely ( ) 3
d) never ( ) 4
e) don't know ( ) 5

31. Do you leave home after your children have gone to school?
a) always ( ) 1
b) sometimes ( ) 2
c) never ( ) 3

31A). Are you home when the children return?
a) always ( ) 1
b) sometimes ( ) 2
c) never ( ) 3

if b (sometimes) or c (never) to either Q.30 or Q.30a ask:

31b) Who cares for your children at these times?

	AM
a) selves	( ) 1
b) neighbour	( ) 2
c) relative	( ) 3
d) older child	( ) 4
e) friend	( ) 5
f) child minder	( ) 6
g) other	( ) 7

31c) Do you find these arrangements satisfactory? YES ( )1
NO ( )2

if no:

31d) What is unsatisfactory about them? state

32. What arrangements do you make for days off / holidays?

a) take child to work	( ) 1
b) relative cares for child	( ) 2
c) neighbour	( ) 3
d) older child	( ) 4
e) friend	( ) 5
f) childminder	( ) 6
g) playschemes	( ) 7
h) other	( ) 8

If b) c) or e)

32a) Do you pay for this child care or do you have some other arrangement? a) pay ( )1
b) other ( )2

ALL EMPLOYED WITH PRE SCHOOL CHILDREN ASK Q. 29.
IF NO PRE SCHOOL CHILDREN ASK Q.

33. Who cares for your children while you are working?

a) relatives	( ) 1
b) friend	( ) 2
c) L.A. nursery	( ) 3
d) private nursery	( ) 4
e) childminder	( ) 5
f) nursery school	( ) 6
g) nanny	( ) 7
h) au pair/mothers help	( ) 8
i) other	( ) 9

If a or b ask:

33a) Do you pay or do you have some other arrangement?

34. Are you happy with the care your children receive?
YES ( )1 NO ( )2

if no:
34a) why is this.....

35. If this arrangement breaks down have you someone else you can turn to? YES ( )1 NO ( )2
if no:

35a) would you have to stay home from work?

36. Some working parents express feelings of guilt about leaving their young children. Do you experience these feelings?
YES ( ) 1 NO ( ) 2

37. Do you consider it is your duty to go out to work?
YES ( ) 1 NO ( ) 2

TO ALL EMPLOYED EXCEPT HOMEWORKERS

38. What do you consider is the worst aspect of combining work and childcare?

a) no time for self	( ) 1
b) cost of childcare	( ) 2
c) organising childcare	( ) 3
d) not enough time with children	( ) 4
e) unsympathetic employer	( ) 5
f) none	( ) 6
g) other	( ) 7

HOMEWORKERS ONLY

39. Did you work from home before you were a single parent?
YES ( ) 1 NO ( ) 2

40. Why did you decide to do this type of work?

If pre school children:

41. How do you combine your work with caring for young children?

a) work when the children are asleep	( ) 1
b) manage to work with the children around you?	( ) 2
c) take child to carer (state who)	( ) 3
d) employ help	( ) 4
e) other	( ) 5

42. Can you think of any difficulties you experience working at home? (prompt... isolation, motivation)

43. Do you have a separate room set aside for work?
YES ( )1 NO ( )2

TO ALL EMPLOYED

44. Since being on your own would you say your household income has

a) fallen slightly ( ) 1
b) fallen substantially ( ) 2
c) remained the same ( ) 3
d) increased ( ) 4

If fallen:

44a Is this due to any of the following?

a) Loss of over time (because of the children) ( ) 1
b) having to work fewer hours because of childcare commitments ( ) 2
c) change of jobs ( ) 3
d) change of shifts ( ) 4
e) loss of wife's earnings ( ) 5

45. Besides earnings do you receive income from any other source? YES ( )1 NO ( )2

if yes

45a) please state:

46. In which of the following groups does your total annual income fall?

£0 - £5,000 ( ) 1
£5,000 - £10,000 ( ) 2
£10,000 - £15,000 ( ) 3
£15,000 - £20,000 ( ) 4
£20,000 - £25,000 ( ) 5
£25,000 - £30,000 ( ) 6
£30,000 + ( ) 7

IF EARNINGS FALLEN

47. Has this fall in income led to any changes for the children?

a) less pocket money ( )1
b) fewer clothes ( ) 2
c) fewer outings/holidays ( ) 3
d) fewer treats ( ) 4
e) having to wait for things they need ( ) 5
f) nothing has changed for them ( ) 6
g) other ( ) 7
h) not applicable (too long on own for comparison)( )8

48. Are there any items for the home or yourself which you now regularly spend less on? yes ( ) no ( )2

if yes, state.....

49. Are there any items you find you are having to spend more on? (Other than general cost of living rises)

yes ( ) no ( )2

if yes, state.....

50. Are you able to save a regular amount towards such expenses as heating bills or household repairs?
yes ( )1 no ( )2

50B. Do you receive help from your family or friends, either in cash or by having goods brought for you?
yes ( )1 no ( )2
if yes prompt for details of help.....

TO ALL NOT WORKING/UNEMPLOYED.

51. How long have you been out of work?

52. What was your previous employment?

53. Do you hope to return to the same type of employment?
YES ( ) 1 NO ( ) 2 DON'T MIND ( ) 3

if no:
53a) Is there any particular reason why not?

53B) What type of employment will you be looking for?

