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My Dad's a Sailor

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ABSTRACT

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A simple statement by a colleague prompted me to embark on the research question: are children affected by having a father in the British Royal Navy? Conversations with my own children led me to approach it from the perspective of the children, themselves, exploring their personal life-stories, emotions and opinions.

I introduced the work with my biography, to exemplify the life-experiences of a Royal Naval family and continued by consulting work of eminent psychologists and sociologists such as Lamb (1982), Bowlby (1998) and Allan (1999) I established criteria to identify a normal family, the expected role of the father and anticipated effects of paternal deprivation.

The data was gathered from more than fifty teenagers, who experienced life in a Royal Naval family, by asking them to complete a questionnaire devised and conducted using Robson's model (1999). This addressed issues of family life, with and without their father's presence, their behaviour at school and at home during times of separation, and their views on their family compared to the 'norm'. The results are expressed as both statistical information and summarised versions of their answers.

To discuss the question, I correlated the key points from my literature study with the summarised answers from the children and concluded that the children whose fathers are in the Royal Navy experience the temporary pull of separation, but do not recognise their fathers' absences as making a difference to their behaviour. They clearly identify that their lives are different during the times of separation but, contrary to the belief that they might be psychologically or emotionally harmed in some way by the separation experience, many feel they are at an advantage over non-naval families because of the opportunities presented to them to travel, use excellent sport facilities and attend an excellent private school.

It is the opinion of the children that having a father in the Royal Navy does not affect them, and that it is the quality of the parenting they receive that is important to their well-being and not the continual physical presence of both mother and father.

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Introduction to the Research Project

Introduction

A teacher, having experienced an incident of bad behaviour by a pupil, stated in a staff meeting that the reason for the bad behaviour was: "his father is in the Navy and has just gone away". This simple statement was meant to explain, or excuse, his behaviour and most of the staff in the room agreed with her rationale and the subject was dropped. However, I was less willing to accept her theory. My husband is in the Royal Navy; we have two children and at no time would I expect them to misbehave. However, the rest of the teachers in the meeting appeared to accept this 'excuse' and I began to think that my children may be the exception to the rule. Indeed, I knew other Naval families that did have badly behaved children, but also many others where the children were not. When the opportunity arose for me to conduct a research project, this simple statement became the basis for the study. If some children are badly behaved because their fathers are often away from the family home, and some are not, will it be possible to identify any effects on children in families where the father is in the Royal Navy?

This work is both a discussion and a critical view of the topic that will also include an empirical survey of children in Royal Naval families. Both approaches are needed since it is a realm of study that appears to have been ignored by eminent researchers, thus making it necessary to discuss related issues in order to establish a basis for the research. Chapters 1-4 present both background and theorization to the research, while Chapter 5 discuses research methodology in general and the more specific methodology used for this work. Chapters 6 and 7 present the analysis of the results and a discussion.

Areas of literature research

Towards the end of the twentieth century, the media constantly reminded the population that the 'family' was on the decline. 'Family values' were no longer considered important and indeed we had to rethink our perception of family and society. According to Rowlingson and McKay (2002), the number of lone parents in Britain has tripled since 1970 and one-quarter of all families with children are headed by a lone parent. However alarming these

statistics are, if a positive approach is taken, both parents head three-quarters of families with children. It is a particular fraction of two parent families that are the focus of this research. The group in question are those two-parent families where the father is a serving member of the British Royal Navy.

A generalized view of the experiences of a Royal Naval family is given in the first chapter as a biography. As a mother of two and a Naval wife for over thirty years, I consider my experiences are typical of other Naval families. The other two armed forces are not considered in any depth in the research for two reasons: primarily, it was personal experiences that instigated the research project, and having been involved with the Royal Navy since my teacher training and lived in a Naval town for all my married life, it was a natural progression to focus only on the Royal Navy. Secondly, there are some notable differences between the services, especially in the field of family life, and although some comparison will be made throughout the research, including information about housing and family mobility, in general, families of the Army and Royal Air Force will not be considered.

Being a part of a Naval family, I am aware of the welfare organisations that support the service family. However, as I approached the literature study, it became clear that published materials were minimal on the subject of the transient Naval father and how the families are affected. Portsmouth has a large Naval population and I imagined that the subject of this research would have been considered before, even if not officially documented, but although they considered the topic interesting, the welfare support agencies were also unable to provide any literature. One Naval doctor was prepared to meet me and demonstrated an interest in the subject because, as a paediatrician and a serving Naval Commander, he had a personal interest in Naval children. In his capacity as a Naval doctor, he was privy to unpublished documents and had written articles himself for internal use, some of which he was able to share.

The lack of literature on the specific nature of Naval separation, and even the concept that some children are raised in a loving family whilst the father's occupation takes him away for different lengths of time, highlighted for me that this research was going to be innovative.

Unable to review literature on the specific subject, I needed to consider texts on the three elements that evolve from the research question. These were 'the family'; 'the role of the father within the family, especially the 'father-child relationship'; and 'separation theories'.

The amount of literature available on all three aspects is immense. This study is about children and their perspective of their family life, in particular their relationship with their father, and the study draws on the evidence of eminent sociologists to identify what is a 'normal family' and 'normal family relationships'. All the children in this study have one identifiable variable to the 'norm': their fathers are not always in the family home because they are serving members of the Royal Navy. It is important to establish why this fact makes the children's lives different to one where the father has a 'nine-to-five' occupation, and more importantly, why it is different from not having a father in the family home at all. There is considerable individuality within any family, but there is an added individual element among Royal Naval families. No serving member of the Royal Navy will experience the same pattern of deployment during his career, and therefore the children will experience different periods of separation at different ages. Whilst the data gives evidence of the longest periods of separation, it is impossible in a study of this size to begin to correlate times of the father's absence with the children's ages. It has to be accepted that these criteria may have bearing on the effects of having a father in the Royal Navy, but they will not be considered in this work. Also it is not possible, within the remit of this work, to address the issue of the long-term effect of having a Naval father on the future lives of the children. Do they find it difficult to settle, want to move house regularly, or frequently change jobs? These issues would require a longitudinal study.

The literature study established a standard by which a family can be identified, but it is also necessary to refer to the individuals that constitute the family, since they constantly interact and influence each other in the process of normal daily life. In this study, it is the father and the father/child relationships that are important and focused upon in Chapter 3. Feminists such as those who contributed to Nelson's book, *Feminism and Families* (1997), will argue that having a father in the family is not always necessary for a child's well-being. This research does not present an argument for or against the requirement of women to have husbands, or children to have fathers. Nor do I discuss the feminist views on the subject of the father's role in the family. Some women are very capable of achieving success in every aspect of their lives without a man to support them, and children's well-being is not

necessarily affected because they do not have a father. However, these issues are not treated in this work. Equal to the feminist argument is that of some psychologists and sociologists that consider fathers are not only important, but also vital, if children are to develop socially and emotionally. All the children in this research have a father and the role that fathers play in their children's lives is discussed in Chapter 3. Identifying this role is necessary, because an important question that must be answered is: if the father's role in the child's life is considered as being vital, how can it be achieved if he is away from home for months at a time?

The third area of literature to be considered was related to theories of separation. During the time the father is away, the children are separated from a parent and their mother becomes, in some respects, a lone parent. The available published research on this subject falls into two categories. Work by researchers such as Bowlby (1951, 1998) generated an awareness of the emotional and psychological problems children suffer when parted from the primary carer, but focused on maternal separation or primary carer separation and virtually ignored paternal separation. Bowlby (1998) wrote about separation from this perspective whilst others researchers, such as Landsdown and Hetherington (1990), and Wallerstein and Kelly (1980), turned their attention to exploring the effects of permanent separation of the father through divorce and marital break-up. Research on this aspect of separation is prolific and important to consider since the children do experience a 'separation'. Unless the country is in conflict with another, the risk of losing a father by bereavement can be no higher than in civilian life. However, times of conflict will present a completely different scenario. The effects on service children during war or conflict should not be ignored, but since 1949, conflict on the scale of the First and Second World Wars has fortunately been avoided. Although the British Armed Forces have been involved in conflicts since then, for the majority of time life is more peaceful, and this research is based on the peacetime coming and goings of Naval personnel. In other words, the time that the father's presence or absence becomes a 'normal' part of family life.

The majority of the literature, on all three elements of the research question, reflected the views and opinions of adults. The researcher looks at issues; interviews and observes children as required, and draws conclusions. By simply discussing matters with my own children, it was evident that their perception of situations and their interpretation of incidences that occurred during their childhood are very different from mine. My

professional experience as a teacher highlighted for me that adults think and make assumptions about things in a very different way to children. Their younger minds analyse matters in different ways to adults. They have a different perspective on life and situations. It is easy to assume, with our adult knowledge of life that, if the father is not always there, then problems will arise. This view is in some way reinforced within literature by recognized authorities. I have raised two children, and in the capacity of a teacher and playgroup leader, worked with many more. I decided that instead of answering the research from an adult perspective, I would ask the children themselves to answer it.

Sample groups

In order to conduct the research from the direction of the children, the next big consideration was finding the sample groups. I needed to identify groups of children whose fathers were serving in the Royal Navy, living and working in a large Naval area. I mistakenly thought this would be easy. My research is based on the assumption by certain teachers that having a Naval father can be a cause of bad behaviour. If this is true, then schools in the area would have a number of children who periodically misbehaved, so an obvious source of children would be the local schools. Anticipating a positive response, I contacted local schools. Surprisingly to me, none of the schools I contacted in the Portsmouth and Gosport area were aware of how many children in their school had a father in the Royal Navy. The response from schools was that they had no requirement to collect such data and was one of indifference. In their opinion, the research was of no direct educational value to them and it would not be appropriate for me to approach the children on the subject of their fathers' occupation. I had not anticipated so direct a refusal. One local school, however, did agree to allow the children to participate in the research, and details of how it was conducted are explained in the methodology.

Collecting information from this one school would not, however, give me enough data to present a reliable project. My son had attended a boarding school in Holbrook, Ipswich, where a criterion for a placement is to have a father or grandfather, who is, or had served, in the Royal Navy. Whilst the school agreed to participate, they were anxious to protect the children in their care, and exercised strict control on how the survey and the subsequent interview were conducted. Unfortunately, as a researcher this presented a few difficulties such as confidentiality and reliability, and these are discussed in the methodology.

Information from the teenage children of the two schools gave me sufficient data for the research.

Data gathering

To conduct the research, it was necessary to construct a questionnaire, which was suitable for teenagers to answer in minimum time and independently, since I would not have the opportunity to supervise its administration. These questionnaires would generate the majority of the data, especially since one school did not want me to approach the children directly, and the other restricted the potential for interviewing. Details of the questionnaire are given in the methodology.

Data analysis and discussion

Having ascertained a research question, reviewed appropriate literature and identified sample groups, it was possible to go forward with the research. The data was collected, analysed and presented as statistical evidence; including information about the children and their families, the answers each respondent gave, and identifying key features about them. The data is then discussed with reference to the literature study, to support the discussion, arguments and conclusions.

Conclusion

Conducting this research has given me the chance to explore the world of being a child in a family where the father is a serving member of the Royal Navy. It has given me the opportunity to make an introspective study of my own experiences, both as a wife and a mother, within such a family. It has also prompted me to realise that as adults we must not make assumptions about children's attitudes and ideas. We are often too quick to analyse children's behaviour, look at their response to situations and assume that as children they think as adults do. In truth, we need to keep the perspective that children are not mini-adults; they think differently; rationalise differently; and experience life on a different plane. This research highlights a small element of this difference.

Chapter 1

The uniqueness of the Royal Naval Family

A view from a Naval Wife and Mother

Introduction

This research is a study of the effects of intermittent separation of the father from the family home, and its effect on the rest of the family, and in particular the children. I do not intend to include the effects of the separated mother, but with the recent change in ruling enabling women to serve on a sea-going ship, this new and potentially controversial issue is not one to be ignored. Mother-child relationships, mother-child separation, and the role of the mother in the family bring a completely different dimension to social studies, but this is not one I am concerned with for this work: since the emphasis is on the father and the effects of his absences.

As there is little research available about the effects on the family of servicemen absenteeism, my research rests upon personal experiences and examines very personal opinions and thoughts. In the 1970s, Kathleen Logan conducted research on American servicemen and presented a tri-service report. Despite my effort to locate a copy through the Ministry of Defence and Naval archives at the Royal Naval Museum, Logan's tri-service report appears to have been so sensitive that no copies are available for examination.

The kind of separation experienced by the Royal Naval families is unique. The Army and Royal Air Force families are usually expected to travel with the father when he is posted to a new establishment. (There are some exceptions: such as serving in Northern Ireland and in the event of military conflict.) Serving members often serve with the same unit, regiment or corps for the duration of their service and, even when moving, they move with families and friends. Royal Naval families, however, may or may not accompany the father depending on the draft[1] or appointment, but if it is a sea-going ship or submarine there are clearly limitations. In the main there are two types of draft or appointment.

[1] 'Draft' is the term for a job for a Royal Naval rating, 'appointment' is the term used for a job for a Royal Naval Officer.

These are:

1. A draft or appointment to a ship or submarine: the family can move to the home port of the vessel, but since the vessel will be going to sea, the father will probably be away for most of the time.
2. A draft or appointment to a shore-based establishment where the family can move, and the father will be around most of the time, working a more typical 8-to-4 type job.

Drafts or appointments usually last 24 to 27 months, but there is no guarantee that a sea appointment will be followed by a shore-based appointment, or that two consecutive jobs will be in the same area. It is possible that in an eight-year period, a serviceman will serve in Scotland, Devon and Hampshire and then back to Scotland. The kind of separation can vary depending on the current post of the husband and how the couple decide to live. My husband and I decided that a priority for our future family, and us, was to own our home and create stability for ourselves and our children Therefore, we chose to buy a house in the Portsmouth area and to consider each appointment as it came, but with the intention to remain in the same area as far as possible. This decision has occasionally put strain on our relationship because we experienced more separation than sometimes was necessary. Nevertheless, this has been counteracted by the fact that we had a secure base for the children; I was able to establish long-term friendships and was close to my parents, and therefore had support when my husband was away. James, my husband, also had the knowledge that I was secure and comfortable.

To illustrate the kinds of separations a Royal Naval service family may experience, I now draw upon my own experiences. These are, I think, a typical representation of deployments; although it should be acknowledged that James[2] has never been away for Christmas, nor had a ship or deployment which meant he could not communicate with us.

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[2] My husband, James, joined the Royal Navy in 1966 as an electrical artificer. After his apprenticeship he was the non-commissioned rank of Petty Officer. When we married in 1971 he was a Chief Petty Officer, and in 1979 accepted his commission from Her Majesty the Queen and is currently a Commander.

The types of separation we have experienced have included:

1. Periods when James has been away on a ship for 3-6 months duration, but on a Portsmouth-based ship. (This has meant that when the ship was in port, he could be home in the evenings and at weekends.)
2. Periods when he was away on a Plymouth-based ship for 3-6 months duration. (This meant he had a four-hour journey to come home at weekends if the ship was in port.)
3. Shore based in Scotland where he lived in accommodation and travelled home occasionally (this depended on him completing an 8-hour drive each way).
   Both 2 and 3 were also dependent on finance, because although the Royal Navy makes some 'home-to-duty' financial allowances for home-to-work trips, it does not cover the cost entirely.
4. Shore based in Portsmouth, but with a team that often spent time away for days, or for 2 to 3 weeks. These periods were very unpredictable and often at two or three days notice.
5. Shore based in Portsmouth where he was home every evening.
6. Shore based in a foreign country[3] (accompanied)

I am endeavouring to discover how having a serving, Royal Naval father affects the children of the family. I will develop the foundation for the research by considering the effect that my husband's enforced absences had on my children. For this purpose, I have considered a few statements from authors, who have written about the role of the father, and related these to my own experience.

Homan (1970:191) wrote:

> Fathers do not need to be companions to their young. Companionship they don't need, but love, acceptance, discipline and guidance and the furtherance of their independence they do need.
> It is most practical for the parents to have a weekly meeting of minds so that each may know whether he or she is acting with the wishes of the other and so problems and differences of opinion can be discussed and reconciled. In my opinion the actual physical presence of the father is not nearly as necessary as the presence of his

[3] Foreign deployments can be unaccompanied or married accompanied. In the latter the wife and family travel with the husband, accommodation is provided and travel allowances are made for necessary journeys.

> strength and backing of the mother. A father whose business requires that he is away and never-the-less make it quite clear to the children that his wife speaks for the voice of the two.

The issues, presented in Homan's statement, reflect my own views as being probably the most important elements in bringing up children; not only for service families, but all family units. My husband and I had very similar views regarding the aspirations we had for our children, in terms of social and moral standards of behaviour and attitudes, and I always knew that he would support any decisions I made, and visa-versa. This applied if he was at home or if he was away. There was obviously a great element of trust on my husband's behalf. The children were as much his as they were mine, and his love, care and concern for them, as great. Similarly, our home and finances were equally important to him as they were to me, and therefore he had to trust me to do what was correct in his absence. Since it is an important feature of any relationship, creating the awareness that the mother and the father support each other, must apply to any family The family where children can play one parent off against the other is bound to have problems, but I can imagine it is much easier for this kind of situation to escalate when the father is sometimes home and sometimes not. Homan (1970:193) expresses the potential for disharmony in a family, especially a Naval one, when he writes:

> The most surely destructive of all absentee fathers is the one who places upon his wife the sole task and responsibility of guiding and managing the children and berates and derides her for her mistakes and the ultimate shortcomings of the children. This may indeed be the most assured path to the destruction of the wife, the children, the family and the marriage.

It is easy to see that in some situations, especially those of service personnel, the destruction of family life could occur in this manner. The father arrives home for a short time and takes over, possibly allowing children to behave in ways that the mother has not allowed, and then goes away again leaving the mother in charge. It is almost possible to hear the cries of: "Well, Dad lets me!" from children who are subject to inconsistency in discipline and control. Not only would the mother's authority be undermined, but it would add to the confusion and inconsistency experienced by the children. James and I supported each other's philosophy for child-rearing, maintaining a routine whether 'dad' was there or not, and we were able to avoid the type of inconsistency mentioned by Homan (1970). I have heard tales of young children sleeping in the marital bed when the father was away, but then expected to sleep in their own rooms when he was there. It is easy to understand the

conflict, feelings of rejection and inherent hate for this person, who has disturbed the relationship between the child and the mother, and subsequently the behaviour problems that arise. This kind of situation is not a new one. Turner and Rennell's (1995:94) study on returning war personnel reveals children's memories of their father returning from the war. Julie was four years old when her father returned:

> I had always shared a bed with my mother...We went to bed as usual and I slept. It seemed the middle of the night when I was lifted from the eiderdown's warmth to be sat on the bottom stair whilst my mother, in best flowing nightgown, hurried to answer the knocking at the back door. They embraced; he seemed utterly foreign, no part of me or her. When he gathered me up his face was rough and his khaki was harsh with an alien smell. I wriggled to escape, not wanting to be held. What followed was worse: I didn't sleep with Mummy any more.

And young Margaret wrote:

> The difficult part on the first evening of his return was the sleeping arrangements and I found myself in the single bed in my own room. This man with the muscular arms, deep voice and white teeth obviously intended to stay overnight. It appeared to be the plan that I had to sleep by myself, not that anyone had consulted me on where I wanted to sleep.
>
> 1995:102

The issue of stability and consistency of routine is vital for any family, not least that of the service family, and I went to great lengths to ensure the continuity of routine. Nothing was stopped because 'dad' was home and special things were rarely done just because he was there. Treats happened and special occasions were celebrated, with or without him. Family events, such as James's birthday, were celebrated even though he was at sea: because for us celebrating birthdays are a normal part of family life. For the children, it was important that we recognized the event. It did not require his physical presence in order to identify his position in the family. The factor of 'physical' presence was highlighted in Andry's (1960:113) book *Delinquency and Parental Pathology*. He states: "physical absence does not mean psychological absence," and I consider a constant awareness of 'dad' is vital for children coping with separation of this nature. We made every attempt to ensure that 'out of sight' did not mean 'out of mind'. This started prior to any deployment when we took the opportunity to show the children where their father would be whilst away. This would include visiting the ship, his cabin, and if possible meeting his colleagues. Photographs were always around and letters and packages were sent from both parties. The children were

encouraged to write letters and send pictures. I recall one incident from some years ago when my young children asked, during a visit to a ship, why a colleague had more gold rings on his arm than their father. The reply was that he (their father) had to save up Rice Crispies' packet tops to earn the next gold stripe. For months of the deployment, we were eating the cereal and sending the tops to my husband. (We knew promotion was imminent so we knew in the children's eyes 'the tops' would work.) This 'fairy tale' illustrates the type of constant involvement the children had with James, even though he was away. Similarly, his coat always remained in the hall, slippers in the bedroom and shaving kit in the bathroom; all constant reminders of his importance and place in the home.

Discipline within the family is highlighted in many studies about child rearing, and fathers are often deemed to have the authoritarian role in the family. Some mothers will use the term, 'wait till your father gets home' or 'wait till I tell your father' as a disciplinary ploy. This kind of discipline can be effective within the ordinary family, but is less effective when the father may not be home for several months. The mother has to discipline, but also to assume the role of the consolatory agent, not an easy task. It is important, however, to know that the actions are supported by the father and shared with the father by letter or phone so that all parties know what is occurring.

Creating a balance for the children, between having just one parent in the family home sometimes and two at others, is difficult. As Moss and Fonda (1990:174) write,

> As for the impact on child-rearing and development of the child, some view the peripherality of the father as having two undesirable effects on children: it allows for the possibility of an over-developed mother-child bond, and deprives the child of some fathering.

Careful consideration has to be made in all issues to stabilise the relationships that the children have with each parent.

As very young children, my youngsters possibly did bond to me more closely than their father, but as far as I could tell, not to any definable detriment. This may be because of factors already mentioned: continuity of routine, behaviour, etc. In connection with this, I asked my son about his thoughts of his father's presence or absence and his comment was, "Well if he was there he was, and if he wasn't, he wasn't!" He went on to say that he liked

having his father around but it was just of those things if he wasn't. "After all it's only his job that takes him away and he's got to do that." He added that he does not really remember the times when James was away. My daughter, on the other hand, recalls more of the absences than when her father was there, and does not really consider ever really having the opportunity to get to know her father. Bowlby (1998) would relate this difference in attitude to the ages of each of the children at the times James went away. His attachment theory identifies that attachment to another individual begins during the second and third year. For both of my children, between the ages of eighteen months and three years old, James was away and whilst there might be an age/absence/attachment link, I cannot identify it. I will mention, however, that the children have completely different personalities and, in my opinion, this has had far more impact on their memories of their father's presence or absence. In illness and times of trauma, both would come to me for comfort, but not more than children would 'run to mum' in a normal two-parent family situation. Both would equally be at ease getting reassurance from 'dad' or 'mum'.

I know of incidences where sons, even very young ones, resent their fathers coming home. They have been encouraged to be 'the man of the house' whilst their father is away. When father returns this role is removed and the child's assumed role, of protecting and caring for the mother, removed with it. There must be great confusion within the child about his relationship with his mother. We never encouraged or desired this role for our son and so he did not suffer this 'demotion'. He was allowed to be a child and not expected to take on the responsibility of adulthood whilst still a child.

I do not believe that my husband's absence meant my children were deprived of fathering, if that can be truly identified. I never wished for a dictatorial, feared, father figure for my children, nor have I ever felt that there were different roles for fathers and mothers. He is a parent as I am a parent and we share all responsibility for our offspring. My husband encouraged every aspect of our children's lives by such things as attending concerts, parents' evenings and so forth when he was home, or asking about them when he was away. He changed nappies, disciplined and cuddled our children, as any father would, when around. He wrote, spoke or sent pictures to them when apart, always making them aware of his love, concern and support.

Aldous (1974) suggests:

> ...that when a person assumes a role within the family that deviates from the norm (role maker) he or she needs to maintain a high level of self-esteem, independence and ability to control his or her situation.

This quote, taken from Lamb's book *Non-traditional Families* (1982:217), highlights the effects on me as a mother and a Royal Naval wife. As a Naval wife, I experienced many different emotions. The anxiety of being physically alone to protect, care for and bring up two young children; the responsibility of looking after the house and home; the loneliness of being parted from the man that I love and the loss of all associated comfort and physical support; all required me to have those personal traits as identified by Aldous (1974). In addition to this emotional 'roller coaster' is a range of emotional experiences identified by Logan (1970) and known as 'separation anxiety'. I have not been able to secure a copy of Logan's (1970) work, and have had to rely on the unpublished work of Marulli de Barletta (1993) and an abbreviated version from the Royal Naval Magazine in order to explain my own experiences and link them with those she identified.

Deployment Syndrome

Stage 1: This is the pre-deployment stage of cramming in activities and doing things before he goes away.

This did not really occur for us, perhaps because of our personalities. House decoration has never been a priority nor has cramming in visits to the family. Because of our belief that routine should be maintained there was very little change to the normal routines. There was an element of "this is the last time for a while" which had to be coped with emotionally, but I do not think the children experienced this concern. On occasions, I was inwardly annoyed with the children when they wanted to go to friends instead of spending that 'last day' or 'last evening' with their father. It was a one-sided emotion as far as I could tell.

Stage 2: This is the pre-deployment stage of detachment and withdrawal.

Personally, I felt that rather than detachment there was an eagerness to please in all areas of marital relationships and life. Things like cooking a good meal, making the house clean and

tidy, etc. seemed more important during this pre-deployment stage than normal. Perhaps it was a case of making James leave with a good image of house and home. This did put pressure on the relationships, but again, because of the need to maintain the level of normality, we felt it necessary for the sake of the children to keep it under control. The feelings at this stage were heightened when the ship was going into a war zone. On such occasions, I can identify a clear period when I just wanted James to go, so I could get on with coping with him being away.

Stage 3: During the deployment

During the periods of separation there is always a need for an aim or an objective to be completed during that period. I'm a fairly independent person and quite able to cope with most home repairs, etc. However, I always considered it important to maintain a balance between what could be left for when James came home and what was vital. It was important for James to know that he was needed and had an important role in the care and maintenance of the home. Therefore, I would never undertake a major decorating job or similar task whilst he was away. However, I would buy a washing machine if necessary since it could not wait for weeks, especially when I had two young children. Identifying and being aware of James's needs was vital in order not to undermine his role as provider for the family.

The other feature of coping with a deployment was keeping busy and planning time especially weekends. Planning activities, even for cleaning a particular cupboard or a walk with the children to occupy time, was vital.

The biggest difficulty I experienced was not having someone to talk to. Many Royal Naval wives overcome this by joining Wives' Clubs that are linked with Naval establishments. Forming social units, even with these clubs to help, is difficult because husbands return and leave at different times, and there is a tendency for them to have transient attendees. Whilst I am sure the clubs are extremely valuable for many wives, I personally found them oppressive, partly because the conversation often revolved around moaning about husbands being away and what the wives could and could not do, and also I rarely found the activities interesting. Instead, I went to night school one evening a week. This offered me intellectual stimulation and an opportunity to socialise with adults. General socialisation during periods

of separation is very difficult and demands a great deal of trust on both sides. A sailor having a girl in every port is a standing joke with an element of acceptability, but a wife going out with another man, however innocent the relationship, has connotations of adultery and unfaithfulness. I was extremely lucky and was able to socialise with friends of either sex, and on occasions attend functions with a male partner, knowing my husband trusted me, but I know of wives who did not have this confidence.

Stage 4: Anticipation of return

An important feature in coping with any lengthy deployment is having a date of return to look forward to. Once established into a period of separation, the duration is almost immaterial if there is a point of return to focus on. As previously said, planning activities and identifying goals, together with generally keeping busy, is an important method of coping. There has only been one occasion when I did not have this focus and that was during the Falklands Conflict. Even then, I set myself the task of finishing a patchwork quilt that I had started twelve years before. I completed this and started a second to complete before Christmas 1982. As it happened, I only had twenty-four hours notice of James's return, but the first quilt was finished and on the bed. Setting targets, planning time and maintaining a routine were primary factors in helping me and the children cope with the periods of separation.

Stage 5: On return

The day of return is always exciting and it often involves a 'families day[4]'. These occasions do create a change in routine, but no more than other extra-special times like Christmas and birthdays. When the children were very young, I felt it important not to push the children onto their father, aware that he was physically returning to their lives, and they would be naturally hesitant and shy. It took time and understanding to associate his physical presence to the conversations and memorabilia around the home. If they wanted me to do something I would, and not insist that James did. Instead, James and I would do things together like bathing them and reading the bedtime story. This way they quickly accepted their father's

[4] A 'families' day is when families are invited to go on board the ship. Families may be taken out to the ship anchored off shore and then sail into port with it or go out for the day around the Isle of Wight.

presence again. Hill (1987) recognised this as a socialisation process where children get used to a stranger or someone new in their environment, but the 'stranger' is someone their mother approves of and is therefore safe. He considers this a very important part of child development. I am not sure if, because my children have gone through this early socialisation process often, they approach new acquaintances more readily, but they do mix easily with others.

Stage 6 & 7: Re-establishment

This is another period of adaptation and the one I think is the most difficult. I would have become accustomed to doing things without help, from moving furniture to doing the shopping. I had an established social life (night school) that I needed to maintain for no other reason than to prepare for the next period of separation. I had to take care to include James in doing things I did. Similarly, he had to accept that I was capable of doing things without him, and often did. It is a time of give and take on both sides and takes a great deal of time, effort and understanding, but essential to keeping the tensions, that are inevitable, away from the children.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to highlight some of the salient points that evolve when the father of the house is a serving member of the Royal Navy. I have outlined some of the different types of separation that the family may experience, and reflected upon my own experiences and how my children experienced their father's role in their lives. The subject of the Royal Naval family is unique, but I do not personally believe that being a member of such a family puts the child at risk of being deprived, emotionally disturbed or developing abnormal behaviour. To make it work, a Royal Naval family possibly needs more trust and compromise than a normal family situation, but there is the bonus that housing and financial security is assured. Until recently, being a serviceman was an extremely secure occupation and an experience not shared by other families. There are many other factors that are involved in service life and its implications: such as young wives living far away from their family home and not being in reach of parental support; the regular movement from establishment to establishment and therefore having to make new friends every two or three years. Even then some friends will move on at different times. I have no experience of these

situations, so I cannot comment. In these situations there may be long-term social, psychological and emotional effects on the children. The research that follows aims to study groups of children and families, and establish if children are affected by their fathers being in the Royal Navy.

Chapter 2

The Family

Introduction

The family is probably the oldest social grouping of individuals that exists. Sociologists such as Drake (1997) and Allan (1985; 1999) and psychologists (Lamb, Pleck & Levine, 1985) have dissected, analysed and produced a great deal of material, reports and research papers on the subject. They have projected ideas about the ideal family, recommended how they should live and the ideal size, and sub-divided the concept of the family into different types. They have attempted to identify a 'norm' for family structure. Over many years, the changes in family structure have been monitored, and how much society and family structure influence each other correlated. Most of the population will identify themselves with belonging to a family by being born into it and having a mother and a father and associated relatives, or by selecting a family by association and becoming a member of a commune or church group. For most human beings, it is instinctive to be a part of a family and sociologists have continued to identify the emotional, psychological and physical problems that can result from either not belonging to a family, or being a member of a family that deviates from the recognized 'norm.' Every aspect of family life has been examined. Family structure within different cultures has also come under scrutiny in an attempt to find the 'best'. Two clearly defined theories have emerged: a family can be a nuclear one, working as a small independent unit, of mother, father and children living in one home, or an extended family where parents, siblings, grandparents and children exist within a localized or communal environment, sharing care of the elderly and the young alike.

By definition, a family is a group of individuals that inter-relate with each other, and these relationships are as individual as the people who make them up. Along with the attempts to identify the ideal 'normal' family, sociologists such as Cosin and Hales (1997) and Drake (1997) have tried to isolate and individualise relationships within the family. They pontificate about how family members should behave with each other, and identify the benefits and disadvantages if these relationships do not happen or cannot occur due to the absence of the mother or father. Many questions have been asked and examined relating to all aspects of the family. These include the effects of being in a dual-income family or a

single, non-working mother, and the effects of being in a large family compared to being an only child.

This chapter sets out to summarise some of the literature available on the subject of the family, giving a generalized view of the modern family, and then briefly looking at it from an historical perspective in order to help identify the features that are considered to be important for creating a 'good' family. There is a remarkable variety of academic treatment of family life, but most of it has been concentrated on the dysfunctional family or the one-parent family. The term 'family', whilst readily used in our language, is a complex and ambiguous term. Family structure varies throughout different cultures, but since I am only considering fathers who are serving in the British Royal Navy, I will focus on the family structure in Britain.

A general view of the 'family'

What is perceived as the 'ideal' family has been studied and examined by many sociologists. Established sources offer at least seven different definitions of the word including 'a group consisting of a set of parents and children,' and 'a related group of plant or animal genera' (Chamber's 1997). There is both an epistemological and moral debate about what a family is and what a family ought to be. Silva and Smart (1999:1) identified that some people consider it easy to define what a family ought to be, namely: "a heterosexual conjugal unit based on marriage and co-residence," and continue to identify the purpose for the family as being: "to inculcate proper values in children and to remain independent of state support."

The stereotypical family is easily recognised, in the media or family holiday brochures, as being a man and woman, married, and with a boy child and girl child. They live in perfect harmony in a perfect home. The reality can be very different, and in today's western society even the media has come to realise that this perfection is not necessarily the 'norm'. Indeed, the recent demise of the 'ideal' family, as portrayed in the series of advertisements for the cooking ingredient, Oxo, is an example of how family structures are changing. It was withdrawn because it was felt by the manufacturers that it no longer represents the family of the twenty-first century. In today's society, the word 'family' is used in many contexts.

Allan (1985:1) links the family as being synonymous with the home, identifying it as 'a haven from the harsh realities of the outside world' and 'taken to be the natural location of our most meaningful, intense and rewarding attachments and experiences.' Connecting the family with 'home' brings another dimension to the idea of a family. In the stereotypical family, the female or mother becomes the homemaker, creating the 'home' in which to nurture children and look after the husband. In the study of relationships, the home is often related to the place where the most caring, loving relationships are found. In this research, the mothers are left to look after the home and the children while the husbands are at sea. When the history of the family is considered, it is possible to identify the Naval wife with wives throughout history.

As soon as a child is born into this world, it becomes part of a family and will, in the course of its development, form relationships with those who constitute its family. The media is constantly bombarding us with news that the modern family can no longer be relied on to provide support and sustenance because it has become isolated and private, and family relationships are less stable. The social implications arising from the breakdown of the family unit are immense and widely discussed in literature, but in this research, I will be looking at a particular demographic group where family life is in the conventional area of being 'normal'. If, as we are led to believe, being a member of a family is so important to personal welfare and society as a whole, and the breakdown of the family is so devastating, how can the 'ideal' be identified, especially if this research makes the assumption that the subject children live in a normal family?

Vertical and horizontal family theories

Family groupings have existed throughout the world since recorded history began, and throughout the variety of forms that the families take, and are fundamentally integral to the organisation of the societies they make up. Throughout history, families have been observed from two perspectives, identified by Lévi-Strauss (1996) as the vertical family and the horizontal family theories. The vertical ideal considers that society is an aggregate of basic families based on biological and psychological foundations. It recognises that there is a basic instinct that causes a man to be attracted to a woman for the purpose of procreation. This is supported by an instinct for the woman to raise and feed her children. In other words, the basic family is founded on 'natural' requirements around which social organizations

revolve. This linear structure binds together different generations because of the repetition of the pattern of adults producing children, who in their turn become adults and produce children, and therefore over time create continuity. This vertical family structure creates a place where early and often profound emotions are experienced, and where there is space for both the physical and moral being to develop. In such a family structure, ancestors and descendants are united.

The horizontal dogma presents a different argument. Here the family is split when, on marriage, a woman leaves the home she has been raised in, or leaves it to live in the same house as the man. Similarly, the man may leave the home he has been raised in, to create a new home for himself and his partner. Two families are broken and have to accept that they each lose a member when this new family is created. In turn, children in this new family will eventually break away to form another new family. Both vertical and horizontal theories of family structure are evident in western society. Other societies, especially those such as the aborigines, do well in maintaining a vertical family structure. (Lévi-Strauss 1996:5)

It becomes clear that there would not be society without families, nor families without society. The biological need to procreate is not a sufficient basis to develop a society. A society can only form as families unify in mutual friendship, aggression or defence. When considering the historical changes in family structures, social changes play a critical role.

A historical view of the family

Piecing together the various outcomes from the studies of early families, it can be concluded, that even as far back as pre-history, there was a tendency for the female to stay within the family home or within the social-group base, while the male went away from the 'home' to hunt in order to provide for his 'family'.

No research about family life is complete without including evidence, gathered by exploring life patterns such as growing up, courting, getting married, bearing and rearing children, becoming old and dying. The lives of individuals, and the families they live in, are major intermediaries in society. It has been argued by researchers such as Hareven (1997) that, before the pre-industrial societies, people lived in the extended family group, and often with

at least three generations living together. The nuclear family did not develop until after the manufacturing industries and the opportunity for working in factories became a way of life. According to Hareven (1997), industrialization produced the nuclear family, while simultaneously destroying familial harmony and community life. During the past two and a half decades, researchers have dispelled some of this limited view, investigating family members throughout their entire lives, and examining the nuclear family and its interaction with a wider kinship group. Researchers also studied the family in relation to other elements in society as a whole: religion, education and the welfare state, as well as migration and urbanisation. To go into any depth of the research papers that have been presented on the subject of family development is more than within the realm of this study. Hareven's paper, *Recent Research on the History of the Family* (in Drake 1997:39), covers a wide range of the research conducted in recent years and concludes:

> When the historical study of the family first emerged, it drew its vitality and motivation from the need to link discrete family patterns to the community and to the larger processes of social change. That original impetus was shared by the pioneer generation of family historians, and it endowed the historical study of the family with its initial depth and energy. Doing justice to this goal and achieving the proper equilibrium between the reconstruction of time-specific family patterns and their linkage to larger social processes continues to be a major challenge.

Evolution of the family

This research reflects on the issue that the father is away from home for various periods of time throughout the child's life, and because of these absences it is possible that the child will be affected in some psychological or emotional way. Periodic absences of the father, however, are not a new concept. Looking back over time, archaeologists have located groups of bones together, often different sizes, surmising that these humanoids lived as a group or 'family'. It appears that even in prehistory family groups existed, even if in a primitive form, as they do today, and a fundamental issue related to this research involves the responsibilities required by the individuals in that family. In this research, there is a family unit of mother, father and children, and for the sake of argument, we will consider that the mother stays at home whilst the father goes to work, often away for days at a time. This scenario is not dissimilar to that of the theoretical idea of prehistory families mentioned earlier, when the female stayed with other females in the 'home' area while the males went to hunt for food, often for days at a time, with other males. The roles of the adult in the two

families are alike. The modern Naval wife may go to work, but her role is one of remaining in the family home to care for the children while her husband is away. By evaluating historical text, it is possible to understand that this situation is neither an ancient concept nor a new one. By looking at the evolution of the roles of family members, it is possible to understand that the role, experienced by the Naval wife and indeed the children in a Naval family, is not very different from those experienced by wives and children throughout history.

Adult family roles and the division of labour

If the concept of a 'family' group did exist in prehistory and is accepted further questions have to be asked regarding the fundamental characteristic of family life that seems to appear only in human societies, and that is the sexual division of labour. Whilst rapidly changing in the western world, the distribution of tasks between men and women, which occurs in nearly all societies, is usually clearly defined. It is a subject that can be debated at length, but three simple theories can be identified as possible reasons for such male/female differentiation. The division of labour can be seen as making the couple an economic cell, or that it is a life style that binds the couple together and each becomes mutually dependent on the other. Whilst the tasks delegated to the man or the woman may differ within different cultures, the origin of such delegation is unknown. Masset (1996) gives the example of Pueblo Indians where weaving is strictly a male occupation, and within the Navaho tribe where it is solely the responsibility of the female, and yet these two tribes live close together and are related as closely as cousins.

Another possible explanation for this sexual division is the restriction put on the females because of their nurturing role and biological function of bearing the young. A female approaching full term pregnancy is restricted in mobility, and the young human is dependent for a much longer period of time than other species. Activities such as hunting would be restricted if a child was present and it would be extremely dangerous for hunter and child. Hunting was thought to have been an activity undertaken by the male and so it was a logical outcome that whilst the male went hunting the female stayed home and cared for the children. Since it was important in such groups that the fire was kept burning it became a role of the woman to keep it going, and as it was used to cook the food the female role became one that included food preparation. Hence a family unit developed where the female

was at 'home' caring for the house and children, and the male did strength-orientated activities such as hunting. This picture of the woman at home by the hearth is one of the oldest images associated with family life.

The influence of industrialisation on family life in the UK

As this work focuses on the relationship between a father and his children, and their interaction in a modern day family, further consideration of the more contemporary issues relating to family development is important. It is also appropriate that the focus is on the family within the United Kingdom, since it is concerned with the British Royal Navy, which in itself is a unique institution. The importance of the father within the family structure has changed significantly in recent years. These changes have been brought about partly by the changes in family life and structure, and therefore it is necessary to identify some of these changes before looking at the family today.

Going out to work

Some historians believe that the concept of 'going out to work' began with the industrial revolution, but O'Day (1994) argues that this phenomenon was well established by the seventeenth century. By this time, there was already a proletariat made up of agricultural labourers, who did not own their own land and sold their labour for goods and money. Such labourers either did not have a home, lived rough wherever they could find work, or lived in makeshift homes that they took from place to place. They had little opportunity to buy land or become homeowners. If they had wives and children, these followed to wherever work was available and sometimes they took jobs as well.

During the nineteenth century, several different types of work environment emerged. In one, the wealthy businessman or entrepreneur would provide materials for the smallholding families to produce goods on a piecework basis. The 'employer' would provide the materials, tools and machinery, that were either rented or bought by the worker, and the smallholder could supplement his income by producing goods. He and his family would work at home but still maintain their independence by continuing to work their farm and land.

The second type of employment at this time came from much wealthier individuals. They would be in total control and owned the means to produce goods. For example, they would own the land, the mine and the machinery. They might also own the houses that the workers lived in. They would pay the workers a wage and sell on the goods that they produced for their own profit.

Financial restrictions brought about another requirement for men to go out to work. Whilst many had the opportunity to be apprentices to a trade, few rarely had the opportunity to buy the tools required to set up their own workshops. Several skilled workers would join together and share both workplace and tools, and whilst working for themselves would 'go out' from the family home to work.

As a result of this trend of 'going out to work', the wives could no longer share in the income-producing work of the household, and nor could the children who, in the past, had chores to do and a role to play for the common good of the family. When the husband started to leave the family home to gain employment, the wife found her role changed. No longer needed to support the husband to farm the land, the traditionally female tasks were taken away. Apart from the retail trade, there was little opportunity for women to go out to work, and so they stayed at home. Thus, the home was no longer the workplace, and so took on a different function and became a place of leisure, rest and relaxation, and the wife's role was to ensure that it ran smoothly.

The changes in the working lives of the male population that occurred after the industrial revolution brought about a dramatic change in family structure. Sons and daughters left their parental home to find employment and brought about the demise of the extended family. The extended-family life style does still exist in Britain and is evident in many other cultures. However, the introduction of industry, rapid population growth, urbanisation, and capitalisation as well as industrialisation did, according to Gittins (1993), result in families separating and creating a society in which the nuclear family became the dominant family style.

The family of the twenty first century

Several features of the modern family have already been mentioned, but, with the vast diversity in family structure today, it is impossible to identify any one as being the 'norm' or 'average family'. A divorcee will argue that his/her family is as close and stable as any two-parent family, and the single parent can provide a good, secure family environment for her, or his, children. Whichever family developmental theory you consider, it is the freedom of today's western society that allows for a much wider choice of lifestyles than ever before experienced. Couples can freely live together without marriage and, whilst occasionally frowned upon by some, a woman can have a baby out of wedlock and raise it without the father ever knowing of the child's existence. Indeed, today's society actively encourages an unmarried mother to keep and raise her child. Contraception is easier now than ever before, and so couples have almost total control over the timing of the birth of any number of children they want to have, and some couples actively choose not to have any. The twenty-first century is continuing to develop equal opportunities for both sexes. There is legislation that requires employers to give equal pay and professional development to both sexes, and this equality is now being pursued into the realm of granting paternity leave as well as maternity leave. The differential between women's and men's wages is gradually lessening and with more women demanding a career of their own, before and after marriage, it is possible that the wife can contribute more to the household budget than the husband. Along with the fact that there is no longer a requirement for the male to hunt, it is sometimes the husband who leaves work to care for the home and young children. In some circumstances, another individual becomes a part of the family as a paid nanny or au-pair, caring for the children whilst both parents work. Another possibility is that the children have far more time to share with their extended family members when being cared for by grandparents or aunts. In many families there is an expectation that men take an equal role in the running of the family home and childcare, and especially if it is a dual-income household.

It is no longer possible to identify a 'normal' or 'average family' and all types of adult/child groups can stress that they constitute a 'good' family, yet identifying the factors that make a family 'good' is equally as complex. If it is becoming impossible to identify and define a 'normal', 'good' or 'average' family, perhaps it is worth considering the family from the perspective of what might be termed an objective for having or being in a family. Pringle (1986:15) identifies a 'good' family as being one that provides for the children's needs.

> Children's physical, emotional, social and intellectual needs must all be met if they are to enjoy life, develop their full potential and grow into participating, contributing adults.

A family home that can meet these needs could be deemed as a good one, and how to achieve this within the family has been written about and studied by numerous psychologists and sociologists (Homan 1970, Lamb 1982). Nowadays, it is recognized that these needs identified by Pringle (1993) are inter-dependent in subtle complex ways. Much is known about the ways in which the quality of family relationships can affect a child's development, and even more is known about the probable consequences when they are unsatisfactory or completely absent. The emotionally disturbed child may fail to thrive physically and cognitively despite being fed the best quality diet. In the same way food can affect a child's growth, a child deprived of love can become socially detached as it suffers from positive emotional starvation. Given an appropriate diet a child will grow, but the child must also be encouraged to exercise properly in order to develop well physically. The child, who has a stable, continuous, dependable and loving relationship with its parents, where love is given unconditionally and without expectation, can develop a healthy personality. Consistency in discipline, approval and acceptance, enable a child to develop self-worth and confidence and, by example, develop acceptable moral and social standards. Given security, which provides reassurance and support, the child will be prepared to explore the world with the confidence that his family are behind him. Homan (1970:8) clarified the factors contributing to the normal development of a child as: (1) love, (2) discipline and (3) independence. A child must experience these things in his relationship with his parents, and also see such values demonstrated between the other members of his family, and between his parents and their relationship with their parents. A stable family life can provide a child with a sense of personal continuity, of having a past as well as a future.