54. Besides a regular income are there other things you miss about working?

a) social contact	( ) 1
b) sense of identity	( ) 2
c) job satisfaction	( ) 3
d) status	( ) 4
e) regular routine	( ) 5
f) stimulation	( ) 6
g) none	( ) 7
h) other	( ) 8

55. Have you made/will you be making any preparations for returning to work, in the way of Further education, training etc? YES ( ) 1 NO ( ) 2
if yes:

55a) what type of preparation have you made/will you be making?

a) gaining more formal qualifications	( ) 1
b) training scheme to learn a new skill	( ) 2
c) re-training course	( ) 3
d) other	( ) 4

If no:
55B) would you like to make such preparations but find the children prevent you from doing so?
YES ( ) 1 NO ( ) 2

56. what do you consider is/will be the major barrier to finding employment?
a) cost of childcare ( ) 1

ALL NOT WORKING/UNEMPLOYED

63. Are you dependent on benefits for your main source of income? YES ( )1 NO ( )2

64. Which benefits do you receive?

64b) Do you receive maintenance? yes ( )1 no ( )2

65. Do you feel that social security provides enough money for you and your family to live on?

a) just enough ( ) 1
b) not quite enough ( ) 2
c) definitely not enough ( ) 3

66. Briefly, how do you feel about receiving benefits?

a) its a right ( ) 1
b) don't like it ( ) 2
c) not bothered its a necessity ( ) 3
d) other ( ) 4

67. What do you consider to be the major change for the children since you have been on your own?

a) less pocket money ( ) 1
b) fewer outings/holidays ( ) 2
c) fewer clothes ( ) 3
d) fewer treats ( ) 4
e) nothing has changed for them ( ) 5
f) other ( ) 6
g) not applicable (too long on own for comparison) ( ) 7

68. Are there items for yourself or the home, which you now regularly spend less on? yes ( )1 no ( )2
if yes prompt for details

69. Are there certain items you now find you are spending more on? yes ( )1 no ( ) 2
if yes prompt for details

70. Are you able to save a regular weekly amount towards such expenses as heating bills or household repairs?
yes ( )1 no ( ) 2

71. Do you receive any help from your family or friends either in cash or having goods brought for you?
yes ( )1 no ( ) 2

ALL DOMESTIC RESPONSIBILITIES

72. Did you take a share in childcare/domestic responsibilities before you were on your own?
YES ( )1 NO ( )2
if yes prompt for details of things done regulary

73. Were there any tasks which you found particularly difficult when you were first on your own?
yes ( )1 no ( )2
if yes state:

74. Can you think of any tasks you still find difficult?
yes ( )1 no ( )2
if yes state:

75. Do your children help with the household chores?
yes ( )1 no ( )2
if yes prompt for details of ways in which they help

76. Do you feel that your child/ren do more chores than they would if you were not on your own? YES ( )1 NO ( )2

77. Do you receive any extra help with your house work?
YES ( )1 NO ( )2
If yes;

77a) Is this a) paid help ( ) 1
b) friend ( ) 2
c) neighbour ( ) 3
d) relative ( ) 4
e) other ( ) 5

78. What time apx. does your average day begin?

79. What time are you usually able to consider your work for the day is over?

80. On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied do you feel with your domestic skills?

ALL

81. When you first became a lone parent who was the first person or organisation you turned to?

parents	( ) 1	the church	( ) 6
friend	( ) 2	health visitor	( ) 7
Gingerbread	( ) 3	social service	( ) 8
relative	( ) 4	no one	( ) 9
children	( ) 5		

81a) Has this person/organisation continued to be a source of support? YES ( )1 NO ( )2

if no;

81a) Is this because this help is no longer necessary?

82. Do you consider that you had enough support when you were first on your own? YES ( )1 NO ( )2

83. Do you consider you are getting enough support now?
YES ( )1 NO ( )2

84. Overall, how satisfied are you with your social life nowadays?
a) not at all ( ) 1
b) fairly satisfied ( ) 2
c) satisfied ( ) 3
d) very satisfied ( ) 4

if a or b

84a) What do you consider to be the greatest restriction?
a) lack of time ( ) 1
b) lack of money ( ) 2
c) being a single person ( ) 3
d) the children ( ) 4

85. Have you kept in touch with friends you had before you became a single parent? YES ( )1 NO ( )2
if no:
85a) Is there any particular reason why not?

86. Do you know other men who are bringing up children on their own? YES ( )1 NO ( )2
if no:
86a) would you like to meet others in a similar situation to yourself? YES ( )1 NO ( )2 NOT INTERESTED ( )2
if yes:
86B) do you find it helpful to know others in the same situation? yes ( )1 no ( )3
if yes prompt for ways in which this is helpful

87. Do you feel you have become closer to the children?
YES ( )1 NO ( )2
if yes prompt for ways in which you feel closer

88. Are you able to discuss your feelings and problems together ?
if no :

is this a) because you do not want to? ( ) 1
b) Your children are too young? ( ) 2
c) other ( ) 3

89. Are you able to obtain childcare at short notice if you want to go out in the daytime or evening?

90. How often do you get the opportunity to have a whole day to yourself?
A) once a week ( )1
b) more than once a week ( )2
c) less than once a week ( )3
d) never ( )4

91. In an average week how often do you go out in the evenings for pleasure?
Once a week ( ) 1
Twice a week ( ) 2
More than twice a week ( ) 3
Stay at home ( ) 4

Not applicable (at work) ( ) 5

TO DIVORCED OR SEPARATED

92. How often do your children see their mother?
a) every day ( ) 1 b) every week ( ) 2
c) every month ( ) 3 d) year ( ) 4
e) never ( ) 5
if a b c d
How long is this for?

TO ALL

93. What do you think is the worse thing about being a lone parent?

94. What do you think is the best thing about being a lone parent?

95. Finally, overall how satisfied are you with the way you are coping as a single parent?

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