Conclusion

Research by the likes of Allan (1985; 1999), Bramen and O'Brien (1996), demonstrates that the concept of 'the family' is a very fluid one. As society has changed through industrialisation and technological developments the place of the family within it has changed. As society has changed to accept the rights of women to work and be independent of male dominance the family no longer has to be that of a married couple and their children. Contraception has become commonplace and as a result family size can be

determined and, as the welfare state supports lone parents and those on lower incomes, family structures change continually. Some factors give positive reinforcement to family stability, but similarly some of those factors can have a detrimental effect on the family. Divorce can create animosity between fathers and mothers, and children are exposed to emotional upset. Parent/child relationships can become strained if they are subjects of visiting orders. Technological developments can be considered as a two-edged sword: on one edge it has enabled parents, especially the mother, time to spend with their children because the daily chores are quicker, but on the other edge, it can lead to higher unemployment and this can disrupt family life by creating financial pressures and emotional upset. Higher unemployment has also meant that family groups move away from other kinship families to get work, and the extended family is broken, creating isolation and loneliness. The subject of family life is ever expanding and worthy of a great deal of research. It is clear that there is no longer a typical or stereotypical family and nor can a normal family be identified. However, this study focuses on children within a two-parent family where the father is employed, but who does not have a 'nine-to-five' occupation.

By looking at a small amount of the literature available on the subject of the family, it has been possible to identify those elements that constitute a 'normal' family and relate them to the families within this research project. As well as highlighting the need for stable family units, I have also been able to identify that the families within this work have a similarity with family units throughout history. To recap: in the pre-historical days of the hunter-gatherer era, the child rearing was done by the woman who was often separated from her partner for several days and even months as he went away to hunt. In the post-industrial days, the men often had to leave the martial or family home to find work in factories, and were not reunited until he had achieved financial security for his wife and children. She in turn would leave the extended family situation to be with her husband, much as the Naval wife does. The situation the Naval family children find themselves in is not a new one and, by briefly looking at the history of the family, can be identified as being one experienced by children for centuries. In the next chapter, I look at documented research literature about the role the father plays in the family, the role he plays in promoting the well-being of his children and, in particular, the effects on the children if he is unable to fulfil this role.

Chapter 3

The Role of the Father

Introduction

Before attempting to identify the effects that a father, who is often absent from the family home but at the same time remains very much a part of that family, has on the family unit, it would be pertinent to consider the actual role a father plays in child rearing and development. This chapter therefore considers how the father's role within the family has changed from the patriarch of the Victorian era, to the father of the new millennium, who is not only expected to be the breadwinner, but to be fully involved with the upbringing of his children. The feminist movement may well argue that a father's presence is not necessary to promote the growth of a child into a responsible, well-adjusted adult, but this work does not explore literature of this genre because it is focused on families within which the father is an integral part. Attention is also directed to how the father interacts and the role he plays in the development of his children.

The father's role in the family

Family relationships are by nature complicated and while motherhood has been widely discussed, fatherhood has received relatively less attention. Some research has been conducted in the last few decades to address this deficit, albeit mostly by American researchers such as Boose and Flowers (1989), Hammer (1982) and Secunda (1993). This research has had a tendency to focus on children's sex-role development, approaching the subject from a psychoanalytical, psychological or sociological perspective. Research on the positive factors of father-child relationships still remains limited. Sharpe (1994) identified the reason why the majority of research has focused on the mother-child relationship as opposed to the father-child relationships, as being that the mother is the essential child carer with whom it is necessary for the child to make a satisfactory bond. Hence this ideology has fuelled research on maternal matters and especially maternal deprivation. The lack of research on partial paternal separation creates the impression that the subject is seen as less important by researchers in general. Although gradually changing the nuclear family structure is still taken to be the basis for a 'normal' family, within which the mother stays home and looks after the home and children, and the father goes to work. Father still retains

the symbolic link with the outside world. Simone De Beauvoir (1949) typifies this vision of the patriarchal role in her work The Second Sex.

She wrote:

> The life of the father has a mysterious prestige; the hours he spends at home, the room where he works, the objects he has around him, his pursuits, his hobbies, have a sacred character. He supports his family, and is the responsible head of his family. As a rule his work takes him outside and so it is through him that the family communicates with the rest of the world: he incarnates that immense, difficult and marvellous world of adventure; he personifies transcendence, he is God.
>
> Cited by Owen 1994:31

As the world moves into the twenty-first century, western society has created a situation where fathers or partners are expected to take a full part in the upbringing of their children as well as expecting them to provide the money on which the family needs to live. In the consumer society of the 1990s and 2000s this task is getting harder. With the decline of public transport and increase in out-of-town shopping, many wives require a car to ferry the children about and do the shopping. The children want the latest designer clothes to belong to their peer group and there must be the latest television, computer and microwave in the home. Whilst coping with these imposed pressures, the modern father has a role to play for which he has no model to follow. Researchers like LaRossa (1988) consider that the culture of fatherhood has changed dramatically, whilst others like Lamb (1987) consider the change is much slower, primarily because fathers have not had a role model of an individual who 'fathers'. Their own fathers were often shadowy figures, at best difficult to understand, and therefore unable to provide them with the expectations and involvement that they are now expected to fulfil. Daly's (1995) work considers the importance of having your own father as your role model, although her research indicates that men put together a wide range of different roles to form their own 'fathering skills'. Daly (1995:29) comments that men often view their own fathers in a negative way, writing:

> Although respondents frequently talked about their own fathers in response to the question about models their fathers served only as a negative or a reference point for which respondents wanted to change in their lives.

Despite this lack of a role model, Daly (1995) argues that most fathers today express the desire to be an active and influential force in the lives of their children – rather than having

children to 'carry on the name' or family business as was the case in the Victorian era. Daly (1995) points out that in the past fathers have not produced a role model for the 'today's' father, so they look to their contemporaries to establish good fathering patterns. The father also relies on the mother to teach him and takes cues from her as to how she thinks the father should behave. Instead of presenting an inherited model of fatherhood to their children that is rooted in the past, modern day fathers appear to be focused on the construction of a fatherhood model from the values of today. It is important to consider that whilst society is emphasising that fathers should play an equal role in caring for their children, the same society makes it extremely difficult. In some cases Law Courts enforce very restrictive visiting rights on the divorced father, and a father still has no rights to protect his unborn child from being aborted. The cases of child abuse reaching the media often inhibit fathers from performing the most natural of caring functions for fear that they may be misconstrued. A great deal of work is being done by child protection agencies to ensure the safety of children and protect them from abuse, but unfortunately it has engendered a fear in many parents, especially fathers. An innocent accident or a game of rough-and-tumble may result in bruises, and even the caring task of a father bathing his daughter can easily be misinterpreted and, before long, alarm bells ring and an allegation of assault made by 'caring' outsiders.

The patriarchal structure of the Victorian era still exists, but the opportunity now for families to get help if they are struggling financially, unemployed or bringing up young children on little or no income, has changed the situation. Women are no longer forced to be dependent on another person in order to care for their children, and parenthood can become a partnership.

The father's conventional role as provider does cause physical separation from the family simply because he has to go to another place to work. However, it is generally accepted that he will return home daily unlike the case in this study when it may be several weeks before the father returns to the family home. Bowlby's (1951:15) early work almost dismisses the direct need for a father in a child's life by writing:

> In the young child's eyes the father plays second fiddle and his value only increases as the child becomes more able to stand alone...his value as the economic and emotional support of the mother will be assumed.

More recent studies by Parke (1981), Allan (1985; 1999), and Lamb (1997), have increased the awareness of the role a father can play in all aspects of the development of a child. The father can offer emotional support even before the child is conceived. With modern family planning, the couple can decide together that they both want to have a baby and this immediately brings the 'being wanted' emotion into the later life of the child. When writing her book the *'Needs of Children'*, Pringle (1986:60) expresses Kitzinger's (1973) view that even pregnancy can be an emotional time for both parents. She describes pregnancy and birth as:

> ...involve developmental crises, not only for the woman but very often for the man too (as well as for the larger family of which they are a part). It is a key point in their individual life cycle and in the cycle of their relationship, whether or not the couple are married. Education for childbirth and parenthood can help towards the prospective parents towards maturation...it can help towards a deeper understanding of relationships – between the couple and the in-laws, between the parents and child – in the family and in the wider society.

Similarly the emotions at the time of conception can bring the feeling of love and affection into the child's life. We no longer live in a society where men are expected to 'make an honest woman' of the girlfriend they get pregnant, and therefore do not generally enter into marriage and fatherhood with great reluctance. The father's role in planning not only the conception, but also the support and care he gives his wife or partner during pregnancy, planning the nursery and even through the actual birth, will affect both parents and the role they will play in the child's life (Parke 1996). It cannot be assumed that a mother is 'naturally' maternal, but if the father is by her side a mother can receive assurance that what she is doing is all right, and reinforce her feelings of adequacy and self-esteem. Her increased confidence that she is doing a good job will in turn be communicated to the child. This support and understanding for the mother can be of vital importance in the early days and months of the child's life, when the mother might be so preoccupied with the caring of the child that her relationship with the father suffers. She may become exhausted and anxious or suffer post-natal depression. These may engender emotions of anger, hatred and rejection that could be reflected on both of their relationships with the child.

Pringle (1986) believes that both parents participate actively in child rearing but with different roles. The father becomes the principal companion and disciplinarian for a boy as he grows up. The father's absence, particularly when it is for long periods or permanent, has

an unfavourable effect on the child's psychological development, especially when it happens during the pre-school years (Pilling, Pringle & Kellmer 1978). Fathers can give an example of democratic co-operation that their sons can emulate and their daughters may seek in their future husbands. Green (1976:49) expresses this view when she writes:

> If father allows himself to be kept aside as unimportant to the very young child, he may have set the pattern to remain unimportant to that child forever after.

The father's role in the early years is really one of just being there, giving the infant the opportunity to seize the fact that other people exist besides his mother and that men are different from women. The child observes that interesting, helpful, satisfying and sometimes angry, feelings exist between fathers and mothers as well as between parents and children. Through the two people they are closest to, they are introduced to a wide range of emotions that a growing child needs to see, whilst in a secure and protected environment. Importantly, children of both sexes get a chance to see how men and women relate as adults. They observe that the fathers might make most noise but do not always win the argument. They observe the compliments and hidden threats, the goodwill and resentments of life. By observing the interactions between mother and father, the children experience early in life an appreciation of commonly accepted social and sexual roles. It is between the ages of two and three that a child identifies itself as having a sex. The 'normal' boy will grow to know that he will grow up to be like his father and not his mother. A child will learn from its parents the behaviour and attitudes of the different sexes towards each other (Pringle 1986). It is thought that if there is no father present at this stage, the young boy could become confused, but the boy can pick up his identity from the men around him, by behaving like the boys he plays with and relatives like grandparents and uncles. Pringle (1986) identifies this process of identification of sexuality as being an important role of the father. By his support of the mother and presenting a different perspective on the child-rearing process, the child will develop the concept of responsibility. Pringle (1986) illustrates her views by quoting research from Bronfenbrenner (1970), that better progress in positive child development appears to be made when praise and recognition comes not only from the mother, but from another person, preferably of the opposite sex.

Arcana (1983a), a single mother, wrote about the difficulties of bringing up a male child, feeling very aware that unless she was able to create an awareness of the gender role her son needed to experience, there was a risk that he could be ostracised and humiliated. She

considered the simple factor that boys, unless given the opportunity to learn about male roles in their early years, may well become confused. He will realise that females are not like him and he doesn't understand. He might even become anti-women because the discipline he is subjected to at home and at school, comes mostly from women. It is important for fathers to get their sons to feel the pride and responsibility inherent in being a boy. Psychologists and sociologists agree that the father is the chief transmitter of culturally based conceptions of masculinity and femininity.

> Growing up alongside a father who talks to him, takes a constant interest in him, makes decisions that his son is aware of, sets some limits to what his son may and may not do, gets his son to work with him on jobs and plays with him at sport, enriches and smoothes the transition from young child to adolescence.
>
> Green 1976:57

The role of the father in allowing the child to identify their sexuality is very important. If a son watches his father teasing his mother, loving her, quarrelling and making up, he will be emotionally awakened to how to relate to females later in life. Similarly a daughter who has an open-minded and loving relationship with her father, can lay the foundations for many of her later attitudes and consequently for her success with men for the rest of her life. Popenoe (1996:143) Despite the fight for equality, fathers still have a tendency to encourage sons to be aggressive and independent, but daughters to be sociable and articulate, passing on the system of male dominance and female subservience. Often the parents reinforce this stereotyping. Boys are asked to empty the rubbish and do heavy and dirty jobs, whilst daughters are asked to make beds and dust. This can be even greater in the family where the father goes away. The son is asked to 'look after mummy and sister while I'm away' imprinting onto the child that he has to be the strong responsible male. Pringle (1986) suggests that there is evidence that in homes where the father has been absent for long periods or permanent, boys are at greater risk of becoming delinquent and girls of having an illegitimate baby. She does not give evidence for her statement and nor can she identify the age at which the father's absence has this impact. Green (1976) researched the intellectual level of boys and correlated the results with the fathers' presence in their lives, using for her research group American boys from the 3rd grade in school. Her results indicated that boys who saw a great deal of their fathers each day, easily came out on top in academic performance tests compared with boys who had absent fathers or spent less than six hours a

week with their fathers. Green (1976) concluded that the father's absence after the age of five can set up intellectual problems, and that the parents' attitude is crucial in determining a child's educational prowess.

Conclusion

It seems that there is a considerable variation in the ideas of researchers about the role a father plays in the development of his children. Whether or not, the father's role in the child's environment, could be replaced by other males, is as debatable as identifying how much time a father must spend with the child in order to provide these needs. It becomes clear, however, that most researchers consider a father is necessary for more than conception. Although a point that could no doubt be argued by many lone mothers, it does appear that most researchers think the father has a vital role to play both in the psychological development of the child and, according to Green (1976), the educational development. It seems he is there to provide support to his wife, a role model to his sons and an example to his daughters, and without him the family will suffer. In this research, the only guarantee that the father was present was for the conception after which there could be any combination of times when he was physically present or absent. However, it should be assumed that the couple are in a committed relationship and even though he was not physically present, the wife and mother has psychological and emotional support exhibited by communications and inner knowledge of the individuals.

In this work, I aim to find out if the periods of their fathers' transience does affect the children. Having considered in this chapter the father's role in a child's life, I will proceed by exploring some of the literature regarding the effects of separation.

Chapter 4

Separation and Father Contact

Introduction

This chapter initially considers the literature available, which is related to how children become attached to their primary carer and how they react to separation, and then examines the affect on children of paternal contact once their father has left the family home. Family scholars, using diverse theoretical perspectives, maintain that parent-child relationships are crucial to child development. This proposition is central to a wide variety of research topics including anthropological and developmental studies, feminist studies, and those related to social exchange, social learning, social role, family systems and psychological theories. Traditional approaches to examining the environment required for a child's well-being focus on and emphasise family composition and posit that two parental role models are essential for the normal development and well-being of children. Consistent with the Freudian assumption that a two-parent group is the essential unit for appropriate sex typed identification, sociological and anthropological theories have long maintained the necessity of such a group for normal child development. To depart from the nuclear family, it is argued, will be problematic. It has been shown that parental absence is associated with decreases in parent-child contact, and that these processes in turn are associated with behaviour problems among children (Dornbusch, *et al.* 1985, Furstenberg et al. 1987). Acock and Demo(1994:47) identifies these theories as, 'The Family Composition Hypothesis'.

Contemporary western society has become characterized by prolonged separation of family members and a distant-living father commuting long distances, while at the same time calling on the father to become more involved with child rearing. Climo (1992), citing work by Moss *et al.* (1985), Adams (1968) and Lee and Ellithorpe (1982) regards the expectation of father involvement as a phenomenon of the middle-class families, and although his research considered the adult-child and parent relationships, highlights that once established the parent-child bond remains cohesive even under conditions of limited face-to-face contact.

Previous chapters have explored the role of the father and family life in general, and while it may be argued that a 'perfect' family is one that consists of a full-time, caring mother, father and two children there are many different family styles and many different occasions when this 'perfection' is not possible or desired. The amount of time the father-baby dyad interacts varies greatly from family to family, and also varies as the socio-economic and subcultures differ. There is an abundance of literature relating to research conducted on the effect of separation from a parent on the child, but it should be noted that there are significant differences between the separation experienced by the children of the literature reviewed, and the family situations experienced by the children in this study. Primarily, the published research tends to focus on the separation of the child from the mother, the child often being put into nursery or foster home. Indeed, this was the subject of studies by Burlingham and Freud (1944), Bowlby (1998) and Rutter (1976), all of who focused their work on maternal deprivation due to hospitalisation. Secondly, when separation from the father occurs, the majority of researchers focus on separation as a result of marital breakdown, a situation that is often accompanied by disharmony in the relationship between the parents. The third area that much research has focused on is concerned with the effect on children if no father is present in their lives, as in the unmarried-mother family structure. A fourth area of study relating to separation is that which results from the death of the father. Permanent separation of this nature brings with it many more issues than is pertinent to this study, because of the immense psychological effects a close family bereavement has on all the family members. In some single-mother family scenarios, the father remains a significant person in the child's life even though they live apart. These families bring another dimension to the equation of separation theories. However, for this research it is necessary to focus on children from the following perspective: they are separated from the father and remain with the mother; the parents are in a loving, caring relationship with each other (evidence for this, however, is not a part of this work); and unlike the single-mother with no father situation, the father is a very significant member of the child's environment, living in the family home when he can. It is, however, important to consider different types of separation in order to identify similarities in the experiences of the subject children.

Minimal work can be found relating to military service causing the father-child separation or indeed occupational separation. Burlingham and Freud (1942) started to study children who were separated from their mothers as a result of evacuation, and concluded that although they exhibited stress at the time, they did not suffer long-lasting effects after

twenty years. Identified in Chapter 1 was the work of Turner and Rennell (1995), which focused on children in the Second World War and studied how the children of servicemen reacted when their fathers' returned home. Due to the vast changes in family structure, communication and the decrease in the duration of deployments, neither of these works relate to modern day society in any significant way.

Attachment theories

Children have a natural instinct to form an attachment to someone who is a source of protection and provider of food. A newborn baby can discriminate between its mother and a stranger within days of its birth, forming a bond because she feeds, protects and offers warmth and comfort to the baby (Hetherington and Parke 1993). When this person disappears a high level of anxiety is produced (Lansdown and Walker 1996). Woolfson (1995) attempted to give a reason why children are so affected. He considers that a child needs to experience stable family relationships in the developing years, and these act as a base for future social relationships. Parents, he argued, find it hard to give their child all the necessary love and attention they need, when they themselves are struggling with life. He firmly believed that children are just as able to interpret non-spoken signs of ill feeling, as they are of interpreting verbal language. Parental tension cannot be hidden completely and, for a child, the failure to form at least one emotional connection with an adult in the first three years of life can have long-term detrimental effects later in life. He also argues that the child will form attachments in the same way as they observe attachments around them, and a child uses its parents and their relationship as a model of how it should behave towards others. Galston and Kamark (1990) also looked at family structure and relationships, especially with the father. They concluded their research by reporting that the relationship between family structure and crime is so strong, that controlled family configuration erases the relationship between race and crime, and low income and crime. Based on such evidence, they make a strong case to support the theory that paternal deprivation in the form of physical, economic and emotional unavailability of fathers to their children, has become the most prevalent form of child maltreatment in America today.

The principle of the father's importance as a valuable parent has already been discussed in the previous chapter. It is an importance that does not go away when the family structure

changes. It is the quality of the parenting that is important more than the quantity, and whilst children need financing, they need love and time more than money (Lilley 1997). Observations made by Colin (1996) in the course of her research on human interaction, found that babies who were away from their fathers for up to a month were not likely to exhibit prolonged protest or sink into despair while remaining in the mother's care. Occasionally, there was a measure of detachment at being reunited with the father, followed by intensified attachment behaviour. If the mother went away for a similar period of time, but the baby continued to be looked after by the father, the same reactions were observed. Colin used this as evidence to suggest that the father is a valued attachment figure in his own right. Kotlchuck (1976) found the same sort of attachment demonstrated when father or mother left the room. The reaction was slightly more pronounced with the mother than the father, but non-existent with strangers. The babies clearly treated their fathers as attachment figures who were able to serve as a security base. The subjects for Colin's (1996) research were from two-parent families, and the reader is left to assume that there was harmony between the adults. The positive emotional tie between the parents could be an important consideration in how the baby reacts. It is accepted that the emotional state of the carer does influence the emotional state of the baby, and it could be surmised that the occurring separation in the Colin's (1996) investigation was between loving individuals and was amicable. The period of separation would possibly be accompanied by talk of return and other positive interaction and this, too, could improve the overall reaction to the separation period and subsequent child reaction.

Rutter (1971) came to similar conclusions when he studied parent-child separations. He found there was a greater risk of antisocial problems when the separation was the result of family discord, than if it was caused by any other reason. It is the long-term family disturbance that causes the psychological problems, rather than the separation itself. Rutter (1971) thought it was a certain type of separation that causes short-term distress, and may in some circumstances play a part in some psychological problems. He explored the questions: "What is special about the separations that cause distress and disorder? What differentiates them from those that do not cause harm, and which are happy and positive experiences?" In so doing, he considered the hospitalisation experience and found that there are opportunities and actions that can be taken to reduce this anxiety, such as the presence of a family member or friend, frequent visiting, ample provision of toys and play activities, and adequate preparation prior to the admission. He also identified things such as having

familiar toys and belongings around; a regular routine; and having the same person around for meals, bedtimes etc. Emotional psychology is complex and it is not possible to explore these issues here, but it is commonsense that actions occurring with harmony are far easier to accept than when they are without. However, when the separation is as a result of marital break-up, maintaining harmony, a regular routine and providing adequate preparation for the separation, is not always possible.

Reactions to separation through marital break-up

Developmental psychologists, Lansdown and Hetherington (1990) suggest that the first two years following the break up is the "crisis" period. Both adults and children face intense emotional upset, continuing family conflict and have to adjust to new living arrangements. Studying pre-school children of middle class families, Lansdown and Hetherington (1990) described them as living a chaotic lifestyle in the first two years after the separation. They were more likely to live on take-away food, eating at irregular times. Bedtimes became more erratic and older children were often late to school. It is important to recognize that every child is an individual with its own unique personality. How a particular child might react to the separation of its parents will depend on several different factors, based on their previous life experiences and personality. It is inevitable that the family structure changes in a situation such as divorce. Parents can become depressed and routines change, often resulting in the withdrawal of attention from the child, and there could also be changes in the family care arrangements. Further, there could be changes in parental attitude, moods and behaviour. The newly single mother may be relieved of the stressful situation of a failing marriage, but she is suddenly faced with a different combination of stressful situations. She has to make all the decisions and provide for all the children's needs. In addition there may be a need to take up employment. So with the combination of work, parenting and housework, the mother may find there is no time for the unexpected demands of her children as they too experience the separation. Whilst adapting to a new lifestyle, she may be suffering great emotional trauma herself, and at the same time trying to give emotional support to her children. Wallerstein and Kelly (1980:35) use powerful and emotive wording as they describe the emotions that may occur within the family on divorce and write:

> For children and adolescents, the separation and its aftermath is the most stressful period in their lives. The family rupture evokes an acute sense of shock, intense fears and grieving which children find overwhelming.

The range of emotions experienced and the reaction of the child to those emotions will vary according to their unique personality. A child's early response to divorce and separation is not governed by a balanced understanding of the issues that have led up to it. Instead, the child's attention is focused entirely on the disruption of its own family, and is intensely worried about what is going to happen to them personally. There is no set formula and much will depend on the circumstances surrounding the separation and the interaction of the parties involved. However, there does seem to be similarities in the reactions of children of like age. Burgoyne, Ormrod and Richards (1987) discovered that all children experience a strong fear of being left alone, because until the point of separation both parents have been a constant feature in the child's life. The two people who they have depended on for support and protection are forcing the separation upon them. This can make the child angry, sad and depressed. The children will, however, feel that they cannot express this anger in case they send the remaining parent away as well. They will find different ways to express this anger; siblings become quarrelsome; cross with friends; become aggressive and demanding on their peers, sometimes driving friends away and therefore making the child even more distressed and abandoned. On the converse side, this anger may be internalised and the child becomes withdrawn, quiet and depressed. Burgoyne *et al.* (1987) are not as definitive as Lilley (1997) in identifying precise ages when certain behaviours are exhibited but their findings do concur and both observe that the strong overt reactions are often short lived and only take a matter of months to subside.

The parent-child bond, the most fundamental of all human relationships, finds its roots deep in the history of human social life. Bowlby (1998) proposes that under the dangerous conditions of early human existence, nature bonded mothers and small children together for protection, and for no less a purpose than survival; but this primeval, instinctive relationship has been disclosed as having far deeper consequences. Forming an attachment, with not only the mother but also the father, has been proved to have very positive effects on the child's well-being. Children usually show their first close attachments at six or seven months and become anxious when separated from their parent figure and wary of strangers. In many cases this wariness can be strong enough to be recognized as fear. During the months that follow this pattern of apprehension tends to become more marked. Both

separation anxiety and the fear of strangers peak at around sixteen months. Thereafter children become less fearful, but remain timid (Lansdown and Walker 1996). Observations made of children who are separated for a long period and placed in strange situations away from their parents show a clear sequence of events. Ainsworth (1985) first determined protest, crying, screaming, then quiet periods of detachment, and then despair when they are quiet and appear "good". When reunited with their parents the children may not welcome them, but can be angry and sullen, and sometimes even ignoring the parents. They lose trust. Lansdown and Walker (1996) believe that the most vulnerable period for separation to occur, and therefore separation anxiety to be at its peak, is between the ages of six months and four years old. They identify key features of the reactions to separation by children at different ages.

The young child between three and five years old will become frightened and blame itself for the separation. They might regress to familiar habits such as bed-wetting and thumb sucking and exhibit great anxiety when the remaining parent leaves them. The slightly older child will become angry, will cry and even run away from home in search of the missing parent. Schoolwork might deteriorate and there is sometimes a need to be indulged and supplied with material goods, to blot out inner feelings of deprivation. There is often hostility towards the remaining parent and boys can develop serious psychological problems when the male role model is absent.

Between the ages of 9 and 12 there are two different, clearly defined types of reactions that are exhibited by children. They have a clearer understanding of what is going on and can express their anxieties verbally, but do so self-consciously because they feel they have to be in control. They will put on a brave face, but the unhappiness is often galvanised in different ways. The less mature child, who experiences divorce at this age, often appears very angry and hostile, looking for someone and something to blame. In a subconscious attempt to force reconciliation, they may suffer psychosomatic illnesses and as with the younger age group, their schoolwork may suffer as they develop a poor attitude to life and work. Conversely, the reaction can take the child to the other extreme and they become obsessed with school or another activity, spending as much time as possible out of the family home, and therefore able to inwardly deny that the separation has occurred.

The subject groups for this research are teenagers and when separation though divorce occurs at this age, teenagers attempt to be 'grown up' about the situation that they find themselves in. They often try to hide their feelings and mental bewilderment by hiding behind a complete refusal to accept the situation, and not talking to one or other of the parents. They can also exhibit their hurt by becoming physically aggressive or taking to vandalism, as they attempt to distance themselves from their emotions. During these times, boys show more aggression and anti-social behaviour that creates what Chase Lansdale et *al.* (1990:105-150) identify as the "coercive cycle", where the mother responds irritably to her sons, which, in turn, compounds the situation. Girls appear to adjust more rapidly, although Chase Lansdale *et al.* (1990) found evidence that they internalise their distress more and suffer depression and lowered self-esteem. Children create 'I don't care' personas or pretend nothing has happened, denying that the separation has occurred. Accompanying this may be truancy and a general lack of communication and co-operation. With this comes a feeling that the parents are too occupied with their own problems, and so the teenager might turn to a boy or girl friend for support, and enter a sexual relationship in order to receive comfort and security.

Lilley (1997) identifies these reactions as not being caused by becoming a part of a one-parent family, but from having to endure something they did not want to happen. He emphasises that it is important to separate the two, so as not to fall into the trap of believing that they have become deprived children because they now come from lone-parent households. However, when the father leaves his wife and children, he is indeed creating a single-parent family, and the sole day-to-day responsibility for the care of the children falls firmly on the woman.

Following divorce, it is common for the non-resident father's involvement with the children to wane (Popenoe 1996). There is a misconception that this absence can be counteracted by the fact that teenagers' lives naturally revolve more round peer group relationships, and that they are old enough to understand the situation of divorce. It is possible for them to rationalise that their father has not disappeared from their lives, and they can anticipate the future and when they will have time with their father. Lamb (1982) recognised these tendencies in adolescents within two-parent families and accepts the behaviour as a normal development stage as the teenager moves towards independence. Amato (1986) agrees that the negative outcomes identified by Chase Landsdale *et al.* (1990) do occur with higher

frequency, and the adolescents are more likely to make 'defensive attributions' in order to compensate for the fathers' seeming disinterest in them, when they are experiencing divorce. Amato (1986) studied two hundred and seven boys, aged 15 and 16 years old, and found that in adolescents of one parent families, self-esteem positively correlated with indices of the fathers' involvement in the case of adolescent boys, and with both genders when the father remained with the family.

The affect of paternal contact

Work by McLanahan and Sandefur (1994)on single parent families and the American problem of fatherlessness was supported by Popenoe (1996), an American sociologist, in his work *Life without Father.* His research presents new evidence showing that children have a primeval desire for a mother and a father, and that fathers and marriage are indispensable for the good of the children and society. At the same time as there is a demand for fathers to be involved with the housework and child-care as well as providing financial support, there is an increasing number of absent fathers. Statistics point to the fact that over half the children in America will spend at least a portion of their childhood years growing up without a father. McLanahan and Sandefur (1994:8), researching the consequences of growing up with a single parent found that:

> Children who grow up with only one of their biological parents (nearly always the mother) are disadvantaged across a broad array of outcomes...they are twice as likely to drop out of high school, 2.5 times as likely to become teenage mothers and 1.4 times as likely to be idle at school, out of school and out of work, as children who grow up with both parents.

They account for this difference as being caused by lack of financial resources, and conclude that about 50 per cent of the disadvantages associated with single-parenthood are related to money. They identify other causes as being too little supervision and involvement, along with greater residential mobility.

Amato (1986) and Amato and Gilbreth (1999), conducted studies into the effect of paternal contact on children when they carried out their meta-analytic research, that correlated and examined a selection of 63 research papers including some of their own original research,

and provided an integrated overview of some of the most relevant research. Their study provides a comprehensive picture of the dimensions of how the non-resident father-child relationships are linked with the child's well-being. One of the first questions they attempted to quantify was how much time the father had to spend with the child in order to make a positive contribution to the child's well-being. Independent studies based on larger representative surveys, Seltzer (1994) and McLanahan and Sandefur (1994), demonstrated that frequent paternal contact had no detectable benefit for children. Although Seltzer (1994) and other researchers consider that there is insufficient evidence that a father's presence in a child's life is vital and therefore is not conclusive, there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that his contribution to the financial costs does contribute to his child's well-being.

Many researchers such as Clarke and Barber (1994), have focused their attention on the frequency of contact and how much time the father spends with the child. Far less research has been conducted on what the father does with the children when with them, and the emotional ties that are between them. Many fathers take their children to restaurants, cinemas or activity centres such as ten-pin bowling, intent on giving the children a good time. Fathers attempt to be a companion rather than engaging in authoritative practices like helping with homework and talking over problems.

Along with others, Seltzer (1994) explains throughout his research that if the father continues to financially support the mother, then there is an increase in the child's educational attainment, health and general well-being. Providing finances for the care of the children is not an issue in this particular study as all the children have fathers who are fully employed. Financial problems are not unknown in the Royal Naval family situation, and there are occasionally complications that make gaining access to money difficult, but these are usually of a personal nature and from a lack of foresight. (For example, the wife is reliant on cheques arriving from the husband, who is at sea, instead of having access to a joint bank account.) Naval pay is above the national average, so the effect of limited money within the family will therefore not be considered here in any depth. Family finances are complicated and the distribution of money within the family can and does cause problems, and although these problems may exist they are not necessarily related to the husband's employment.

The frequency of contact with the father is often assumed to be an indicator of the general quality of the father-child relationship and research often focuses on duration rather than activity. Berscheid and Peplau (1983) define close relationships as ones involving a high degree of interdependence. This interdependence is reflected in four relationship properties and summarized as:

1. Individuals have frequent contact.
2. The relationship is of long duration.
3. The degree of mutual impact is strong.
4. The relationship involves diverse kinds of activities.

Close relationships are also commonly characterised by strong emotions, although these emotions can be negative as well as positive. Without knowing the behaviours that transpire during the visits, examining how the child feels, and the context of the visit, it is difficult to predict the effect. Other researchers recognise the emotional tie between child and father as being of high significance to the well-being of the child. Rollins and Thomas (1979:362) were concerned about the socialisation of children and parental control, and linked the well-being of children and their emotional ties with parents as being fundamental in the internalisation of social norms of behaviour. They contend that:

> ...when children feel close to and respect their parents, they are more likely to obey parental rules.

Davies and Cummings (1994:401) continued by recognising the importance of this tie and write:

> The strength of the emotional tie between children and non-resident father would appear to be a relationship dimension with clearer implications for child well-being. When children feel loved and cared for by parents their sense of emotional security is strengthened. Emotional security in turn, helps children cope with stress and makes them less vulnerable to anxiety and depression.

Frequency of contact is not however the only relevant dimension of forming a relationship with another individual. Within the structure of a father-child relationship there are indications that the degree to which the father acts as the authoritarian is also very important. Support for the child is reflected in behaviour such as responsiveness, instruction and everyday assistance. These behaviours facilitate a child's positive development by

conveying a basic sense of trust, and reinforce the concepts of self-worth and competence while promoting academic success. Authoritative control does not imply the father should adopt the attitude of a Victorian, father figure, but he should be involved in the formulation of rules and their application, as well as monitoring and disciplining. It is also important that the mother and the father are consistent in their methods of reward and discipline. All too often a child has to live with conflicting discipline where one parent is more lenient in order to win favours with the child. This particularly applies with the single parent, who only sees his children occasionally and wants the children to like him, and for the contact to be a happy occasion which does not include reprimands and rules. Non-resident fathers want their children to enjoy their time with them and tend to be permissive and indulgent because they feel the relationship is tenuous. They fear that setting rules and disciplining unacceptable behaviour will alienate the children (Hetherington, Cox & Cox 1982).

Young, Miller, Norton and Hill (1995) studied two-parent families and suggest that the continual presence of the father is not so crucial for a child's well-being as the extent to which they engage in authoritative parenting. They found that the father's intrinsic support, reflected by trust and demonstrated by encouragement and discussing problems, was positively correlated with children's life styles; whereas if the father used extrinsic support, demonstrated by taking them to dinner, buying toys, gifts and so on, was not. They concluded that:

- Fathers who spend time with children in extrinsic, recreational pursuits probably contribute little to their child's adjustment and development compared to fathers who engage in authoritative parenting.
- Regular visitation rights do not guarantee a high-quality relationship exists.
- Fathers contribute resources to a child well being only if emotional ties between father and child are strong and if father is actively involved with the child's life.
- Children who feel close to their fathers who engage in authoritative parenting and achieve higher standards in academic achievement.
- It is not the quantity of time that fathers spend with their children that is important but what they do when they are together.

Lamb (1987) reiterated the importance of quality of the father's parenting skills in his paper '*The Emergent American Father*' which was published in the book '*The Father's Role: Cross-cultural perspectives*'. He concluded that to be competent fathers, men must have a strong commitment to the role of being a parent as well as having appropriate parenting skills.

Much of the early research was conducted on the assumption that non-nuclear family forms produce undesirable outcomes for children. Clark and Barber (1994) used a 'process by context' method to study whether fathers' interest in their adolescents (a family process) is differentially related to adolescent self-esteem in two different contexts: two-parent families, or always-married families, versus post-divorce or mother-headed families. Cooley (1902) and Mead (1934) surmised that the relationship between paternal interest and adolescent self-esteem does correlate. Their work was in keeping with that of later researchers such as Bachman (1970), Coppersmith (1967) and Rosenberg (1965).

There is more American-based research available where the effect of family diversity has become an issue of political rhetoric and government policy. Former Vice-President Dan Quayle is one of the many politicians who, in one of his pre-election speeches at the Commonwealth Club of California in 1992, (cited in Wade 1998), is quoted as saying that such families constituted a deficient, family environment for rearing children. His views did not however express a new concept. Eight years earlier Uhlenberg and Eggebeen (1986:38) published the findings of their work entitled *'The Declining Well-being of American Children'* and concluded with the statement:

> We suggest that it is an erosion of the bond between parents and child – one characterized by parental commitment and willingness to sacrifice self-interest that is a significant cause of the declining well-being of [American] adolescents after 1960.

Family diversity and the well-being of children is considered by Acock and Demo (1994) in order to examine the hypothesis identified as 'The Family Composition Hypothesis'. They conducted their work by focusing on four prevalent family types:

1. Two parent families where the mother and father are both in their first marriage.
2. Single parent families headed by the mother who is divorced from the children's father.
3. Two parent stepfamilies in which the mother has biological children from a previous marriage.
4. Single parent families where the mother has never married.

They reflect the popular preconceived idea that:

> Many worry that non-traditional living arrangements harm children. Popular literature and media blame non-traditional families for high rates of teenage sexual activity, pregnancy, delinquency, alcohol and drug abuse. These problems are blamed on the parents, (and typically the mother,) for spending little time with their children and not installing the 'proper family values in their children'.
>
> Acock and Demo 1994:3

The rational for this disruption is given as being: divorce and separation upset the bond between parents and children, causing both short-term emotional and behavioural problems, which, unless coped with effectively, will develop into major psychological dysfunction. They consider that typical parenting activities, such as assisting and supervising children in their homework and monitoring, controlling and disciplining children, are difficult if you are a single parent and as a consequence the parental task is not achieved with any degree of adequacy.

Acock and Demo (1994) do however criticise other research and identify five major flaws in previous works. They say that other researchers:

- Neglect antecedent variables such as race, gender and social class.
- Overlook potentially mediating factors such as children's ages at the time of disruption and the length of time since the disruption.
- Use small and non-representative samples.
- Examine limited dimensions of social and psychological well-being.
- Fail to assess possible beneficial effects deriving from different family structures.

Lamb (1977) also admits that children may not need both biological parents as models if they can select models from step-parents, other relatives, teachers, coaches or the media.

The importance of family structure

Family structure is immensely important to the members within that unit. Living with a spouse is fundamentally different from living alone, and living with one parent is different from living with two. Family types influence family relationships and, therefore, family

types do have direct influence on personal well-being, but it does not necessarily mean these are effects of a negative nature. Knowledge of the family structure does not, however, tell us anything about the social experiences within the family nor about the dynamics of the family relationships; the time the family spends together; their relationships with other relatives; family communication patterns; child-rearing practices and values or other important elements of the immediate family and broader social context.
The implication from some of the research is that when a mother is divorced or remains single, she provides a 'second class' socialization experience for her child, with serious and long lasting effects. Also that since the popular belief is that children need fathers, the single mother cannot have proper values; they will have low expectations for their children and they will do not spend enough time with their children.

Nock (1988) argues that single parent families blur generational boundaries, and therefore children in these families do not successfully learn hierarchical authority relations, and consequently they do not do well educationally or occupationally. Golombok (2000) identifies and attributes behavioural problems among children in single-parent families as possibly being caused by reduced parental control, supervision and support. Acock and Demo (1994) attempted to find out if child-rearing values changed according their family structure. They asked parents of the four family types previously identified to rate twelve positive child-rearing criteria according to importance. Their results challenged the idea that single parents have lower values and expectations for their children. In some instances the single parent demonstrated a higher expectation. They place their children's behaviour as being of great importance and they place considerable importance on the child's ability to keep itself occupied. This was particularly important when the children were under five. In the case of older children, all sets of parents appeared to have the same values. All wanted their children to learn culturally valued behaviours and placed great value on children being kind and considerate.

Having identified that the values within the different family types are not significantly different, Acock and Demo (1994) extended their research by attempting to find out how they instil them into their children. They first considered the issue of control and questioned the parents on their children's television-viewing habits, and found that while single parents of very young children were much more restrictive in the amount of time their child watched television, there was no significant difference in monitoring the programs viewed.

In the families with older children there was no significant difference either in time or subject matter. A second question for the parents of older children concerned whether or not children should be home alone after school. All parents were opposed to the idea, but the single parent admitted that always being at home for their children was difficult to achieve. The parents of teenagers were asked about the 'home alone' situation and all family types agreed that their children were allowed to be alone during the day, but none wanted their children to be alone overnight. If the children were out, all the parents wanted to know where they were. There was a slight variation when the question of chores was considered. Seventy-five per cent of single parents said their children had regular chores, whereas in the other family situations children sometimes did chores. There was no significant difference either in allowing part-time work and dating, but when asked about their views on their child's sexual activity the first-married families were strongly opposed to their children having a casual sexual relationship. The single parent was significantly less opposed. The results Acock and Demo (1994) obtained refute the arguments that single parents have lower values and less control than their married counterparts.

The second aspect of their research considered the educational expectations of the parents for their children asking how long the parents thought their children should be at school, and should parents pay for higher education. The first-married parents had significantly higher educational expectations and were more willing to pay for higher education. The always-single parents, whilst placing great value on education, were concerned about the financial implications of supporting their children through higher education.

The third issue covered by Acock and Demo (1994) focused on child-parent interaction, support, control and conflict. The researchers distinguished three components of parental involvement: responsibility, accessibility and engagement. The responsibility aspect was divided into three further divisions: time, energy and financial resources, and included activities such as keeping track of extra-curricular activities, the child's social calendar and medical and dental appointments. Accessibility involved situations in which parents have to be there, doing things in or around the home whilst their children are doing something else (i.e. mother is preparing a meal and not actually involved with the child, but nevertheless accessible to the child). Engagement is defined as the time spent interacting with the child face-to-face.

Children develop a variety of skills from direct observation of parental behaviour and get a sense that they matter to parents when the parents invest time in them. Participating in shared activities is a valued tool for transmitting affection, nurturance and support. Important aspects of parent-child relationships include the frequency or regularity of interaction, the degree to which the relationships are enjoyable and the range of activities in which parents and children participate. The questions asked were: how regularly do they have an especially enjoyable time with their children, how often they have arguments and difficulties, and how much do they participate with their children in school, religion, community or athletic activities.

Other aspects of family relationships also questioned by Acock and Demo (1994) were maternal control and agreement and disagreement. They identified if the mothers had a greater or lesser tendency to exert their control by reminding children to do chores, requiring chores to be done before play, homework completed before play, and paying an allowance for extra chores, but found there was no significant difference.

On the question of agreement and disagreement within the family types, the researchers enquired about typical teenage issues: dress, boy or girlfriends, other friends, sexual behaviour, drinking, smoking and drugs, staying out late, money, helping around the house, school, and getting on with the rest of the family, were all taken into consideration. The first-married parents had far fewer disagreements about friends, curfews, money, school and family matters, but had more arguments about chores and helping at home. All family types agreed that they argued more with sons than daughters.

Conclusion

It emerges from the available research that the effect of separation usually has a short-term effect, which if handled sympathetically by the parents, does not necessarily result in long-term psychological damage. Every child is an individual, every family unit is different, and how they interact to cope with parental separation either on a permanent or temporary basis is equally as unique. There are similarities in the reactions of different-aged children and paying attention to this can help develop strategies to enable children to come to terms with the situation. By asking the children within the Royal Naval family structure if they experience some of the features illustrated in this chapter involving separation and

attachment, it will be possible to begin to identify the effects on them of their fathers' occupation and thus be able to address the research question.

Chapter 5
Methodology

Introduction

The previous chapters have presented an overview of family life, the role of the father, and by referring to the work of Bowlby (1998) and Rutter (1971) among others, introduced the theories of the effects on children of being separated from a primary carer. In this chapter, I will explain why a biographical approach was appropriate and qualitative data collected and analysed. Research methodologies in general are considered, including rationality, techniques and procedures, and also addresses issues of methodology including those related to research on sensitive matters. It will recount the methodology that could be used in answering this particular research question, and will report on the methodology actually used, identifying work from Oppenheim (1992) as the backbone for my methodology. I will identify some of the difficulties incurred when finding appropriate research literature and sample groups, as well as giving details of the actual research conducted.

> The need for an appropriate research design arises whenever we wish to generalize from our findings, either in terms of the frequency or prevalence of particular attributes or variables, or about the relationship between them.
>
> Oppenheim 1992:5

The aim of my study is to look at the children within families where the father is a serving member of the Royal Navy, and establish if they are affected by that fact. Once research enters into the realms of family studies, it becomes involved with biographical and life course studies. My intention is to investigate children within a specific family structure and consider if their lives are influenced by the unique situation of having a father present some of the time, absent others, but always a distinctive member of the family. The essence of the research becomes one termed 'biographical' defined by Denzin (1989:7) as:

> The studied use and collection of personal life documents, stories, accounts and narratives which describe turning point moments in individuals' lives...the subject matter of biographical method is the life experiences of a person.

The use of a biographical approach has become a popular method for researching social issues. It is an empowering research tool using a personalized world of experience to study a social issue. By using narrative interviews, social and cultural meanings can be constructed from the subjective meanings contained in the biographical data and how the story is told. Erben (1998) recognises it as a method that provides greater insight into the nature and meaning of individual lives that can then relate to a wider society. It is also a potential method for the specific purpose of analysing lives for a designated purpose. My research looks at the lives of children and how they respond to the absences of their father as perceived by them. The prime method of data collecting was the creation of text arising from the questionnaires completed by the children, who related elements of their life stories. It is therefore prudent at this juncture to consider the use of life stories and a biographical methodology.

Research methods

Biographical research:

> Biographical research is an exciting, stimulating and fast-moving field which seeks to understand the changing experiences and outlooks of individuals in their daily lives, what they see as important, and how to provide interpretations of the accounts they give of their past, present and future.
>
> Roberts 2002:1

Life writing or biographical research involves using a variety of documented sources, which could include photographs and diaries, oral histories and letters, to elicit information that will in some way answer the research question. Once considered to be too subjective a methodology to be reliable the biographical method is now increasingly used as a valid method for qualitative research, and can be diverse both in methodology and data interpretation. It is a method by which, 'individual accounts of life experiences can be understood within the contemporary cultural and structural settings' (Roberts 2002:5). For my research, the narratives were primarily obtained through the children themselves completing a questionnaire, and for a few, contributing extra information through the oral means of interview which then became a communal narrative in the form of a transcript. Denzin and Lincoln (1998a:191), almost comically, mentions that the first task a biographical researcher has to answer is 'Who is the subject to be written about?' In this

research the answer was easy; since the research question was about the lives of children, it would be necessary to study the children's life stories. The research question arose from a personal experience and Denzin and Lincoln (1998a:191) identify this as an important factor when biographical studies are conducted:

> The biographer's personality – motives, fears, unconscious conflicts and yearning - reaches out to responsive, if not similar, territory in the person to be the subject.

My research started with my own autobiography, the variation on biography when the life course is written by the author him or herself. It is impossible for biographers to detach themselves totally, and therefore will bring to their interpretation of the data their own personality, understandings and experiences when writing about others.

Atkinson (1998:8) chose to define a life story as:

> The story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived, told as completely and honestly as possible, what is remembered of it, and what the teller wants others to know of it, usually as a result of a guided interview by another... A life story is a fairly complete narrating of one's experiences of life as a whole, highlighting the most important aspects.

The purpose of introducing my research with my own autobiography was to inform the reader of a particular life style that encompassed the Royal Naval family situation, highlighting my own experiences and to give an insight into my own personality. It reflects the diversity that surrounds family life in this particular setting and the unpredictability of naval postings and appointments. It is of course a highly personal perspective and may be atypical of other families, but does serve the purpose of giving the foundation for the project and the basis for the content of questions used for data gathering. Since I am investigating the family from a child's perspective it could be argued that I should have asked my own children to write their autobiographies as a starting point, but having considered the issue I felt that it was too emotive and 'close to home' with the potential to upset their relationship with their father as it could not remain confidential. I, too, could not remain impartial to comments made and in turn they would possible not be able to write freely because of the emotional connections within the family.

Qualitative research

Qualitative research as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990:17):

> Any kind of research that the produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedure or other means of quantification.

It is a method that produces results from data collected in a non-mathematical procedure and can include one or more of the methods of collecting data. It is a method that allows for flexibility and openness, where things do not have to be pinned down to certainties and facts. Qualitative research can use a variety of theoretical approaches - ethno methodology, phenomenology, narrative analysis, symbolic interactionism, discourse theory and conversational analysis (Silverman 1993, Atkinson and Hammersley 1994, Bryman and Burgess 1994, 1999, Denzin and Lincoln 1994, Feldman 1995). An approach for any research method that produces quantities of statistics would be inappropriate since the biographical nature of this research aims to study a social issue within a context of personal experience. Interpretation of the data collected can be presented in a way to give an honest account of how the individual subjects perceive their situation. Alternatively, the data can be presented as an accurate description of a situation and selecting specific data to illustrate the findings. Deciding on a method of data analysis in qualitative research can depend on why the research question first occurred.

In broad terms, quantitative research sets out to support, by the means of statistics, the hypotheses, but qualitative research relies on the exploration of the subject at a certain time and for a select group of individuals. Qualitative research is not about establishing the 'truth' or 'getting it right' (Wood 1999:5) but differently 'contoured and nuanced.' Richardson (1994:522) encapsulated this by emphasising the distinction between, and necessity for, qualitative research:

> There is not one truth, not one single explanation of anything, but many overlapping truths operating at different levels and constantly subject to change.

Research practice

Any research method is an approach to address a particular research question or problem, and what is achieved depends on both the quality of the data collected and the way in which

it is processed. If done well, the researcher will collect, analyse and communicate their findings and so add to societal progress.

> Research in education is a disciplined attempt to address questions or solve problems through the collection and analysis of primary data for the purpose of description, explanation, generalisation and prediction.
>
> Anderson 1996:4

Research relies on systematic and objective observations, recording and analysis and it is natural that researchers chose a subject in which they have a keen interest but with the commitment to minimise bias objectivity. Whatever approach is used for the research the resulting work will always tell the reader something about how the researcher views the world. According to Anderson (1996) all research should contain certain elements: descriptive, explanatory, generalisation and basic or theoretical. The descriptive level should look at both historical and contemporary aspects of the subject and is the most elementary level. Fundamental to this level is the need for clear, objective observations and measurements because without these there would be very little meaning. The explanatory level tries to explain what and why events where observed. This progresses to generalisation where the researcher tries to find out if the findings can or will fit with other situations. Finally, the fourth level attempts to discover the underlying principles at work. These levels are not discrete; they all interact with each other and, depending on the research question, have varying weighting and importance.

Whichever method or combination of methods is used for the research all have to conform to ethical guidelines. The researcher will determine some, and some by the type and purpose of the research and the authority involved. The ethical issues involved in research are a study in their own right, but there are a few basic considerations that can be made here:

- Informed consent:
  The most fundamental principle is that all participants must be informed of the nature and purpose of the research and must consent to participate.

- Use of volunteers:
  By individuals volunteering to participate they may have the idea that they will learn or be helped in some way. What you say and do therefore may inadvertently alter their lives.

- Honesty:
  Deception is rarely necessary in research, but if the researcher feels that to deceive is the only way to establish results, then it is vital that the truth be told and the real research question explained afterwards.

- Debriefing:
  When someone has participated in a research project it is ethical to provide feedback. Participants should have the opportunity to ask questions and receive a summary of the findings.

- Respect:
  Researchers should be aware of wasting participant's time by asking irrelevant questions or asking them to participate in an activity that will not lead to valuable data.

- Confidentially and Privacy:
  It is the duty of all researchers to protect the confidentially of those who participate and they should be careful to maintain an awareness of an individuals private business.

- Right to Withdraw
  Any participant in a research programme has the right to withdraw at any time and the researcher should ensure that all participants know this fact and that they do not have to give reasons or be subject to penalties.

No code of ethics will cover all eventualities but every individual researcher should establish an ethical code and practice it.

Data collection methods

Historical data:

Examining previous research papers plays an important role in all research because the empirical researcher is required to undertake some element of literature review before embarking on their own project. Historical research does have some features in common with both normative and interpretive approaches to social research in that it shares the quest for objectivity and the desire to minimise bias and distortion. That is, it sets out to describe all aspects of the particular situation under study. The aim is to establish how past events illuminate a current issue.

> Historiography refers to the systematic collection and objective evaluation of data related to past occurrences in order to explore research questions or test hypotheses concerning causes, effects or trends of those events that may help explain present events and anticipate future events.
>
> Anderson 1996:113

Employing a qualitative methodology, the historical researcher will use biographies, institutional histories or histories of educational movements to gather data. Alongside these, texts related to the research question should also be used to establish grounding for the research itself.

The value of historical research can be categorised in four ways:

- it enables solutions to contemporary problems to be sought through investigating the past
- it throws light on present and future trends
- it stresses the relative importance and the effects of the various interactions that are to be found within all cultures
- it allows for the re-evaluation of data in relation to selected hypotheses, theories and generalisations that are presently held about the past

It is difficult to specify particular advantages or disadvantages of historical research. By looking at the past it is possible to put some problems into their proper context but the method does have limitations. Often data is limited and fragmented so any conclusions drawn are speculative. Similarly there are very few ways to test either the validity or the reliability of the data being used causing difficulty in drawing conclusions. Qualitative research can only relate to the specific individuals who participated in the research at a particular time, therefore drawing conclusions and making assumptions about the old research in relation to the new could be problematic. There is little opportunity to test these conclusions in a new situation because most information is specific to the situation researched.

Descriptive data:

Like historical research, descriptive research has a role to play in all research studies. Best (1970:15) defines descriptive research as concerned with:

> Condition or relationships that exist; practices that prevail; beliefs, points of views, or attitudes that are held; processes that are going on; effects that are being felt; or trends that are developing. At times, descriptive research is concerned with how 'what is' or 'what exists' is related to some preceding event that has influenced or affected a present condition or event.

A descriptive research project may be quantitative or qualitative. If quantitative, the description is based on counts and measurements creating statistics. Data is presented in tabular form, matrices and frameworks. These are sometimes very difficult to interpret and written summaries are given as well. Descriptive qualitative data is presented in prose or through tapes and photographs, etc; or can be brief narratives or passages that describe phenomena or settings.

There are two main limitations to this research method and these relate to reliability and validity. Choosing appropriate data and ensuring you focus on the data relating to the question can be difficult. Similarly using procedures and measures that give consistent results can be hard. There are a variety of limitations in this type of research that come from the researcher's intentional and unintentional biases. Statistical information is renowned for its ability to be manipulated to 'prove' anything the researcher wants. Descriptive data problems can be caused by sampling errors. Often descriptive research relates to a specific sample at a specific time and these may not relate to a general pattern of events.

Data from surveys:

This is perhaps the most common method of collecting data for research and its primary function is to gather information that can be analysed to produce conclusions. Surveys gather data with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions, or identifying standards with which others can be compared, or determining relationships between specific events. Surveys can be of any size; a small scale, single-researcher survey or a large-scale project like a market-research survey. Within the wider concept of the survey are various methods of collecting the data. This may be gathered by structured or semi-structured

interviews, self-completion or post questionnaires, or standardised tests of performance or attainment. The integral method can be multifaceted, as can the sampling, ie: who are the respondents for the method? In the words of Moore (1983:30) the respondents are the sample group from whom the data is collected:

> A sample is a group selected from the complete population that make the task of surveying less costly and more manageable.

Cohen and Manion (1989:101) give illustrations of the different kinds of sampling groups that can be used. Sampling is an essential part of survey research. The aim is to select a sample that is representative or have the same characteristics as the whole population. Those characteristics can range from attitudes and opinions to measuring statistical numbers for washing powder preference. Different sizes of sample group will give different levels of accuracy. Information for survey research can be collected by various means. The common methods used are observation and questionnaires.

Observation surveys:

These are simply the process of observing and recording events or situations. Very often it is an observation that initially prompts the research project and the researcher goes on to make sense of what they have seen. Observation data can be collected in two ways: participatory or non-participatory. In the first of these, the researcher puts his or her self in a position and records the findings. For example, if as a researcher I want to know how shops help wheelchair-using customers, I might put myself in a wheelchair and find out what happens. In the second method, the observer will watch and record. The advantage of the observation method of collecting data is that it is fairly straightforward. It can provide the researcher with direct information, and normally the respondent or subject is undisturbed by the researcher. Problems can occur, however, in that the observed person or persons, may not behave in a 'normal' manner if they know they are being watched, and that the researcher may concentrate on one area and miss something else more relevant to the study. The recording method is also critical and the manner in which the observations are set down often determines the extent to which they can be analysed. Unless some consistent recording format is used, much of the value of the information is lost.

Self reporting questionnaires:

Questionnaires are extremely flexible in nature and can be used to gather information from both large and small sample groups. They do, however, have to be very carefully planned, as it is not easy to design a good questionnaire. The most common form of questionnaire is the closed question format. This type of questioning offers the advantage in terms of reliability and ease of interpretation. The respondents are given a question that is answered by selecting from a number of alternatives. These are sometimes known as the multiple-choice questionnaire. They are normally easy to complete and analyse, and provide a limited range of answers thus producing straightforward, uncomplicated information. The other form of questionnaire is the open-question format. Here the onus is for the respondent to formulate and record an answer in his or her own words. This method has limitations. It is only effective when completed by people who are happy and willing to express themselves and are able to do so in writing. It can produce such a wide range of answers that it can be difficult to find valid data. This type of questionnaire also requires more time and effort from the respondents. It is possible to combine the two types of questions and is often desirable to do so. Many closed question questionnaires give the respondent the opportunity to 'add' additional information or free comment that can give valuable data to the work.

Questionnaires can be relatively inexpensive, can be used with large numbers of people and can provide anonymity. If the questionnaire is well designed it is possible to minimise researcher bias and give the respondent time to think about the answers. Questionnaires were considered to be the most suitable method of data collection for this research.

As with the other methods it is not possible to expand on the subject of questionnaire design, the advantages and disadvantages, but there is a great deal of literature available which can be used to help to formulate this as a research method.

Interview surveys:

The interview method of collecting data is more personal as the researcher and the respondent have to communicate in some way. They provide the researcher with more control. Anderson (1990:223) identifies two types of interview technique; the normative, where the data collected can be classified and analysed statistically, and the elite interview

that has the purpose of probing the views and opinions of others. The latter is normally directed at people who have a particular knowledge or experience about the research subject. In the interview situation it is possible to follow up and clarify answers, record other information such as body language and hesitations, which may have some relevance to the research question. Some of the problems with the interview method of data collection are similar to those of the open questionnaire; data from the interview can be difficult to analyse. Interviewing can be time consuming for both parties and requires a high level of consistency by the interviewer, if the interviews take place over a period of time. Visual records and tape recordings are a good method of creating a permanent record of the data, but both participants may react adversely to the presence of a camera or a tape recorder.

Case studies:

The case study provides the opportunity for an in-depth study of an individual, area or setting and is a method often used in the social sciences. It is not a single method as this approach to research contains both interview and observation together with some element of historical research. The case itself is a unit of analysis whether it is an individual, place or resource and can provide a framework within which the other methods can be used.

> Each case has within it a set of interrelationships that both bind it together and shape it, but also interact with the external world. In an examination of the interrelationships within the case it is therefore possible to not only reveal internal elements of the case, but also aspects of the context in which the case is situated. For these reasons cases provide fascinating snapshots, or perhaps more accurate videos, of a time and place.
>
> Edwards & Talbot 1994:45

The case study can have two purposes: it can cut down the scale of the research by focusing on a smaller number of units, or it can increase the range of different units within the study. By selecting a number of case studies, it is possible to concentrate the research resources and thus to look in depth at a particular problem or issue. The cases, (it is unusual to have more than ten,) can be drawn to broadly represent the much larger group being studied. This has the advantage of covering a large amount of ground with limited expense, and aspects can be looked at in some depth. The case-study data, whilst used for some generalisation, can lack statistical validity. There is also the issue that in being the subject of a case study may cause the subject themselves to 'think about' or examine their actions etc. and change.

The research then can be either negatively or positively intrusive, which returns the researcher to the ethical issues involved with research.

Researching sensitive subjects

The British Psychological Society (2000) introduced an advisory paper on ethical principles when conducting research with human participants. This is outlined in Robson's book *Real World Research* (1999: Appendix B) and six of the key features of ethical issues are covered. This paper gives guidelines on the issues of consent, deception, debriefing, withdrawal from the investigation, confidentiality, participant protection, as well as respecting privacy when doing observational research, and sharing the responsibility with everyone involved in the research.

> In all circumstances, investigators must consider the ethical implications and psychological consequences for the participants in their research. The essential principle is that the investigation should be considered from the standpoint of all participants; foreseeable threats to their psychological well-being, health, values or dignity should be eliminated.
>
> Robson 1999:471

Whatever methods are chosen to investigate and answer the research question, it is important to consider the sensitivity of the subject matter and the individuals involved. Research involving people has the potential to influence the personal life of everyone who participates and everyone who reads the finished paper. I have already mentioned that I felt involving my own children in the research could have lead to conflicts in the relationship they had with their father and me. Any research that involves people answering personal questions is immediately open to issues other than those of an ethical nature mentioned earlier in the chapter. Large-scale surveys have been cancelled because they were considered too sensitive. In 1989, Prime Minister Thatcher herself used a little known power of veto to stop a nationwide sex survey expressing clearly her view that it was too intrusive and of little value to society in general. Lee (1999:1) cited Lee and Renzetti (1990), Brewer (1990), Sieber and Stanley (1988) and Siegel and Bauman (1986) when he wrote,

> 'Sensitivity' potentially affects almost every stage of the research process from the formulation of a research problem, through the design and implementation of a study, to the dissemination and application of the findings.

How individuals are affected can take on many guises. Some research can be seen as a threat, dealing with areas that are private, sacred or stressful. It can be controversial or involve social conflict. Research that is invasive, asking intimate questions, can cause emotional problems, and questions about such issues as bereavement can be very emotionally charged. Asking an individual, personal questions about their lives, could bring back painful memories, so considerable care must be taken. Other individuals might be conscious of the political implications of their answers, and in extreme cases may even consider themselves physically threatened if they answer in a particular way. In recent years, with the increase of media and technology, individuals have been made aware that answers given to a questionnaire often has repercussions. One only has to think of the proliferation of 'junk' mail that falls on the doormat as a result of completing a questionnaire at some time, to realize how computerized data is regularly passed between commercial companies, advertising agencies and charitable organisations without the consent of the individual concerned. The introduction of the Data Protection Act has alleviated some concerns, but people are becoming increasing alarmed by who can utilize data once it has been given, and are becoming increasingly wary of to whom they declare personal information. This research is a private project and does not fall into the category of public social research, which would encompass many of the restrictions such in the Official Secrets Act (1979) as described by Lee (1999), but to lay individuals my enquiries may provoke concerns of equal strength. It was important, therefore, for me to assure the identity of individuals assisting me that the work would be kept confidential, and that it was for academic purposes only.

Social science researchers have used a wide range of techniques to glean sensitive information. In an interview situation, the respondent will want to maintain their standing with the interviewer and will not necessarily give the true answer. On the other hand, it can be argued that by being face to face with the interviewer the respondent can be encouraged to relax and be more forthcoming. By asking the same question in an anonymous questionnaire this need to 'keep face' is partially eliminated. Pioneered by Kinsey, Wardell and Clyde (1948), a method of 'loading' the question in various ways was introduced to interviewing techniques in order to encourage greater reporting. One strategy was to ask the question in such a way that it assumed the type of behaviour being studied had already occurred, using such phrases as 'how often' rather than 'did it' when referring to the particular area being studied. Sudman and Bradburn (1974; 1982) attempted to develop a

systematic framework for asking sensitive questions, which would enable a researcher to obtain the most valid results. They not only examined their own research methods but undertook a meta-analysis of other studies and as a result came up with a number a suggestions and recommendations for would-be researchers. Open questions were preferable to closed and long questions used rather than short. Allowing a respondent to answer the questions in their own words, and questions about difficult issues should be embedded within the wider context of the work. Whatever the method of asking sensitive questions, it is important to keep focused on the prevalence and incidence, and to obtain maximum reliability and minimum compromise to the respondent.

Lee (1999) discusses the effects the interviewer can have on the validity of the responses they receive. The social characteristics might have a biasing effect. This is particularly relevant in my research since I was asking children questions. The respect children have for adults could inhibit their answers, and because they were completing the questionnaires at school, the respect for the authority of the school could have some bearing on the results. This will be discussed in more detail in the analysis of the results.

Methodology for the research

Establishing the research question

There is no definitive or foolproof way of developing a research question. Campbell, Daft and Hulin (1982:109) used a range of empirical techniques to study success and failure of research questions and it emerged from their work, that:

> The selection of innovative research questions is not a single act or decision. Significant research is a process, an attitude, a way of thinking; significant research is accomplished by people who are motivated to do significant research, who are willing to pay the cost in terms of time and effort.

According to Robson (1999:27), a good researcher needs to 'know the area' and be familiar with the research focus area. My own life story establishes my knowledge of the area in which to develop the initial question. It was generated from the simple statement of a teacher in a staff meeting that a child was badly behaved because his father had gone away, (father being in the Royal Navy). I am a Naval wife who had raised two children whose

father had served in the Navy throughout their childhood and into their adulthood. I wanted to find out how children were affected by this untypical family situation. Many potential hypotheses arose. For example, did having a transient father cause difficulties when the children themselves became adults with their own children? Children often follow their father's footsteps when they decide on a career, but does this apply to Naval children? Do they make the decision because their fathers' were in the Navy? Similarly, do the children in Naval families decide not to join the services because they do not want to endure the periods of separation from wives and children, as they themselves experienced? In my own family, a married serviceman left the Navy after a few years because neither of the partnership wanted the separation or service lifestyle.

Finding sample groups to approach my research from either of these directions would be difficult. Whilst being highly valuable, these areas of research did not meet my personal criteria in that I wanted: to focus on the children and their perspective of life in a Naval family. Approaching the question from another direction, it would have been feasible to approach teachers and social services, study youth crime reports, SAT and GCSE results to establish if there was a correlation between the father's occupation and criminality or academic success or failure. In Chapter 4, the effects of being separated from the father are explored and examined in some detail, including looking at the research conducted by researchers such as Lilley (1997) and Wallerstein and Kelly (1980), who attempt to establish that being without a father is detrimental to a child's development. Most research addresses the negativity of being without a father, but very little research has been conducted to establish if living without a father can, in fact, have a positive effect on a child. Exploring these hypotheses would require a longer research plan, keeping records of children throughout their childhood. When following the theories of Bowlby (1998), it would be necessary to add data about when and where their fathers were serving at different points throughout their childhood. This is because he believes that the ages that separation occurs are fundamental when considering the effects. It would also be necessary to establish criteria to evaluate their natural ability, intelligence quotient, and personality traits. The potential number of variables that would need to be considered is so enormous that, whilst such research would be interesting, it would be of such magnitude that it would not be achievable within the directives for this project.

Since the research was to be a small, but in depth, study conducted over an interpretive paradigm of three years, answering the research question had to be achievable. As a teacher, the focus of my career has always been children and on whom I wanted to concentrate my research. Primarily, I wanted to find out how the children themselves felt about their family situation, how they themselves viewed their lives and if they considered that having a father in the Royal Navy affected them.

This research is about a real-life situation, studying a specific type of family grouping, where conditions cannot be controlled or organised, but, by looking at a few select situations, generalisations can be made that could be valuable to others in similar situations. Being a Naval wife is different from being the wife of a nine-to-five worker, and the periods of separation and togetherness make it vastly different from being a single parent. The uniqueness of the Naval family presents different scenarios of family life. At some points the family is a typical nuclear family as described by Bilton *et al.* (2002:230) as:

> A household unit composed of a man and a woman in a stable marital relationship and their dependent children.

This 'family' can be exemplified by the stereotypical image of a family where father goes off to work in the morning and returns in the evening. He shares in the caring and disciplining of the children, while enjoying a satisfying marital relationship with the mother. Suddenly, in the study-group-family type, and with a different sort of anxiety to that experienced in a pre-divorce-family unit, (Wallerstein and Kelly 1980), the father is gone and the mother is left to perform both roles on her own. At the same time, she is experiencing the temporary lost of her partner, lover and companion. This could be for a period of a week, a month or up to six months. It could mean that he has gone away and will not have contact with his family for several weeks as in the case of servicemen aboard certain submarines[5]. The situation cannot be compared with bereavement following the death of the father simply because the father will be returning to resume family life at later date. Chapter 4 explored the different nature of divorced and single-parent families, but the families in this research differ in that their parents are still in a positive relationship, and still have joint responsibility for the children. The father would be living at home if his

[5] Nuclear submarines operate in secrecy for several weeks at a time. During these periods the crew will have no contact with their families. Emergency contact can be made through official channels.

occupation facilitated it. In other words, the father is still very much a part of the family whilst being separated from it.

Although we stereotype the family, each one is as unique as are the constituent individuals and therefore each has to be considered on its own merits, and so attempting to produce quantitative data would be inappropriate. As a social study, a qualitative approach is required and it was necessary to develop the research question accordingly.

The literature study

Walker (1985:13) argues that research literature should provide a background resource instead of the academic discipline required by researchers of the past when it was considered that researchers should have: 'a thorough and up-to-date understanding of the literature; detailed background knowledge of the relevant discipline; technical proficiency; and substantial time and resources' Robson (1999:23). Strauss and Corbin (1990) define literature appropriate for research purposed as being of two types. The first type being technical literature: the reports of research studies and theoretical papers characteristic of professional writing. It is this type of material that can serve as background materials for comparison to new research. Secondly, non-technical literature: being the biographies, diaries, documents and other materials, that can be used as primary data.

Both elements of literature must be explored in order to develop the research question into a viable methodology stimulating the area of enquiry for questionnaires, and selecting sample groups. As the data is analysed, technical literature can be used to validate the findings.

Appropriate literature associated with my research question fell into several distinct categories. First priority, as with all research projects, is to explore work already conducted on the subject. Consultation with the Naval Welfare Organisation quickly established that they knew of no research papers on the subject. Further investigations in search of appropriate literature were done at the Royal Naval Museum Library. This also proved fruitless.

Some literature was forthcoming when I visited a paediatric Surgeon Commander at the Royal Naval Hospital, Haslar. The Surgeon Commander's role at the hospital was caring for the children of Royal Naval personnel and, while primarily concerned with their health, he

had an interest similar to that posed by this research question. He did, however, deal with the children who were referred by general practitioners or social services. These children had extreme problems, usually behavioural, or had developed a problem due to causes unrelated to the family situation. He did not have any involvement with children and families who coped with the Naval family situation without intervention. He was able to provide limited literature, related to his own published healthcare research, and other short documents loosely related to the subject. It became evident that the particular issue I was addressing had not been researched to any degree. A few books were identified that related to the effects of returning fathers after the Second World War, but the relevance of these has to be questioned. Whilst making interesting reading, the world has changed so dramatically in the past fifty years that the majority of information in them would be irrelevant to this research. America has been a little more interested in the subject and brought out a handbook, '*A Parent's Guide to Navy Life*' by Sitler and Hoffman (1981), for their servicemen, explaining what to expect before, during and after deployment and how to cope with problems. In 1997, an eight-page booklet, '*Homecoming*', was produced by the Sailors and Families Advice Bureau and gave limited advice on how to make the return of the father easier.

It became evident that previous research was not available to assist with the development of the research question in order to create a foundation on which to develop a working hypothesis. Therefore, I turned the focus of the literature study to families in general, fatherhood and the role of the father, and separation theories. A great deal of research has been conducted on all of these issues and the resulting theories and findings have already been explored in previous chapters.

Finding the research group

The research question necessitated finding sufficient children willing to participate by completing a questionnaire and with the potential of being interviewed at a later stage in the research programme. For this there were various options. I could consult my friends with regard to their children, but I rejected this idea for the same reasons as I rejected the idea of using my own children. Since we live in an area where there is a concentration of Royal Naval establishments, I next considered using children from local schools on the assumption that there would be a relative large number of children in the Naval family situation.

As Oppenheim (1992) writes, the recent increase in large-scale investigations among school children has provided a ready-made sampling frame. If children were adversely affected by having a father in the Royal Navy, as indicated by the statement which promoted this research, then it was logical that schools should be aware of the children who might have emotional or behavioural problems as a result of their father going on deployment or returning. However, the majority of the schools contacted were totally unaware of the number of children in the school whose fathers were in the Navy. The reaction from most schools was one of indifference, indicating that it was unimportant. As a researcher, the inference from this indifference is that there is no correlation between problem children and the father's occupation. One local school, whilst not knowing the number of children with serving Naval personnel as fathers, was interested and prepared to facilitate the completion of questionnaires. The research was briefly explained along with assurance that all information was completely confidential, and that the completion of the questionnaires was totally voluntary. The children were then allowed time during a tutorial session to complete the questionnaire, and seal them in envelopes which were collected and returned to me by post later. This group became the first sample group.

In order to establish an element of stability for children of serving forces personnel a 'boarding school allowance' is given to those parents who wish to send their children to a boarding school. This gives the child continued education in the same school throughout their school years, and allows the parents to move with each new appointment. Whilst parents can make applications to any of the approved schools there is a specific school for the children of Naval parents. The Royal Hospital School (RHS) in Holbrook, Ipswich offers education for children from the age of eleven to eighteen. Once an all-boys school, it is now co-educational, but still maintains a high level of Naval tradition with a Royal Naval dress uniform, parades and military bands. It was to this school I looked for a second sample group. My initial communication included a covering letter, a copy of the questionnaire I intended to use and brief rationale for the study. This gave the staff at the school the opportunity to consider the request. Subsequently, I was invited to the school to discuss the issue with several members of staff, including the Head Teacher and the school Chaplain. Whilst appreciating the objectives for my research, there was a great deal of reservation in allowing the children to complete the questionnaire or be interviewed. After lengthy discussions, it was decided that the questionnaire would be included in the end of year

information pack, only going to those children whose fathers were currently serving, together with an explanatory letter. Parents could then choose to allow their children to complete the questionnaire if they wished. This paid respect to the sensitivity of the research, but, conducted in this way, did mean that I lost a large element of control. In my first sample group, the children had no parental influence over their answers since it was conducted at school during the school day. With this second group, it was not possible to judge if the children had been supervised when answering, with the possibility that they 'censored' the answers, or whether the parents allowed complete confidentiality by allowing them to complete it and put it in the envelope without interference. The completed questionnaires were then returned individually by post during the course of the summer holiday. The children from the Royal Hospital School became my second sample group.

I wanted to focus on the children's views and opinions and both the sample groups met the criteria of addressing children between the ages of eleven and eighteen.

The questionnaire

Designing any questionnaire is a complicated process. Oppenheim (1992:1) wrote:

> The world is full of well-meaning people who believe that anyone who can write plain English and has a modicum of common sense can produce a good questionnaire.

He explains that a degree of common sense and a good command of English can be an asset, but not sufficient as every investigation is inevitably different, and formulating a questionnaire that will ask valid and relevant questions is in fact a difficult process. He identifies fourteen key issues related to questionnaire design (1992:7) some of which I considered for the construction and development of mine.

1. "deciding the aims of the study"

Previously in this chapter, I wrote about the rationale behind the research question. My general aim was to study the effects on children of having a father in the Royal Navy, but this needed to be narrowed into more specific aims. Because of my background, I was especially interested in the children's views themselves rather than considering adult

perspectives. This enabled me to develop operationalised aims, that is, a specified set of practical issues that could be investigated.

2. "reviewing the relevant literature"

Literature on this specific research question is limited but the abundance of work, related to families, the role of the father and separation, did enable me to focus on key issues for the formulation of the approach I would take in the questionnaire. These were identified as being in specific groups: father's career and living arrangements, friendships, emotions, home life, behaviour, good and bad times, and keeping in touch.

3. "preliminary conceptualisation of the study"

This was carried out by discussions with college tutors, a few close friends and colleagues, and my own children.

4. "deciding the design of the questionnaire"

The nature of the sample groups available and the time constraints meant that data needed to be gathered by administering a self-completed questionnaire. This data-collecting design has its own pitfalls such as there would be no opportunity to verify the information, and predetermined space for the answer could limit or intimidate the respondent. For this type of data gathering the questionnaire had to be carefully constructed with clear and unambiguous instructions and limited open-ended questions. Robson in his work, *Real World Research* (1999:250), identified valuable factors relating to the practical element of questionnaire design. The appearance needed to clear, and to look easy to fill in. This was possible with modern technology and the ability to create forms using the computer. It provides the amateur researcher the opportunity to present professional documentation without great expense. It also gives the opportunity to vary quality of type and typeface to enable clarity of instruction and section division, when arranging the contents to maximise co-operation. Since I was not going to be able to introduce the questionnaire personally, a covering letter to the respondent was needed to explain its purpose, convey its importance, assure confidentiality and encourage a reply. It was important to add a message of thanks to the respondent, when it was completed. Confidentiality was an important issue in this research

as I was asking children to write about very personal issues. I wanted to elicit the most truthful answers and, therefore, felt it important that the questionnaires could remain totally anonymous and so presented the respondents with the option of giving personal information such as name and address. The emotive nature of the questions could evoke other thoughts and feelings in the child who was completing the questionnaire, and whilst not obliged I wanted to give an opportunity for 'open thought', or a place on the questionnaire where the child could express their own thoughts and maybe contribute information they felt was important to convey.

To make the questionnaire less intimidating, I confined it to an A3 size that folded to a convenient A4 size and was easily reproduced on conventional printers and photocopiers. The two pages resulted in an A4 booklet of 8 sides with the first being the covering letter and the last being the free comment space, and a total of 6 pages for the actual questionnaire.

Financially, it was not possible to send a stamped addressed envelope with every questionnaire for its return, but I did present an opportunity for them to be returned to a central point from which they could be collected. As explained previously in this chapter, the Headmaster of RHS allowed me to conduct the survey by sending the questionnaires home with the children at the end of term. This necessitated writing a second covering letter explaining to the parents about the research and the value of it.

5. "doing the necessary pilot work"

In principle, every aspect of the questionnaire should be piloted. Oppenheim (1992:48) goes as far as suggesting that the absorbency of the paper should be tested in order to ensure it is easy to write on. He brings into consideration that the colour of the paper or the typeface might influence the response rate. For the ease of reproduction and economy, I selected to use standard white photocopy paper, with the questionnaire being copied onto A3 and then folded into A4. I used a small graphic on the front, which always carried the introductory letter. This graphic was a combination of a warship and two children playing. This was to identify graphically the intention of the questionnaire and to present it to children in a less daunting document.

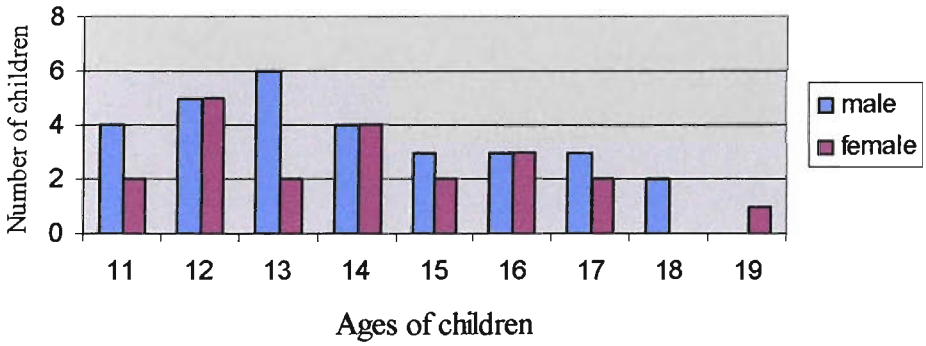
The piloting was conducted in three stages. Having initially planned the questionnaire, I asked my own children to complete it and then analysed the layout, wording, and ease of answering. It was important for me to assure them that they did not have to be truthful in their answers and that the completed forms would be destroyed afterwards. The reason for not including them in my study has been explained previously. Constructive criticism resulted in changes: such as including direction to the next appropriate question where a yes/no answer was given, and the rewording of some of the questions. Both my children are teachers and I considered their judgement valid. Having generated version two of the questionnaire, they were asked again to give their opinions and with minor changes I prepared the questionnaire for the second stage of piloting. For this stage, I asked a friend of my son and his younger brother and sister (aged 19, 14 and 12 respectively) to complete the questionnaire. The father of this second piloting group was a serving officer in the Royal Navy, and I had ascertained with him and his wife that I could ask their children questions about completing the questionnaire. The feedback on ease of completing was positive and it had taken about 30 minutes to complete. Pre-informing the respondents of the time that will be required to complete the questionnaire is important, as it prepares them for the commitment they are making in completing it.

6. "designing the samples"

Earlier in this chapter I explained how I selected the two schools to approach for my sampling. I needed to target specific children: those who had fathers in the Royal Navy, but I could not choose which children who would be involved. I had no control over the ages of the children, nor could I specify that I wanted a certain number of girls or boys. My sample group therefore was a convenience sample.

Fig.1.

A graph to show the number of School Children Respondents by Gender



7. "doing the field-work"

This would include the questionnaire administration and interview work. As already mentioned, the administration of the questionnaire at RHS was taken out of my control. To be able to use the children of the school as a sample group, I had to allow the school to send the questionnaires to the parents in the end of term information packs and then it was entirely up the parents if they allowed the children to complete it. Confidentiality could have been compromised, the parents could have influenced the answers given and, if the children thought their parents were going to be looking at the questionnaire after completion, the answers given might not have been truthful. These problems did not occur with the first sample group as the completion of the questionnaires was completed within school after a brief introduction. This school did not feel it was necessary to inform the parents and this lack of parental involvement, along with the opportunity for the students to choose whether they added personal data, promoted honest answers. They also had the control to put the completed questionnaires in envelopes and seal them without anyone else seeing them.

The final stages of the Oppenheim (1992) guide involving data processing, conducting statistical analysis, assembling results and testing hypotheses together with the research report will be considered in the next chapter.

The interview

Robson (1999:227) considers interviewing a good method for data gathering in educational enquiry, but says that whilst interviewing appears on the surface to be a very simple method of data collecting, it is indeed very difficult to ascertain valid information. In an ideal situation, it is important to pilot interview techniques and questions but in this instance this was not going to be a practical possibility, but it would be possible to tape record the interviews with the children from RHS.

> The interview is a flexible and adaptable way of finding out things. The human use of language is fascinating as a behaviour in its own right, as for the virtually unique window that it opens up on what lies behind our actions.
>
> Robson 1999:229

Robson identifies the face-to-face interview as offering the possibility to modify one's line of enquiry and follow-up interesting responses. Interviews are not without problems. Their flexible nature makes it is difficult to standardize, to eliminate bias and to make them reliable. The interviews that I conducted were very limited. Having gained permission to talk to the children at my second-sample school, a meeting was set up in the chaplain's house where all the children who had offered to be interviewed, would meet together. To ensure the safety of the children, the Headmaster requested that the Chaplain be present. This did not present a problem to me as interviewer but I did have reservations as to whether or not his presence would inhibit the children. The situation was unavoidable, and so the interview with the children was conducted over a period of an hour using the guidelines for interview structure suggested by Robson (1999). It was recorded on a small tabletop Dictaphone for transcribing later. The interview was an informal discussion of the answers and despite the presence of the chaplain I felt the answers were honest. I was able to clarify and allow the children to expand on the answers they had given in the questionnaires. I encountered two main difficulties in conducting the interview. Firstly the pupils were enthusiastic in their replies and as a result several talked at the same time making it difficult to transcribe and whilst the children were reminded about the interview they arrived at different times during the beginning causing me to repeat myself about the assurance of confidentiality. I had begun the interview by asking the pupils to agree not to talk about anything they heard from other members in the group stressing the importance of maintaining confidentially. When the interview concluded I gave the children the opportunity to ask any questions and thanking them accordingly, assured them that they

could contact me if they had any concerns about what they had said or my research. I used the data from the interview transcript to support the data got from the questionnaires.

Interpreting the data

In order to analysis the data it was necessary to present it into a form that I could use for discussion and interpretation. On receipt of the questionnaires each was allocated a code relating to the school, whether the pupil was prepared to be interviewed and a number. For example HT 31 would be the code for RHS respondent who was prepared to be interviewed and was questionnaire 31. These codes were used to identify the respondents throughout the analysis. The statistical evidence, such as age, gender etc. was entered into a spreadsheet from which I was able to create graphs. The 'yes' or 'no' answers to the closed questions were also recorded on the spreadsheet allowing me to quickly interpret the evidence to create the tables for comparative analysis. The answers to the open ended questions were then recorded for each individual under the heading of each individual question. This method of recording allowed me to identify trends and key words respondents used to express themselves and subsequently create text for discussion.

Conclusion

From the evidence in the many books on conducting research, it is evident that the researcher has to be flexible in the approach and design any research project and the subsequent methodology. No single method can be deemed 'the right one' or 'the wrong one'. Constants of time, money and the limitations imposed by the size and nature of the study determine how the research will be conducted. The practical side of the methodology must be carefully considered and also the ethical issues need to be examined carefully, and the researcher must always be alert to what is and what is not ethically appropriate. Whichever methods for data collection are chosen, fundamental considerations need to be made and the researcher conscious of these at all times. Namely: what is the research question, what is the relevance of the data I am collecting, the questions I am asking and how might the individual I am asking be affected by what I am doing?

In this chapter I have discussed general research methods and the methodology adopted for the research. The next task is to analyse the data, and so, having collected the

questionnaires, conducted and transcribed the interview, the next chapter will give an analysis of the data.

Chapter 6
Analysis of results

Introduction

Chapter 5 explained how the research was conducted using self-completed questionnaires and a group interview. In this chapter, I will analyse the results by referring to individual questions of the questionnaire and then summarise the resulting answers, combining further information that materialised from the interview. In order to do this, I listed the answers from the individual questions and added corresponding pieces of text from the interview transcript. How the answers correlate with the theories of family, fatherhood and separation theories will be explored in the next chapter.

Statistical information and general information from questionnaires

Fifty-five questionnaires were returned, though I had no indication of how many were sent out via The Royal Hospital School. From these, twenty were from sample group 1, thirty-one from sample group 2 and four were presented by interested parties. These were four respondents who answered questionnaires as individuals, working as staff in the school and the playgroup, who on hearing about the research, offered to complete a questionnaire because their fathers were in the Royal Navy when they were children. I considered their information valuable as they reflected on their lives from an adult perspective. I included the data from these 4 respondents in sample group 1. Nine children from sample group 2, were prepared to be interviewed.

The first five questions were related to statistical information about ages, sex, siblings, whether the father was still serving, and whether the respondent lived in married quarters and moved around with the family.

The percentage figures given have been rounded to the nearest whole number for ease of handling.

Personal information: Ages and sexes of respondents (Fig 2)

Ages	Female	Percentage of respondents (female)	Male	Percentage of respondents (male)	Percentage of total respondents
11	2	8 %	4	13 %	11 %
12	5	20 %	5	17 %	18 %
13	2	8 %	6	20 %	14 %
14	4	16 %	4	13 %	14 %
15	2	8 %	3	10 %	9 %
16	3	12 %	3	10 %	11 %
17	2	8 %	3	10 %	9 %
18	0	0 %	2	7 %	4 %
19	1	4 %	0	0 %	2 %
20	0	0 %	0	0 %	0 %
21	1	4 %	0	0 %	2 %
22	1	4 %	0	0 %	2 %
30	1	4 %	0	0 %	2 %
31	0	0 %	0	0 %	0 %
32	1	4 %	0	0 %	2 %

This simple table shows at the majority of respondents were 12 to 15 years old. This was expected since the two sample groups came from secondary schools, but with slightly more males than females.

Siblings: (Fig. 3)

Number of siblings		Number of respondents
Younger	Older	
0	0	7
1	0	16
0	1	9
2	0	3
0	2	4
3	0	1
0	3	2
1	1	6
1	2	1
2	1	2
2	2	1
3	1	1
3	2	1
4	0	1

The national average number of children in a family is currently 1.6 children (0ffice of National Statistics 2001) and the average family size of the sample groups was 1.58, which means that the sample group was representative of the national trend. The majority of respondents had one sibling, but it is interesting to note that there were sixteen children who came from families of four or more children.

Question 1: Father still serving as a member of the Royal Navy?

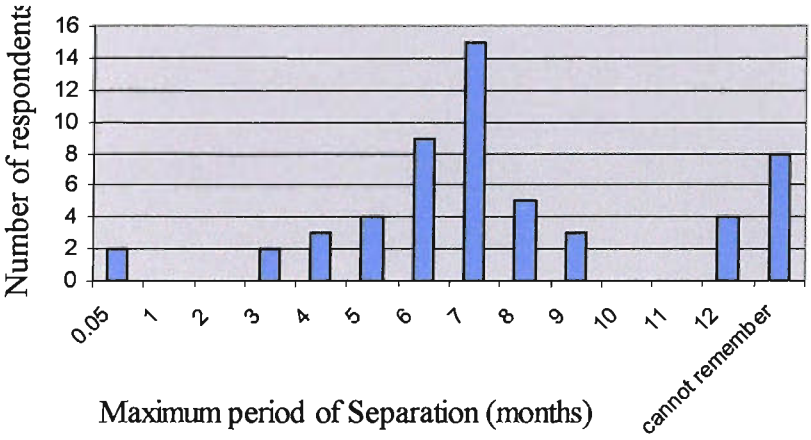
Since the research is about the children with fathers in the Royal Navy, it was important that the majority had fathers who were still serving. Society changes rapidly and the expectations within families, the individuals who make up that family and how they interact and perform their roles, changes equally as fast. To make this research valid, it is necessary that the data from the respondents is as recent as possible, and, in this particular case, for the

children to be living the life of a child with the father in the Royal Navy at this time. The results indicated that seventy-five per cent of the respondents still had serving fathers.

Question 2: Longest deployment

Fig. 4

A Graph to show the Maximum Period of Separation Experienced by Respondents



Question 3: Living in married quarters?

In order to facilitate the mobility of service personnel (in the Royal Navy this can be as often as every two years), specific housing is provided within the locality of the Naval base. This 'married quarter' accommodation not only gives the opportunity for families to move as new deployments occur, but is relatively low-cost. How individual families use this facility can vary. Some couples will live in a married quarter until their children are of school age, and then purchase a house in order to provide a more stable school environment; whilst others will continue to live in married quarters throughout the serving period. This flexibility caused some overlap in the results for Question 3, but the statistics were:

Accommodation Comparison: (Fig 5)

	Currently live in married quarters		Have lived in married quarters, but do not now		Never lived in married quarters	
	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage
Sample group 1	5	20 %	12	50 %	8	25 %
Sample group 2	9	29 %	15	50 %	8	26 %

This illustrated a similarity between the two sample groups.

As well as incorporating a yes/no element, Question 6 onwards invited the respondents to write about their experiences.

Question 4 & 5: Moving with father

Moving with Father: (Fig 6)

	Have moved in the past		Always move	
	number	percentage	number	percentage
Sample group 1	9	37 %	3	12 %
Sample group 2	23	71 %	14	45 %

Question 6: Reasons for not moving

As previously explained, the Royal Navy offer low-priced accommodation to serving personnel in order to facilitate family movement, but by looking at the results of Question 5, approximately seventy-five per cent of the respondents do not live in married quarters. Home life stability was a common factor for not moving and with the opportunity to stay at the same school and be able to make friends. The other main reason was that the deployments were only short or were always in the same area. Two children gave the reason as being the mother's employment.

Question 7: Living near family

Fig 7: Living near family (Fig 7)

	Do live near		Did live near		Never lived near	
	number	percentage	number	percentage	number	percentage
Sample group 1	3	12 %	6	24 %	15	60 %
Sample group 2	4	13 %	7	24 %	21	68%

Question 8: What support did the family provide?

The family support given extended from lending money, to allowing the family to use the PC to E-mail, but the majority of help given was of a caring nature. A common form of help was given by grandparents, who looked after the children whilst the mother went to work, and generally helped to look after them when they were small. In a few cases, physical help was provided in the form of heavy work around the house and providing transport.

Question 9: Opportunity to visit ship father served on

Fig 8: Visiting the ship

	Visited the ship	
	number	percentage
Sample group 1	18	75 %
Sample group 2	30	97 %

Question 10: Details of the visits to ships

The Royal Navy offer a variety of opportunities for children and families to visit ships as well as allowing personnel to take families on board by arrangement. One of these occasions is known as a 'Families Day', and often occurs when a ship returns from a deployment. Sixteen respondents said that they visited the ships on Families Days, but the majority (24) made more general visits to the ships to look round, have lunch and see where

their fathers worked. On three occasions, the children had the opportunity to sail with the ship as a 'Father and Child at sea' initiative. Other visits were associated with barbeques, and sporting events, such as the traditional Field Gun Run, and Christmas parties.

Question 11: Did visiting the ship help?

In sample group 1, seven children, or twenty-nine per cent, considered that visiting the ship or place where their father worked, helped them deal with the separations, and in group 2, there were eight children, or twenty-six per cent.

Question 12: How the visits helped

It was possible to divide the reasons, why visiting the ship helped, into four categories. Several children had two or three reasons why it was important, but in general:

- 9 children felt it was good to see the physical places were their fathers lived and worked
- 5 felt it was important to know about the work he did
- 3 felt it was good to know who their fathers were actually with when they were away
- 6 children felt that seeing the ship helped to reassure them that their fathers were safe

Question 13: Why the visits did not help

The reasons given were varied. Seeing the cramped environment caused one child to think about how unpleasant it was for their father when he was away; another felt that seeing the ship did not help overcome the sadness or stop their father going away. Seeing the weapons caused one child concern, because it brought the reality of a conflict situation to the forefront.

Question 14: Meeting father's friends

Twenty-two children (92 per cent) in the 1st sample group had met his friends and colleagues and twenty six (77 per cent) in the 2nd group.

Question 15: Who the colleagues were

The majority of colleagues and friends were from the same establishment or ship, and some met on a social basis, as they become family friends or participated in sports together.

Question 16 and 18: Making friends

Question 16 and 18 dealt with the friendships formed by the children, who had fathers on the same ship, and whether these friendships were maintained. The children from sample group 1 developed more relationships (16 children or 66 per cent) whilst the fathers remained on the ship or establishment, but not all kept up the friendship (8 children or 33 per cent). In sample group 2, a smaller proportion made friends, but thirty-five per cent of the children made friends with the children of their father's friends, and maintained these friendships.

Question 17: About these friendships

The respondents were asked to report on how these friendships started and developed. The majority of the children from sample group 1 were introduced to the friendships because they live in the same areas, mothers know each other and only occasionally did they meet at a social event. In sample group 2, the majority met at school with a few meeting at social gatherings.

Question 19: Feelings when father goes away

For some of the respondents this question was a little inappropriate as they could not remember when their fathers had actually gone away, having been too young at the time. An analysis of the statements gave evidence of key words used to describe the emotions experienced: 'sad', 'lonely', 'depressed' and 'miss him', were common statements. These

were qualified by the respondent usually stating that they experienced these feeling at the beginning of a deployment but it is an experience that is 'coped with' and 'used to' with the happy expectation that he will be returning. One respondent was sad at first but enjoyed the added responsibility at home, whilst others considered the family somewhat disjointed when the father is away. The touching statement 'when my dad is away, it feels as though a part of my heart is missing!' came from a local respondent. Some of the children experienced anxiety as they were aware that their fathers were involved in conflict situations, expressing concern that their fathers would not come back. Some of the children from sample group 2, attending a boarding school, felt some of their anxiety was alleviated, as they did not see their parents very often. There was an overall impression that it was something that happened and was accepted as simply that. Only one child gave a negative response in the statement: 'I said to mum it feels as though they are divorced and we only see dad once in a blue moon'.

Question 20: Feelings when father comes home

To complement the previous question this one asks about feelings when the father comes home. In keeping with Question 19, some children felt the question inappropriate as they did not remember when their father went away or returned. 'Happy' was a frequently used word when considering feelings, along with 'happy to do things as a family'; 'relieved that nothing as happened to him'; 'feeling as a whole family again'; and 'the gap is filled.' Several respondents refer to the effect their fathers' return has on their mothers, expressing that they are glad mum and dad are back together, and mum is happier. Although there are equal references to how dad imposes discipline, controlling television and telling them to do homework.

Question 21: Memories about father being home

Living the service-family life creates times when the father is home and equal periods when he is away. These times could possibly promote a different life style, a 'with and without dad' life style. My own children remember significant times and activities related to each. This question asks respondents to recall significant memories of when their father was home. The things recalled are consistent with the general things that fathers do. Things identified were: playing in the garden, watching television and helping with the housework,

gardening and cooking. 'A normal family life'; 'the family being together'; 'a normal routine' are recurrent themes to the answers given. Almost contradictory to this were the responses of thirteen children who recalled that their father did special things, like going out on family outings and staying up late to watch television. Two children from group 1 considered that their father spoilt them by buying toys. Only two children, both from group 1, mentioned that having father there influenced the mother, one in a negative way in that the parents argued a lot, and the other positively in that having the father home took the strain off the mother.

Question 22: Memories about father being away

Having asked children to recall situations and events when father is home, it is appropriate to find out if the memories related to the father being away are as strong. The most prominent memory is of how contact is maintained. This is maintained in a variety of ways: mapping the journey, receiving postcards, writing letters and getting phone calls, were some. Several children felt they have a quieter and more lenient time when father is away and are allowed to stay up late, but are expected to help more around the house. Unlike the memories when father is away, more children refer to the effect on their mothers, noticing how busy she is, how she takes on the responsibility to entertain them and making sure the children do things together as a family. If the father misses a special occasion, such as a birthday or Christmas, then some children find these times quite upsetting.

Question 23: Remembering incidents before father goes away

In Chapter 1, reference is made to 'pre-deployment syndrome'. This is the period, often one of tension and anxiety, just before a deployment. Whilst noticeably affecting the adults in the family, this question was to find out if the children themselves noticed or felt the effects. The majority of the respondents did not notice any difference in the family life or in their own feelings and emotions. One noticed a lot of family tension, and some noticed that their mothers became sad, grumpy or became more sensitive. Only one child recalled doing something special just prior to deployment and that was to go out for a special meal. Whilst not directly concerned with this question, one respondent added the information that their birth was induced in order for the father to be present, and one informed me that the father

decided to leave the Royal Navy after their sister was severely injured in a car crash whilst he was away.

Question 24: Changes in home life when father is away

Thirty-seven per cent of the respondents felt that their family life does not change when their father goes away. A general view is that the children do more about the house by helping mother, and try to make things easier for their mother as they notice how busy they are. Mothers appear to be less argumentative, but children are expected to take on more responsibility and be more independent. Two children commented that when their father is away they visit grandparents more, whilst others enjoy more take-out meals or restaurant meals, stay in more, and are allowed to stay up later as the mother takes time to talk to her children and uses them to keep her company.

Question 25and 26: Mother's actions when father is away

Parenting is usually considered a partnership between the father and mother. When the father is away, this responsibility falls directly on the mother. This question attempted to find out if or how the mothers' behaviour changes when her partner is away. This question particularly focused on the issue of reprimands and discipline by asking about mothers' reaction to misbehaviour. Question 26 went on to ask if this behaviour was the same as when father is there. Most children replied with details of the type of punishment given, ranging from 'grounding' to being sent to rooms and smacking. Shouting, telling off and being given 'the look', were also common forms of punishment. Thirteen respondents particularly identified that their mother acted as she does when the father is present, but in answer to Question 26, the response was higher where forty-three respondents (78 per cent) agreed that the behaviour did not change. Some considered that the punishment or shouting was not as loud as the fathers, and only two made references that the mother would contact the father. Three children stated that they never misbehave, but only one mentioned that this was because they did not want to bother their mother.

Question 27: How is mother's behaviour different?

Of the children who identified a difference in mother's behaviour, one felt mother was stricter because she was 'trying to teach us a lesson because she did not have another voice to back her up.' Two identified that it was the father who would do the smacking, and two felt that when father is there they can get away with more.

Question 28: More freedom when father is away?

Forty per cent of the children felt they had more freedom when their father is away. This freedom comes in the mother needing company and mother not being as strict as the father. Reasons for a negative answer to this question were the father expecting the children to complete more chores, having to look after younger brothers and sisters, and the father wanting to spend time with the child. One reference was made to the fact that when the father is at home, the child can go out more because the mother does not drive and the father does, hence can take them out more. One enjoyed being able to make more noise when father was away because they did not have to worry that he was watching television. Fathers appear to be stricter over 'staying out late', 'doing chores' and being over-protective about who the child is going out with and where. One child put this down to being because the mother knows their friends, whereas the father does not.

Question 29: Does behaviour change when father is away?

In answer to this question, seventy-three per cent of the children felt their behaviour did not change when their father is away. Of those that felt their behaviour did change, three considered themselves more relaxed, and two felt they had more work to do around the house. One admitted that they were nasty to their younger sister, and two thought that they were naughtier when their father was away. One mentioned that father's absence meant they could spend less time on homework and more on a social life.

Question 30: Does your schoolwork suffer?

It was clear that the majority of respondents did not feel that their schoolwork suffered when their father was away, with a response of eighty-four per cent saying it did not suffer.

Of those who admitted some change, it was as a result of having to do more things at home, not concentrating properly and rushing work in order to go out, 'missing him' and not having father around to help with homework.

Question 31: Problems at school whilst father is away.

Consistent with the previous question, eighty-seven per cent of the respondents did not feel they had experienced problems at school because their father was away. One child felt they were naughtier, and two had problems relating to homework not being done. One child got into trouble at school because they cried a lot, and one got into trouble when they responded negatively while talking to both peers and staff, about what their father was doing.

Question 32: Are the problems related to father being away?

Of those children who considered they had problems at school whilst their father was away, one felt it was because the father was not always there watching the homework procedure, and one knew that they cried because their father had gone away. One child answered positively to the previous question by saying that it had been a victim of bullying, but because their father was away and the respondent was unable to talk to him and resolve the problem, the incident was not dealt with for some time. Not directly in answer to the question, one child mentioned that since they were at boarding school, the movements of the father made no difference. The child, who admitted being naughty in the previous question, felt that all the problems were related to their father being away.

Question 33: Do you feel you have missed out?

Sixty per cent of the respondents felt they did not miss out on anything because their father was away. Those who did feel they had missed some aspects of father-child activities mentioned not being able to go to football matches, or do certain things because 'mum' can't do them. One child, whose mother is disabled, felt they missed out because they had more to do looking after the mother if father was away. Only one child felt they were missing out because their mates have fathers at home who took them out and the respondent did not. One, who described herself as a 'daddy's girl', and would have liked to share a lot more with him but was unable to when he was away. Four of the respondents wrote that

they didn't miss out on anything, because their mothers took time to provide all they needed. Being at boarding school was also mentioned as a means of counteracting any feelings of missing out.

Question 34 and 35: Feeling the odd one out

Only three children agreed that, on occasions, they felt the odd one out among friends. The occasions highlighted were: if friends issue invitations there is talk about who is cooking; or having to asked permission from 'Mum and Dad'; and when friends talk about going out with their fathers.

Question 36 and 37: Feeling that their family was different

Six children felt their family was different to others, and the reasons given were: other people have fathers there all the time; missing out on events when other parents can come into school every week; simply because father is not there; and father being away at Christmas when everyone else has their father there. One child said they used to get upset when they saw other families around.

Question 38 and 39: Feeling jealous or upset when father is away

Eighteen (33 per cent) of the respondents did experience some jealousy or emotional upset because their father was away. The reasons for these feelings were very mixed: mother not being able to manage all the things the child required because she was so busy; and occasions when the media continually mentioned forthcoming conflict. Friends and teachers talking about fathers caused distress to six of the children, while eight generally missed their father being around, especially for occasions such as birthdays and Christmas.

Question 40: Opportunities because father is in the Royal Navy

Whilst twelve respondents considered they had had no exceptional opportunities because their father was in the Royal Navy, twenty nine (53 per cent) considered that they had the opportunity to broaden their horizons by travelling, living in different countries and meeting lots of different people. Sample group 2 was taken from the children attending the Royal

Hospital School and ten considered they were fortunate to have the opportunity to attend the school. Seven children considered that being able to use the sport and leisure facilities at the Naval establishments was an opportunity they would not have otherwise had.

Question 41 and 42: Being spoilt by father when he is home

There was a marked difference between the two sample groups when asked if the children considered themselves spoilt by father when he was home. From sample group1, thirteen children (54 per cent) felt their fathers spoilt them; whereas in sample group 2, only six children (19 per cent) felt that they were spoilt. The major method of spoiling took the form of buying clothes, giving presents, and spending money on them. A few felt they were spoilt because their father took them out more.

Question 43 and 44: Treats when father is away

Most respondents did not get extra treats when father was away. Thirteen children (24 per cent) put down a positive answer, and expressed the treats as ranging from mother buying special food and clothes, going out more and having more money spent on them.

Question 45: Keeping in touch by E-mail and letters

Keeping in touch (Fig 9)

	More than once a week		Weekly		When I want to		Rarely		Never	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sample Group 1	2	8%	6	25%	9	37%	4	16%	3	13%
Sample Group 2	1	3%	6	19%	9	29%	7	23%	8	25%

Question 46: Receiving letters as an individual

Receiving letters (Fig 10)

	Yes		No	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Sample Group 1	15	63%	9	37%
Sample Group 2	21	68%	10	22%

Question 47: Opportunity to phone father

Phoning Father (Fig 11)

	More than once a week		Weekly		When I want to		Rarely		Never	
	No.	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Sample Group 1	2	8%	1	4%	6	25%	11	50%	4	16%
Sample Group 2	5	16%	6	19%	1	3%	13	42%	6	19%

Question 48: How often does your father phone you?

Receiving phone calls (Fig 12)

	More than once a week		Weekly		When possible		Rarely		Never	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sample Group 1	7	29%	3	13%	10	42%	4	16%	0	0%
Sample Group 2	3	10%	1	3%	20	64%	4	13%	3	10%

Question 49: What special things are sent to father?

This question asked the respondents to identify particular things sent to fathers when they were away. There were a variety of responses: nine children sent nothing at all, while others sent a selection of different items. Twenty-four respondents sent things that they had made, in particular drawings and tapes. The expected items were also listed, such as cards, birthday presents, school reports and photographs.

Question 50: What special things kept as a reminder of father?

A vast majority of the children had photographs to remind them of their father and a few kept letters and postcards. One had a map on the wall to remind them of where their father was and one had a special teddy. One child mentioned a book with a special message, and another, a special song that was often played. Three children refer to talking about their father as a way of remembering their father. Special items also consisted of a box of small gifts and a scrapbook of the letters and things that the father had sent.

Chapter 7
Discussion of Results

Introduction

I heard a story about a young child who was always painting pictures in black. Psychologists concluded that the child had a serious racial problem. When asked directly why he always used black, the answer was simple: the black paint was the only one he could reach! It is easy for adults, with our increased knowledge of the world around us, to make assumptions about the simple things that children say and do. Adults view the world in different ways to children. It was this story that came to mind when I started to consider how I would answer the research question. There was little literature for me to consult, and it was my personal experiences, of how an adult can mistakenly interpret a child's actions, that prompted me to attempt to answer it from a child's perspective, and discover what the children themselves think about their lives within a Royal Naval family. From the wealth of research about children's reaction to separation and paternal deprivation, it is easy to assume the children within such families are likely to be adversely effected. Were the children, who had fathers serving in the Royal Navy, affected by the separations that were forced upon them because of his job?

The original research enquiry was to find out if children were affected by having a father in the Royal Navy. I had various options as to my choice of sample group, ranging from adults who had experienced childhood as a Naval child, to asking parents about their views on the subject. However, it was the story, about the boy and the black paint, which made me particularly focus this study on how the children themselves looked upon the situation. By means of a self-completed questionnaire and a group interview with volunteer children, it was possible to gather data for the research. The quality of the data from each respondent varied and my concerns about the validity and reliability have already been highlighted in the methodology. The reason for focusing on the teenage age group was because I felt these children, providing they were able to complete the questionnaires confidentially, should be able to express them coherently, and would be of an age where they could be reflective and have independent thoughts about their experiences. Focusing on the opinions of adults would not have presented data relevant to this work. From experience, how I view the effect

of James's absences on our children is very different from the way they perceive the effects. So armed with information written by mostly teenagers in this chapter, I will attempt to answer the research question referring to evidence presented in the literature study.

Chapter 2 explores the work of Silva and Smart (1999) and Zonabend (1996), identifying their definitions of what constitutes a 'family'. Silva and Smart (1999) emphasise the importance of 'a heterosexual conjunction based on marriage and co-residence'. The families in this research conform to this definition by the very nature of the selection process of the sample groups. It was a necessary criterion for the sample group children to come from two parent families, or there would be no 'cause and effect' scenario with which to work. The children were asked to consider their father's absences and their mother's reactions. It is therefore a safe assumption that all came from a heterosexual family. It could be argued that the second part of this definition is not fulfilled since we are dealing with families where the father is absent and not co-residing for periods of up to a year. The family address remains the father's residence, his belongings remain in the house, and he has responsibility for the house, his wife and the children, and it is the place he returns to when the opportunity presents itself. To all intents and purposes, it is his home and where he resides with the family. Being on a ship or having accommodation on a shore base is only a temporary arrangement. Silva and Smart (1999:1) add to their definition by including that the purpose of a family is to 'inculcate proper values in children and to remain independent of state support.' It is very difficult to identify how far Silva and Smart (1999) consider this independence from the state extends. The Royal Navy is state run, the accommodation is subsidised, and funding for the children's private education can be provided to large extent[6]. One, therefore, has to question whether the provision of private education and subsidised housing make the family dependent on the state, though I do not think that this employment arrangement can be considered 'dependence' on the state. How many children from Royal Naval families eventually end up dependent on the state by way of drawing unemployment benefits, etc. is unknown. The children who responded to the questionnaire were from establishment defined 'family units'.

From an historical perspective families have consisted of a mother, a father and their children. For many generations, it was accepted that the mother remained in the home and

[6] The boarding school allowance is based on the fees for pupils at RHS and covers 90% of the cost per annum.

nurtured the children and the father, apart from financial support, had very little to contribute to their care and upbringing. It could be argued that, whilst Western society has introduced the concept that the father must play a role in childcare, the Naval family engenders the idea that the mother looks after the children while the father goes out to work. The fact that he is away from the family home and unable perhaps to say goodnight to their offspring (epitome of the Victorian father figure), his absence should make little or no difference. Perhaps years ago this would have been true, but society, and along with it families, have changes. These changes were discussed in Chapter 2. Whilst society has changed, women who marry a sailor find themselves in this situation, married but sometimes the sole carer, but hopefully financially provided for. In the Victorian era this was an expected role for the mother but for the 21st century mother it is a role that can be hard to fulfil.

Families exist in many different forms and sociologists have spent many hours attempting to establish what a family is, but, after the industrial revolution it became common for the 'man' to move away from his parental family to find work. If successful, he would take his wife and children with him, thus breaking up the extended family and creating a nuclear family near his work place. This can be referred to as the horizontal theory of family formation referred to in Chapter 2 and most of the families in this research follow this line. There are three main Naval areas in the United Kingdom, and it is towards these many of the Naval families gravitate. Family accommodation provided by the Royal Navy is usually in the surrounding area, formed of groups of houses similar to that of local housing estates. This provision is different from the other two armed forces, who provide accommodation often within the guarded boundaries of an establishment. Social clubs, shops and children's playgrounds are within the fences of the establishment, providing a different environment to that of the Royal Naval married accommodation. Naval housing or married quarters are usually unguarded, and residents use all the facilities of the rest of the community, although social clubs and sports facilities are sometimes provided within establishments if the personnel wish to use them.

When an airman or soldier changes his job, it is very likely that he will move at the same time as the rest of his regiment or squadron. In these circumstances the wives and families are expected to move base with their husbands. In the Royal Navy it is a different situation. The husband is unlikely to move to a new ship with anyone else from his existing work

place. Even if he has been on a training course, he will not go to a ship or base with others he has trained with. He might meet individuals he has served with before, but this is by chance not design. If he is going to serve on a ship there is an expectation that he will be away from the family home on many occasions. I have already mentioned that all the forces offer a 'boarding school allowance' to enable parents to provide a stable education for their children but the Royal Navy also offer a 'long service advance of pay' (LSAP). This is an interest free loan for first-time house buyers that is repaid on receipt of pension or when the individual leaves the service. The Royal Navy actively encourages its personnel to live in private accommodation. The average pay of service men is above the national average and puts them into a higher socio-economic group. With the added incentive of the LSAP, there was potential for the families involved in this study, to be above the national average for living in their own homes, but there was only a slight increase in occurrence. Seventy-two per cent of the subject families lived in owner-occupier accommodation compared to the national average of seventy per cent. (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Housing Statistic Summary No 13 2002).

In order to eliminate factors, other than the man of the house being a sailor, as possibly affecting the children, I attempted to identify if the families in this research conform to the 'normal' or 'average' ideal of a family. With the majority of definitions identifying a 'family' as a group of related individuals that includes children, I used the statistics gathered in the questionnaire to compare the research families to national statistics. I have already covered the housing issue and now consider the size of family. The Office of National Statistics (2001) established that the average number of children in a family is now 1.64. In the sample-group families, the average number of children is 1.58. This is slightly below the national average but I consider it a good match to the official statistics.

One area where this survey differed demographically is that they were all two-parent families and the very nature of the research necessitated this, but I can conclude that the children and families taking part were from acceptably 'normal' families, and only their fathers' employment identified them as being unique among other families. So, did the children themselves consider their family any different to other families? The majority did not think so, but for those that did, it was the outward appearance of the family that caused most to identify theirs as different. They felt they could not identify with other children at school because their father was not at the school function; or they noticed how they

appeared different because their father was missing from the family group. One of the children in the study identified a difference in her family when her father was away at Christmas. However, it was not necessarily the fact that the father was not there, but the fact that it was a different type of Christmas celebration. Her father's absence was heightened by the family behaviour. There was a change to other Christmases and they postponed the main celebration until March. Doing this created a situation that was very different to that which would have occurred in a single-parent family home, and perhaps it was the event that created the feeling of 'difference' that the child felt, rather than the fact the father was away.

With slight variation there are two main social family groups, dual-parent families and single-parent families. The difficulties experienced by some sample children, especially when with peers and amongst other families, are that sometimes they cannot relate to their friends and as a result get a feeling of being the odd one out. Commonality of single-parent families means they are generally accepted throughout society, and children readily accept that a friend has a single parent including them in conversations on a different level; however, the sample children are always conscious that they have both a mother and a father. In the course of conversation with their peers, they feel 'different' or the 'odd-one-out' aware that the elements of the conversation, that if they were of a single-parent family, would not apply, but because their father is away they cannot contribute. Whilst the incidences seem small, they were significant enough to the respondents to be recorded. The feeling of being the 'odd-one-out' and the feeling that their families were 'different' as expressed by some children, stem from the same experiences. When the children are with friends, talking about and referring to their fathers, Naval children do notice a difference. They observe other children in their homes with their fathers, perhaps preparing a meal, or taking them out to football, and find themselves separated from the conversation. This of course, only applies during the periods of separation and a lot of children expressed the delight of being able to do things with their father when he returns. I am sure the times when they cannot contribute are equalled by the opportunities they get to expand on their trips out with their father.

The roles of the father within a family unit are many and varied. In Chapter 3 these are explored and the question that arises from looking at these roles is: How can they be fulfilled when the father is not there? The chapter includes a quote by Simone De Beauvoir (1949), which includes the statement, 'as a rule his work takes him outside and so it is

through him that the family communicates with the rest of the world: he incarnates that immense, difficult and marvellous world of adventure.' If a man is in the Royal Navy he is in an excellent position to do this. Children, whilst not necessarily being involved with the actual role their fathers play in the service, are aware that he is in an armed force with a military role to play in the time of conflict. For many, their father's job has opened up the world for them. Several keep a world map on the wall to track their father's journey, enhancing their knowledge of different places and cultures.

Many of the children in the research receive postcards from their fathers when away and souvenirs from the countries they have visited. In response to the question I asked about opportunities the children have had as a result of their father's job or 'perks', moving around to different places and living in different countries were prominent answers. Phrases like 'giving me a liking for travel', 'giving me broader horizons', 'travelling to different countries' and 'being able to talk' about places their fathers have visited gave opportunities to the children that many others could not experience. Apart from the United Kingdom, some of the children in the research group had had the opportunity to live in one or more of thirteen different countries. One had even had the exceptional cultural opportunity to live in Saudi Arabia, unique in the fact that visitors are not permitted and there is no tourism (except for the Moslems during the festival of Hajj to Mecca). It is a place almost impossible to visit unless though employment.

If the father is away from the family home, how can he fulfil the roles of the father discussed in Chapter 3. I have already mentioned the potential for achieving what De Beauvoir (1949) describes as 'communicating the outside world to their children' role, but what about the other roles? There was little evidence about the care of the children in the study when they were young. Whilst fathers may want to resume their caring role, younger children sometimes reject the attention of the father when he initially returns from a deployment. This exhibited behaviour is classic, as expressed by Colin (1996) and discussed in Chapter 4 along with other theories of separation, and although relevant, at this juncture, I will continue with how the fathers fulfil their roles in the family even though absent. One method they do this is through discipline. Questions were asked of children about how they were disciplined both when their father was home and when he was away, and in almost all cases, the system and nature of discipline remained the same regardless of the father's presence or absence. Apart from one child whose, almost indignant, reply was that she never

misbehaved, most explained that shouting, telling off and the occasional smack were the kinds of discipline they received from both parents. Most of the children, who were grounded, (the practice of not allowing the child out for recreation,) received the punishment from both parents equally. A few exceptions were a respondent who felt his father was more willing to discuss the misdemeanour and resolve it, whereas his mother would just tell him off; and another who was grounded by his father and not his mother. The parents, whether by accident or design, follow the same procedures and support each other. Hetherington *et al.* (1993) researched the element of discipline and the reluctance of many non-residential fathers to discipline their children for fears of alienating them. This creates discord in the separated child when father appears as the 'good-time' parent and the mother the authoritarian one, but as seen in this research, this conflict does not normally occur. The parents have a consistent method of discipline regardless of father's presence, and it is only in a few cases where there is slight variation, which could conceivably apply in any two-parent household. One did feel the treatment of her father reflected that of Owen (1994) and identified an atmosphere in the home when he was there, because he was very strict. Daly argues that fathers want to influence their children's lives, and in an attempt to influence their children, some fathers in the sample families do establish a different regime when they are home. Particular instances given by respondents were that: their father expected the children to do things for them; another was 'strict and old fashioned' and because the father had not been around to know the child's friends, was over protective. Other fathers try to make up for lost time expecting the children to spend time with them. This is understandable, but for the child who has lived his or her own life during the period of absence, and will do when the father goes away again, this can cause discord.

The father's expectation of the child to stop what he or she has done for the last few months could be considered unreasonable by the child. Wives too, can experience this 'you must be with me' attitude of the returning partner. Much as the wives during World War II, they enjoy an element of independence, imposed on them by the absence of the husband, and adopt 'coping' strategies. In the case of the war wives, it was going to work and this was something they were unwilling to give up when the war was over. Modern-day service wives adopt their own activities, such as going out with friends or going to work. Mothers cope with the separation, creating a sense of normality, routine and activities and they are unwilling to sacrifice these or other coping strategies when their husband returns, because

they know they will need them in the future. When the husband returns home it is not always possible or desirable to stop these activities.

Children, too, create a life around their friends and can see no reason for it to change because for a few weeks their father might be home. Creating a life for oneself, becoming independent, and gradually moving away from the family home is normal animal behaviour, and which, for the human, begins to happen during the teenage years. It is normal for them to want to 'do their own thing' and not be forced into 'being with dad because he is home'. Teenagers have their own agendas for life and being with parents does not often have a high priority. This was expressed by several respondents, who admitted that whilst they like to spend some time with their newly returned father, they want to continue doing the things that are important to them such as going out with friends. I recall my own husband being upset when, having returned from a deployment and experienced all the hugs and kisses from the children, they then asked if they could go across the road to play with friends, which was 'no big deal' for them. Again, an example that children are, even if subconsciously, self-centred and concerned with their own interest and well-being as identified by Bowlby (1951). He wrote about the father as only being of economic support for the mother and only second fiddle to the child. This study did not involve an examination of the relationship of husband and wives in Naval families, but it was interesting to note that two of the respondents commented that their father coming home made their mother very happy.

Psychologists such as Pringle (1986) and Bronfenbrenner (1970) examined the role the father has in developing a sense of masculinity in their sons. If the father is not there, can this create a problem? The fathers in this study appear to make an effort to bond with their sons during the times they are home. They go to football matches, have trips out together, garden and do house repairs together, and play with their children. However, identifying with the male role can upset young children, especially boys who try to assume their father's role when he is away. The question that regularly arises when the effects of absent fathers is considered, is whether another man can fulfil the role. It can be argued that in the single-parent situation there is the requirement for a father figure, in order that the children will develop psychologically and emotionally stable. In the scenario of this study, there is a father in the family, but is there a need for another male figure to feature in the children's lives when their father is away? If the presence of a physical, father figure is as important as

Daly (1995) implies, it is possible to assume that without their own father, the children of servicemen gravitate to other men during the periods of separation. Several respondents commented that they relied on other men for support with homework or lifts in cars, but there is no evidence that this is to replace something lacking in their own lives, or more a matter of convenience when their mother cannot do something.

Green (1976:49) wrote: 'If father allows himself to be kept aside as unimportant to the young child, he may have set a pattern to remain unimportant to that child forever after.' If he is serving in the Royal Navy, it is not always possible for the father to be shore based and therefore, home continually during the formative years of the child. One father in the subject families was fortunate that he could be at the birth of his daughter because the delivery was induced.

What appears to be important to the children is how they are encouraged to keep in touch and have memory aids to help remind them of their fathers during his absences. Having photographs were the most common artefact, but maps on the wall, having fathers' things around the house, making tapes and writing letters all added to the list of ways of keeping the father figure forefront in the children's minds. In the case of the very young children it is up to the mother to do this. Talking about father, kissing photographs goodnight, (although one has to be careful of this since it was reported that a young American boy refused to accept his father on his return from a deployment, because he thought his father was the refrigerator as that was where the picture was that he kissed every night), and a map on the wall to track his journey were among the ways fathers were kept in the minds of children. Also, doing drawings as special things to send, and making up gift parcels to send, got the children involved and relating to their father. Respondents sent things to their fathers as a way of keeping in touch. Not only did they write letters but enjoyed making tapes, sending school reports and sending photographs of recent events, and all of these kept their fathers involved in their lives. In return, he sent letters and postcards personally addressed to them and talked on the telephone when possible.

This continual communication and involvement with the father is enhanced for many children by the opportunities they have to 'know' where their father is and what he is doing. The majority visit the ship that their father is serving on, and the children in the study agreed that these visits play an important role in maintaining links between child and father.

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The Royal Navy encourages ships to have 'families days'. These are usually a day prior to a deployment and families are invited on board. For the children this is an opportunity to see where their father lives and works during the times he is away, and the knowledge that their father 'is safe' or 'with nice people' was very reassuring to the children. This association meant they became involved in what their father was doing and whom he was with, an important feature in the child-father relationships.

I referred earlier in this chapter to the importance of the mother's role in the Royal Naval family. If the father is absent, it is the responsibility of the mother to bring up the children. Even though she has the psychological support from the husband, it is much harder than if her husband is home. She may get lonely, particularly in the evening and find the housework too much. From the results there were two distinct ways mother and children coped with this change in situation. Children assumed the role or were asked to do more chores, helping with the housework and looking after younger brothers and sisters. Extending to the other extreme life without 'dad' becomes more relaxed, more take-away meals and the children being able to stay up later. This behaviour mirrors some of the behaviour exhibited in recently separated families identified by Lansdown and Hetherington (1990), and could be attributed to the change of circumstance the mother finds herself in and a way to alleviate the different stresses she experiences when her husband goes away.

A few children, who commented that their mother was always busy because she had more things to do around the home when their father was away, and this too, is a reflection of the newly separated family, highlighted another similarity for the newly separated family. One child expressed the view that she had to be more independent when her father is away, whilst another made a determined effort to help her mother around the home during times of absence. In a Naval family, it is not always possible to establish long-term routines. A particular household routine will only last for the duration of a deployment. As well as the changing number of people in the house, there is the accompanying emotional roller coaster of separation and return. One week the wife is catering for herself and the children, and next there is another person and all aspects of living in the same house change. The use of the bathroom, who sits where to watch television, and even what programmes are viewed, can all change when the father returns. Flexibility becomes paramount in the Naval home, and coping with this flexibility falls mainly on the mother because she has to cope with both when her husband is home, but also when he is away. There is conflict in between

establishing a routine in the home that will enable the children to feel a sense of security and stability at the same time as one that will allow for the flexibility that is required when another person, in this case the father, returns. The mother has autonomy for a period and then shared responsibilities and then autonomy again. Often she has to express total independence during the periods of absence but cannot express this when her husband returns. We all desire a feeling of being needed, and the returning husband is no exception. If the wife and children demonstrate too much independence it is possible for the husband and father to feel rejected and unwanted. Establishing a balance can fall on the wife more than the children as they are generating their own world where it is not necessary to depend on their father. The children expressed a small element of resentment towards their fathers, when they return home and want to 'take over' the children's lives and the home.

Having discussed how the father's role is or is not fulfilled because of his absences, I will now consider the main issue of the research question. Does a child's behaviour change during these absences? If the teacher who was instrumental in the formation of this research question is right, a child's behaviour will change significantly and negatively when their father goes away. A great deal of research, including that by Green (1976), concludes that academic standard is lower in children without fathers and delinquency higher. What, then, is the opinion of the children in this study and does their fathers' absence present them with any problems? Nearly three quarters of the respondents were very categorical in their negative answer. The few that felt their behaviour did change, related the cause to being more relaxed when their father was away and this had different effects on their behaviour. One found that he did not feel pressured into completing homework and subsequently got into trouble by not handing in homework on time; and another was more interested in social life than school work, hence causing a drop in standard. A dislike of the stricter regime that accompanies their fathers' return makes two youngsters resentful, but neither thought this changed their behaviour when their fathers were there. They did, however, think it influenced it more when they are not there, because they find they are more relaxed and able to cope with things more easily. One child admitted to getting cheeky, and other felt they argued more and tested their mother's patience. Positive changes in behaviour included being more helpful and trying to be better behaved in order to help the mother. Being moody at the beginning of a separation and during the time when his father was away was also recognised by a respondent. Seltzer (1999) explained throughout his research that regardless of his presence, if the father supports the child with sufficient funding, the child's

educational attainment as well as its health and well-being is maintained. Since there is no problem with providing enough money under normal circumstances, Seltzer's (1994) theory should be upheld in the Naval family situation, with the conclusion that there should be no problems academically for the sole reason the father is in the Royal Navy.

Adult-child and parent relationships are highlighted in many books, and deviation from the accepted norm of two heterosexual parents immediately gets sociologists and psychologists anticipating problems, especially when the parents are separated or the father is totally absent. Western society expects fathers to be participating in all aspects of childcare. Climo (1992), and Moss and Fonda (1990) wrote that, once established, the parent-child bond remains coherent under conditions of limited face-to-face contact. This is exactly the situation of the families in this study. The children do experience sadness when their fathers leave and elation on their return so how do they cope with the separation? There is some disharmony between the parents as explained by the pre-deployment syndrome. Even though their mothers might experience these changes in the family environment only a few of the children noticed these changes. This lack of observation could be the result of children not experiencing the altered tension. It could be that the parents manage to behave normally in front of the children, or it could be that, being children, they did not notice simply because young children have a tendency to be totally involved in their own lives.

There is also the possibility that disruption or heightened emotions were a 'normal' part of family life that preceded a deployment. During the interview, the children expressed the comings and goings of their fathers as just a part of life; they got used to it, and it 'just happened'. The descriptions of the children, who did notice a change, included: tension, 'mum crying', 'mum getting sad and grumpy', and 'mum getting sensitive.' These sorts of observed emotions are not dissimilar to those experienced pre-divorce, but in this case they are usually short lived. Unlike the divorce-related separation, the children do, however, experience the separations repeatedly. Both the children and the mothers know that there is no love loss, that it is only the job that is taking the father away and that he will return; unlike in a divorce case when the future can be uncertain in many aspects, including accommodation and finance. The immediate period of departure for the service family is short-lived and the separation temporary. The children know that they will see their father in the future and enjoy normal family life again.

When divorce occurs the children's world is often turned upside down. When the father leaves because of marital breakdown there are many problems facing the single mother. In the case of the service there are few of these problems. Providing the couple have been sensible then finance should not be a problem. Accommodation is assured, as there is no question about who pays the rent or mortgage, and child maintenance orders are not required. There are no legal issues to be considered and if problems do occur there is a strong mechanism in the Naval Welfare Organisation to help on any matter. In common with the newly divorced mother, the Naval mother has to plan and cope with life without her husband, but she knows he supports her in her efforts and for her it is only temporary. Without the stresses imposed on the divorcee the Naval wife can concentrate on the home and the children supporting them throughout the separation, and it is motherly support that is written about by the children. Because the family has not broken up the children do not experience the feelings of guilt that they have been the cause and therefore do not go though the emotions often experienced by children of a divorce. One of the child respondents remembers experiencing the feeling that her father was gone for good and her parents were going to be divorced. In fear of separation a very young child will cry when its mother leaves, exhibit temper tantrums or ask to sleep in the mother's bed. These are typical attachment and separation symptoms as explored by Bowlby *et al.* (1998), and are identified in Chapter 4. It is easier for the Naval wife to comfort the child and cope with the situation because there is a definitive end to the separation, and she can readily admit the truth and explain where the father is and when he will be back. Explaining the emotions and events surrounding a divorce is much more difficult. Unlike the divorce situation the father-child interaction does not wane. It changes from face-to-face talking to letters and phone calls, or to an explainable silence if the father is on a nuclear submarine, but nevertheless remains tangible.

Despite the knowledge that the father will return and that family life will resume, there is evidence that the time the children and father spend together and what happens during that time, has a similarity with the way that the separated father spends with his children. Berscheid and Peplau (1983) studied father-child relationships and indicated that there were four elements that were important in building a positive relationship. The individuals have to have frequent contact, achieved by the majority in the study by frequent letters and telephone calls. They identified that the relationship had to be a long one, and the relationships in my sample groups were as long as the children were old. Their third

recommendation was that there needed to be a strong degree of mutual impact, and this was exemplified by the children's description of their emotions when their fathers leave and return. Their last idea was that the relationship had to involve diverse kinds of activities. Most of the Naval fathers try to involve their children in activities when they are home, and involve them when away by sending letters and postcards, returning with souvenirs and talking to their children about their trips.

Young *et al.* (1995) identified five key issues correlating the father's role and child well-being. These key issues concern positive elements required to engender the child's well-being. One of these issues mentions the need for positive involvement, and the interaction of the Royal Naval fathers with their children, described above, actively involves the father with the child during the periods of absence. Similarly, the active involvement in discipline, creating a consistency in how the two parents discipline misdemeanours, and being seen as an authoritative parent adds substance to good parenting. Young *et al.* (1995), however, also mention that fathers who spend their time with the children in extrinsic, recreational pursuits only, do not add to the equation of bringing about the well-being of children, but can in fact cause conflict and stress. Clarke and Barber (1994) also researched the activities that fathers undertake with their children when they are with them, and concluded that many attempt to be friends with their children, treating them and taking them out, and this extrinsic behaviour can extend to Naval families. A significant number of the research children considered that their fathers spoilt them and gave them a good time when they were home, but still identify their fathers as the authoritarian, involved father figure, and the occasional spoiling was insignificant.

Conclusion

The Royal Naval family can be described as a typical family unit conforming to the 'norm' in family size and housing, but with the distinct difference in that the father may or may not be present in the home at any one given period of time. The evidence of this research shows that the children in such families do not appear to suffer the social, psychological, or emotional problems often attributed to paternal deprivation. Without a long-term analysis of academic results, it is not possible to ascertain if their academic achievement is lower, but the standard of behaviour generally remains constant. One can attribute this to the methods the parents adopt to ensure all aspects of the well-being of the children and the attitudes of

the children themselves. Most parents demonstrate a consistent approach to discipline and home routines, enabling the children to know order and a sense of right and wrong. Similarly, both parents become involved in ensuring the relationship with the father is maintained during the times of physical separation by a variety of means. When the children are very young, they are encouraged to draw pictures to send, and involved in conversations about their father illustrated with pictures and postcards. As the children get older, they take these activities onboard increasingly and adapt contact to suit their needs. Keeping the fathers present in the minds of the children becomes a natural process as photographs are displayed, and the normal paraphernalia of his life in the home is always present. It is possible for the Royal Naval father to fulfil his 'role' as described by many psychologists by adaptation, variation and imagination. The opportunities he can bring to enhance his children's lives can bring enrichment that is sometimes not possible in other professions. Many expressed feeling a sense of pride in their father and the role he plays in the Royal Navy, engendering a feeling of respect and an understanding of the role he plays in the family.

Admittedly, the children experience the emotions related to parting and returning but these are temporary. The families do experience some of the emotions and reactions similar to those experienced by the newly separated or divorced family, but again these are temporary and usually overcome by a variety of means including reassurance, conversation and the knowledge that the father will return. On occasions, the children do not feel as though they fit into a specific social group, not a single-parent family, and not a dual-parent family either, and this can result in feelings of jealousy and difference. Occasionally, the expectations of behaviour placed on the children during the father's absence are high, and feelings of resentment or anxiety can ensue. Similarly, when he returns, these feelings can emerge but with careful understanding and an awareness of the difficulties encountered by all parties these do not appear to have long lasting effects.

With the parental guarantee of security and belonging, the teenage child of the Royal Naval family appears to be able to 'get on' with their own life in the same way as other teenage children. With the confidence that they have loving parents, they can develop into independent young people, and as with a lot of youngsters, the most important thing for them is themselves. There is a demonstration that they accept the irregularity of their father's presence as a normal part of their particular family life. They appreciate spending

time with their fathers but have the same desire as all teenagers as wanting to break away from the family bonds and associate with friends and peers. They enjoy it when their father is around especially if it means they get money for new clothes or sweets or can go to a football match. My experience of today's teenagers is that they are focused on materialistic things and a self-fulfilling attitude to life. The children of a Royal Naval family are the same. It would be wrong to say they do not care about their fathers being home or away, but the assumption that they are affected by it, may be incorrect. All children are individuals, all families are individual and there will no doubt be some children who find adapting to their fathers absences and returns difficult, the long-term effects are felt and are life lasting, but for the children in this research this was not evident.

This research began because a pupil's bad behaviour was attributed to his father's occupation-related absence. This research has demonstrated that whilst children feel the emotional pull of separation, it cannot recognise this as a cause of behaviour problems. The children live with the comings and goings of their fathers accepting it as a 'normal' part of their particular family life. They identify differences in life when he is there and when he is not but their well-being is not affected and they attribute this to the standards of child rearing carried out by their parents and illustrated by consistency in discipline and home-life.

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Appendix

My Dad's a Sailor

A Doctoral Study into how having a father who is in the Royal Navy affects children.

Questionnaire

I am a postgraduate student doing research into how having a father who is or was a serving member of the Royal Navy may affect children's lives. The aim of the study is to produce a paper that will highlight the different situations that affect children in such a position and create an awareness of the emotions that they may experience. I hope it will be available to teachers and parents so that a better understanding can be reached and strategies developed to help youngsters through, what can be, a very difficult time.

In order to do this work I need a number of young people to complete a questionnaire and for some to join me in focus group discussions or interviews in order to explore the subject. I am grateful you feel you can help and are willing to take time to complete this questionnaire. It will take about 30 minutes but that depends a little on how much you feel you can expand on the questions.

As you complete the questions please be as frank and honest as possible. If you can expand on an answer with more than a 'yes' or 'no' by adding comments please do so as everything you have to contribute will be extremely valuable. Some of the questions asked are personal but I can assure you that these details will remain confidential and at no time will the information be passed to anyone else and names will be changed in the paper to ensure anonymity.

On completion a summary of my research will be available so please let me know if you would like a copy.

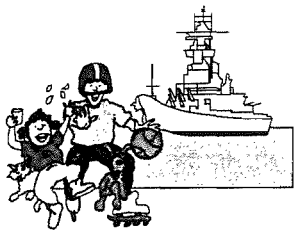
Many thanks for your help,

Lesley Brunink

My Dad's a Sailor Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. I would be grateful if you could answer the following questions as frankly and honestly as possible. Please feel free to add extra comments, as everything you have to contribute will be extremely valuable and if you could expand or answer with more than a 'yes or no answer I would be grateful. Some of the questions I ask are personal and I assure you these details will remain strictly confidential and at no time will this information be passed to any one else. I would like to interview some individuals as a result of this questionnaire so please indicate at the end if you are prepared to talk to me in confidence about your experiences and answers.

Section 1 Person information



Name.....

Age.....

Sex.....

Ages of brothers and sisters .....

Section 2 About your father's job

1. During what period of your life was your father in the Royal Navy? *(please indicate)*

All to date(i.e. Father still serving) ❑ or until I was ..... years old

2. What is the longest time your father has been away a single occasion? *(please state)*

.....

3. Have you live in married quarters or equivalent? yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑
If yes or sometimes please indicate when:

currently still do ❑ other *(please state)*.....

4. Have you ever moved because your father has changed job? yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑
If yes or sometimes please indicate when:

.....

5. Have you always lived in the area where your father worked? (near the port where his ship was based or near the shore establishment) yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑

If you can please state the occasions when you have not lived in the same area as your father's work place.....

6. Do you live near other family members who helped your mother especially when your father was/is away? yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑

What sort of help did they give you and your family?

.....
.....

7. Did/do you visit the ships or establishments your father was/is serving on?
yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑

If yes or sometimes please indicate
before he went away ❑ when he came back ❑ only on families days ❑
Other occasions *(please state)*.....

Section 3 Meeting people

8. If you visited the ship before it went away do you think it helped you cope with your father' absence? yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑

How?.....

9. Did/do you ever meet any of the people your father works with? yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑

If so who?.....

10. Did/do you make friends with any of the children whose fathers are on the same ship?
yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑

If so how, and did the friendship develop?
.....

11. Did/do you still maintain contact with these friends? yes ❑ no ❑ some of them ❑

Section 4 About your feelings

12. How do you feel when your father went/goes away?
.....
.....
.....

13. How do you feel when your father came/comes home?
.....
.....
.....

14. What do you remember about times when your father was/is at home?
.....
.....
.....

15. What do you remember about times when your father was/is away?
.....
.....
.....

16. Can you recall any incidents that occurred before your father went away that might be related to his impending departure. (Ie. Did his or your mothers behaviour change, if so how?)
.....
.....
.....

17. If you misbehave/ misbehaved when your father was/is away what did/does your mother do?

.....

.....

.....

18. Is your mother's behaviour different from when your father is at home all the time?

yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑

Please explain.....

.....

19. If you father was/is away did you consider you had more freedom? yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑

Please explain.....

.....

20. When your father was/is away do you think you behaved differently? yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑

Please explain.....

.....

21. Do you think your father's absences had an impact on your school work?

yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑

Please explain.....

.....

22. Have you had any problems at school that you think might have been because your father was absent? yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑

Please explain.....

.....

23. Does home life change when your father is away? yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑

Please give some details.....

.....

24. Do you feel you 'missed out' on anything because your father was often away from home?

yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑

Please explain.....

.....

25. Do you ever feel the 'odd one out' among friends because you father is often away for long periods? yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑

Please explain.....

.....

26. Did you ever get the feeling that you did not have a 'proper' family? yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑

Please explain.....

.....

27. Do you recall any time when you were jealous or upset because your father was away?

yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑

Please explain.....

.....

28. Do you think having a Father in the Navy had any 'perks'? E.g. The chance to live abroad.
yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑

Please explain.....
.....

29. Do you think your father 'spoilt' you when he was/is home? yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑
Please explain.....
.....

30. Did you get extra 'treats' when your father was/is away? yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑
Please explain.....
. .....

Section 5 Keeping in touch

31. When your father was/is away do you write to him? yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑
Please indicate how often
More than once a week ❑ weekly ❑ when I wanted to ❑ rarely ❑

32. When your father was/is away do you receive letters addressed to you or in with others?
yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑
Please indicate how often
More than once a week ❑ weekly ❑ when I wanted to ❑ rarely ❑

33. When your father was/is away do you get the opportunity to phone or E-mail him? ?
yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑
Please indicate how often
More than once a week ❑ weekly ❑ when I wanted to ❑ rarely ❑

34. Does he phone you? yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑
Please indicate how often
More than once a week ❑ weekly ❑ rarely ❑ when possible ❑

35. Did/do you ever do special things to send to your father? Ie. Pictures cards etc.
yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑

Please give some details.....
.....

36. What did/do you do or have to remind you of your father when he is/was away?
yes ❑ no ❑ sometimes ❑
Please give some details.....
.....

Thank you for completing this questionnaire if you are willing to be interviewed about your experiences please complete this last section.

I would be happy to be interviewed in relation to my answers and experiences and can be contacted at (address).....
Phone number.....